

Readings for December 2019

Sunday 1st December

Isaiah 2:1-5

This is the message that I was given about Judah and Jerusalem:

In the future, the mountain

with the LORD's temple

will be the highest of all.

It will reach above the hills;

every nation will rush to it.

Many people will come and say,

"Let's go to the mountain

of the LORD God of Jacob

and worship in his temple."

The LORD will teach us his Law

from Jerusalem,

and we will obey him.

He will settle arguments

between nations.

They will pound their swords

and their spears

into rakes and shovels;

they will never make war

or attack one another.

People of Israel, let's live

by the light of the LORD.

Romans 13:11-14

You know what sort of times we live in, and so you should live properly. It is time to wake up. You know that the day when we will be saved is nearer now than when we first put our faith in the Lord. Night is almost over, and day will soon appear. We must stop behaving as people do in the dark and be ready to live in the light. So behave properly, as people do in the day. Don't go to wild parties or get drunk or be vulgar or indecent. Don't quarrel or be jealous. Let the Lord Jesus Christ be as near to you as the clothes you wear. Then you won't try to satisfy your selfish desires.

Matthew 24:36-44

No one knows the day or hour. The angels in heaven don't know, and the Son himself doesn't know. Only the Father knows. When the Son of Man appears, things will be just as they were when Noah lived. People were eating, drinking, and getting married right up to the day that the flood came and Noah went into the big boat. They didn't know anything was happening until the flood came and swept them all away. That is how it will be when the Son of Man appears.

Two men will be in the same field, but only one will be taken. The other will be left. Two women will be together grinding grain, but only one will be taken. The other will be left. So be on your guard! You don't know when your Lord will come. Homeowners never know when a thief is coming, and they are always on guard to keep one from breaking in. Always be ready! You don't know when the Son of Man will come.

Sunday 8th December

Isaiah 11:1-10

Like a branch that sprouts
from a stump,
someone from David's family
will someday be king.

The Spirit of the LORD
will be with him
to give him understanding,
wisdom, and insight.

He will be powerful,
and he will know
and honour the LORD.

His greatest joy will be
to obey the LORD.

This king won't judge
by appearances
or listen to rumours.

The poor and the needy
will be treated with fairness
and with justice.

His word will be law
everywhere in the land,
and criminals
will be put to death.

Honesty and fairness
will be his royal robes.

Leopards will lie down
with young goats,
and wolves will rest
with lambs.

Calves and lions
will eat together

and be cared for
by little children.
Cows and bears will share
the same pasture;
their young will rest
side by side.
Lions and oxen
will both eat straw.

Little children will play
near snake holes.
They will stick their hands
into dens of poisonous snakes
and never be hurt.

Nothing harmful will take place
on the LORD's holy mountain.
Just as water fills the sea,
the land will be filled
with people
who know
and honour the LORD.

The time is coming when one of David's descendants will be the signal for the people of all nations to come together. They will follow his advice, and his own nation will become famous.

Romans 15:4-13

And the Scriptures were written to teach and encourage us by giving us hope. God is the one who makes us patient and cheerful. I pray that he will help you live at peace with each other, as you follow Christ. Then all of you together will praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Honour God by accepting each other, as Christ has accepted you. I tell you that Christ came as a servant of the Jews to show that God has kept the promises he made to their famous ancestors. Christ also came, so

that the Gentiles would praise God for being kind to them. It is just as the Scriptures say,

“I will tell the nations
about you,
and I will sing praises
to your name.”

The Scriptures also say to the Gentiles, “Come and celebrate with God’s people.”

Again the Scriptures say,

“Praise the Lord,
all you Gentiles.
All you nations, come
and worship him.”

Isaiah says,

“Someone from David’s family
will come to power.
He will rule the nations,
and they will put their hope
in him.”

I pray that God, who gives hope, will bless you with complete happiness and peace because of your faith. And may the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with hope.

Matthew 3:1-12

Years later, John the Baptist started preaching in the desert of Judea. He said, “Turn back to God! The kingdom of heaven will soon be here.”

John was the one the prophet Isaiah was talking about, when he said,

“In the desert someone
is shouting,

'Get the road ready
for the Lord!
Make a straight path
for him.'"

John wore clothes made of camel's hair. He had a leather strap around his waist and ate grasshoppers and wild honey.

From Jerusalem and all Judea and from the Jordan River Valley crowds of people went to John. They told how sorry they were for their sins, and he baptized them in the river.

Many Pharisees and Sadducees also came to be baptized. But John said to them:

You bunch of snakes! Who warned you to run from the coming judgment? Do something to show that you have really given up your sins. And don't start telling yourselves that you belong to Abraham's family. I tell you that God can turn these stones into children for Abraham. An ax is ready to cut the trees down at their roots. Any tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into a fire.

I baptize you with water so that you will give up your sins. But someone more powerful is going to come, and I am not good enough even to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His threshing fork is in his hand, and he is ready to separate the wheat from the husks. He will store the wheat in a barn and burn the husks in a fire that never goes out.

Sunday 15th

Isaiah 35

Thirsty deserts will be glad;
barren lands will celebrate
and blossom with flowers.
Deserts will bloom everywhere
and sing joyful songs.
They will be as majestic
as Mount Lebanon,
as glorious as Mount Carmel
or Sharon Valley.
Everyone will see
the wonderful splendour
of the LORD our God.

Here is a message for all
who are weak,
trembling,
and worried:
"Cheer up! Don't be afraid.
Your God is coming
to punish your enemies.
God will take revenge on them
and rescue you."

The blind will see,
and the ears of the deaf
will be healed.
Those who were lame
will leap around like deer;
tongues once silent
will begin to shout.
Water will rush
through the desert.
Scorching sand
will turn into a lake,

and thirsty ground
will flow with fountains.
Grass will grow in wetlands,
where packs of wild dogs
once made their home.

A good road will be there,
and it will be named
"God's Sacred Highway."
It will be for God's people;
no one unfit to worship God
will walk on that road.
And no fools can travel
on that highway.

No lions or other wild animals
will come near that road;
only those the LORD has saved
will travel there.

The people the LORD has rescued
will come back singing
as they enter Zion.
Happiness will be a crown
they will always wear.
They will celebrate and shout
because all sorrows
and worries
will be gone far away.

James 5:7-10

My friends, be patient until the Lord returns. Think of farmers who wait patiently for the spring and summer rains to make their valuable crops grow. Be patient like those farmers and don't give up. The Lord will soon be here! Don't grumble about each other or you will be judged, and the judge is right outside the door.

My friends, follow the example of the prophets who spoke for the Lord. They were patient, even when they had to suffer.

Matthew 11:2-11

John was in prison when he heard what Christ was doing. So John sent some of his followers to ask Jesus, "Are you the one we should be looking for? Or must we wait for someone else?"

Jesus answered, "Go and tell John what you have heard and seen. The blind are now able to see, and the lame can walk. People with leprosy are being healed, and the deaf can hear. The dead are raised to life, and the poor are hearing the good news. God will bless everyone who doesn't reject me because of what I do."

As John's followers were going away, Jesus spoke to the crowds about John:

What sort of person did you go out into the desert to see? Was he like tall grass blown about by the wind? What kind of man did you go out to see? Was he someone dressed in fine clothes? People who dress like that live in the king's palace. What did you really go out to see? Was he a prophet? He certainly was. I tell you that he was more than a prophet. In the Scriptures God says about him, "I am sending my messenger ahead of you to get things ready for you." I tell you that no one ever born on this earth is greater than John the Baptist. But whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John.

Sunday 22nd

Isaiah 7:10-14

Once again the LORD God spoke to King Ahaz. This time he said, "Ask me for proof that my promise will come true. Ask for something to happen deep in the world of the dead or high in the heavens above."

"No, LORD," Ahaz answered. "I won't test you!"

Then I said:

Listen, every one of you in the royal family of David. You have already tried my patience. Now you are trying God's patience by refusing to ask for proof. But the LORD will still give you proof. A virgin is pregnant; she will have a son and will name him Immanuel.

Romans 1:1-7

From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus.

God chose me to be an apostle, and he appointed me to preach the good news that he promised long ago by what his prophets said in the holy Scriptures. This good news is about his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ! As a human, he was from the family of David. But the Holy Spirit proved that Jesus is the powerful Son of God, because he was raised from death.

Jesus was kind to me and chose me to be an apostle, so that people of all nations would obey and have faith. You are some of those people chosen by Jesus Christ.

This letter is to all of you in Rome. God loves you and has chosen you to be his very own people.

I pray that God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ will be kind to you and will bless you with peace!

Matthew 1:18-25

This is how Jesus Christ was born. A young woman named Mary was engaged to Joseph from King David's family. But before they were married, she learned that she was going to have a baby by God's Holy Spirit. Joseph was a good man and did not want to embarrass Mary in front of everyone. So he decided to quietly call off the wedding.

While Joseph was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, the baby that Mary will have is from the Holy Spirit. Go ahead and marry her. Then after her baby is born, name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, "A virgin will have a baby boy, and he will be called Immanuel," which means "God is with us."

After Joseph woke up, he and Mary were soon married, just as the Lord's angel had told him to do. But they did not sleep together before her baby was born. Then Joseph named him Jesus.

Wednesday 25th

Isaiah 52:7-10

What a beautiful sight!
On the mountains a messenger
announces to Jerusalem,
"Good news! You're saved.
There will be peace.
Your God is now King."
Everyone on guard duty,
sing and celebrate!
Look! You can see the LORD
returning to Zion.
Jerusalem, rise from the ruins!
Join in the singing.
The LORD has given comfort
to his people;
he comes to your rescue.
The LORD has shown all nations
his mighty strength;
now everyone will see
the saving power of our God.

Hebrews 1:1-4

Long ago in many ways and at many times God's prophets spoke his message to our ancestors. But now at last, God sent his Son to bring his message to us. God created the universe by his Son, and everything will someday belong to the Son. God's Son has all the brightness of God's own glory and is like him in every way. By his own mighty word, he holds the universe together.

After the Son had washed away our sins, he sat down at the right side of the glorious God in heaven. He had become much greater than the angels, and the name he was given is far greater than any of theirs.

John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the one
who is called the Word.

The Word was with God
and was truly God.

From the very beginning
the Word was with God.

And with this Word,
God created all things.

Nothing was made
without the Word.

Everything that was created
received its life from him,
and his life gave light
to everyone.

The light keeps shining
in the dark,
and darkness has never
put it out.

God sent a man named John,
who came to tell
about the light
and to lead all people
to have faith.

John wasn't that light.
He came only to tell
about the light.

The true light that shines
on everyone
was coming into the world.

The Word was in the world,
but no one knew him,
though God had made the world
with his Word.

He came into his own world,
but his own nation
did not welcome him.

Yet some people accepted him
and put their faith in him.

So he gave them the right
to be the children of God.

They were not God's children
by nature
or because

of any human desires.

God himself was the one
who made them his children.

The Word became
a human being
and lived here with us.

We saw his true glory,
the glory of the only Son
of the Father.

From him all the kindness
and all the truth of God
have come down to us.

Sunday 29th

Isaiah 63 7-9

I will tell about the kind deeds
the LORD has done.

They deserve praise!
to the people of Israel;
he has been kind and good.

The LORD rescued his people,
and said,

“They are mine.

They won’t betray me.”

It troubled the LORD
to see them in trouble,
and his angel saved them.

The LORD was truly merciful,
so he rescued his people.

He took them in his arms
and carried them all those years.

Hebrews 2:10-18

Everything belongs to God, and all things were created by his power. So God did the right thing when he made Jesus perfect by suffering, as Jesus led many of God’s children to be saved and to share in his glory. Jesus and the people he makes holy all belong to the same family. That is why

he isn't ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters. He even said to God,

"I will tell them your name
and sing your praises
when they come together
to worship."

He also said,

"I will trust God."

Then he said,

"Here I am with the children
God has given me."

We are people of flesh and blood. That is why Jesus became one of us. He died to destroy the devil, who had power over death. But he also died to rescue all of us who live each day in fear of dying. Jesus clearly did not come to help angels, but he did come to help Abraham's descendants. He had to be one of us, so that he could serve God as our merciful and faithful high priest and sacrifice himself for the forgiveness of our sins. And now that Jesus has suffered and was tempted, he can help anyone else who is tempted.

Matthew 2:13-23

After the wise men had gone, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Hurry and take the child and his mother to Egypt! Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is looking for the child and wants to kill him."

That night, Joseph got up and took his wife and the child to Egypt, where they stayed until Herod died. So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, "I called my son out of Egypt."

When Herod found out that the wise men from the east had tricked him, he was very angry. He gave orders for his men to kill all the boys who lived in or near Bethlehem and were two years old and younger. This was based on what he had learned from the wise men.

So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet Jeremiah had said,

"In Ramah a voice was heard
crying and weeping loudly.
Rachel was mourning
for her children,
and she refused
to be comforted,
because they were dead."

After King Herod died, an angel from the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph while he was still in Egypt. The angel said, "Get up and take the child and his mother back to Israel. The people who wanted to kill him are now dead."

Joseph got up and left with them for Israel. But when he heard that Herod's son Archelaus was now ruler of Judea, he was afraid to go there. Then in a dream he was told to go to Galilee, and they went to live there in the town of Nazareth. So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, "He will be called a Nazarene."