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DAILY *manna*

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GENERAL EDITOR

Rev Isaac Ong

Daily devotions for reading through the Bible

Dear *Daily Manna* readers,

Welcome again to another quarter of *Daily Manna* readings. In the readings for the last quarter of 2009, we will cover the history of Israel from the united kingdom under Saul, David and Solomon to the division into the North and South Kingdoms, and their eventual collapse under the Assyrians and Babylonians. We will also cover the last three books in the historical section of the Old Testament, namely Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. Ezra and Nehemiah record the history of the children of Israel after they had returned from exile. Esther is the story of a Jewish girl who, by the providence of God, saved the Jews from genocide.

The lesson in the records of the Jewish people is that while we are prone to sin and stray from Him, God is “ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness” [Nehemiah 9:17].

A note to new Daily Manna readers

In this book, you will find a reading plan that will guide you through reading the Bible in two years. You will also find a simple exposition based on the reading of the day. From the day’s Bible passages, *Daily Manna* highlights biblical principles which may be applied in the Christian’s daily living. We pray that the *Daily Manna* readings will make your reading through the Bible a more meaningful experience. Over the next two years, our focus will be on the Old Testament with the aim of giving you a more in-depth study of the Old Testament books.

A step-by-step approach

1. Read the day’s Bible chapters assigned in *Daily Manna*.
2. Review the Bible chapters to get an overview of what you have just read.
3. Read the accompanying devotions in *Daily Manna* and reflect on the lessons learnt.
4. Pray and ask God to help you apply His Word to your life.

In His grace,
Pastor Isaac Ong
Calvary B-P Church

1 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
1 Chronicles 1

LESSON
**Generations of God's
people**

VERSE 28
*The sons of Abraham;
Isaac, and Ishmael.*

The opening chapter of First Chronicles is a record of the genealogy of God's people from Adam downwards. In the list of names, we are familiar with only a few of them. Why would the Bible include names of people whom it has little mention, and whose lives are unknown to us?

These names are placed in the Holy Scriptures for several reasons. It proves that the biblical accounts are historical. A person living in the time of Chronicles could trace his ancestors all the way back to Adam. The genealogical records also served to authenticate a person's claim to a particular lineage. The genealogy was used to root out those who falsely claimed that they came from the line of the Levites [Nehemiah 7:64].

Another interesting fact is that the genealogy is divided into two main families: the one that belongs to God and the one that does not. We were all born into the family of Adam, the federal head of all mankind. Because of his disobedience, we are all sinners by nature [Romans 5:12]. As part of Adam's family, we are alienated from God. However, our Lord Jesus is the last Adam, and by Christ, we who are sinners "receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness" [Romans 5:17].

In the end, it is the genealogy in Chronicles that counts. Your name must be found in the only genealogy that matters—the Lamb's Book of Life.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES I

QUESTION **Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life?**

2 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

1 Chronicles 2–3

LESSON

**The human ancestry
of Jesus**

I CHRONICLES 3:15

*And the sons of Josiah were,
the firstborn Johanan,
the second Jehoiakim, the
third Zedekiah, the fourth
Shallum.*

The genealogy in First Chronicles has certain interesting points. It begins with Adam, followed by Abraham, and his two sons, Isaac and Ishamel, with Isaac given the pre-eminence even though he was the younger. The next sections focus on Esau (Israel) and David, who is mentioned as the seventh son of Jesse. There are more details on David's children. We know not only of their names but also the mothers who bore them and the places of their birth. Special attention was given because from David's line would come the promised Messiah.

When we consider the genealogy carefully, we will find that God's plan for the salvation of sinners had been meticulously set forth. Nothing has been able to thwart the plan of God.

Even Jeconiah, who was written off as childless [Jeremiah 22:30], did not stop God's plan. In Luke's genealogy of our Lord Jesus, the line of Jesus goes through Nathan rather than Solomon. And through Nathan, Mary, fulfilling the prophecy in Genesis 3:15, where God said that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. This important truth also proves that Joseph of Nazareth is not the father of Jesus but that Jesus must be virgin born.

God does not leave anything out of His Word. Every word recorded is true and has a purpose, even if we don't understand it. The Bible is simple enough for the beginner to read and yet is challenging enough for those who study it throughout their lives.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 2

THOUGHT

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. – John 5:39

3 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

1 Chronicles 4–5

LESSON

**Walking closely with
God**

I CHRONICLES 4:10

*And Jabez called on the
God of Israel, saying, Oh
that thou wouldest bless
me indeed, and enlarge my
coast, and that thine hand
might be with me, and
that thou wouldest keep
me from evil, that it may
not grieve me! And God
granted him that which he
requested.*

The person who stands out in the record is Jabez. His mother bore him in pain and thus named him “Pain”. However, Jabez did not want to live in pain throughout his life and he knew that God could change it. For this reason, Jabez prayed to God to bless him and to keep him from evil. God answered Jabez.

There is nothing wrong in asking for material blessings. But when we are richly blessed by God, we must not stray away. For this reason, we should always ask God to keep us from evil. We are all born as sinners. Taking the path of evil is our human nature. Only God can keep us from evil. We cannot do it with our human strength no matter how strong our willpower is.

We read the contrast in 1 Chronicles 5:25 that the children of Manasseh “transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land”. This means that they sinned against God by worshipping the idols of the local people. They forgot that their blessings were from God. For their ingratitude, they were taken captives by the king of Assyria.

God even takes care of the sparrows and He will surely take care of us. However, we choose to take care of ourselves, ignoring God’s laws. So we end up as captives like the Israelites. We become captives of sin.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 3–4

THOUGHT

Jesus paid for our sins with his life. Would He leave us defenceless?

4 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
1 Chronicles 6–7

LESSON
**God blessing the
faithful**

I CHRONICLES 6:1
*The sons of Levi; Gershon,
Kohath, and Merari.*

When God delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt, His intention was that they would be to Him a “kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” [Exodus 19:6]. But that was not to be because of the sin of the people. God then chose a tribe out of the 12 in Israel to perform the role of priests to the people. The Levites were important because they acted as the intermediary between the people and God.

Their behaviour therefore had a very deep influence on the people. Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas, behaved very badly. As a result, the people were led astray, and both sons and Eli died on the same day [1 Samuel 4:17–18]. God was displeased and replaced Eli with Samuel who was also a Levite but from another family. “And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings” [Hosea 4:9].

The other prominent tribes mentioned here were Issachar and Benjamin. They were “mighty warriors” [1 Chronicles 7:2]. However, we read the records of the other tribes as well.

Why is there a need to record all of them? The past glories were recorded to show us that people may change but the principles remain unchanged. Blessing, influence and power will always be found among God’s people when He and they are rightly related. God gives victory to those who are faithful to Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 5–6

THOUGHT

Do not pray that God will be on our side. Obey so that we will be on God’s side.

5 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

1 Chronicles 8–9

LESSON

**Only God remains as
King forever.**

I CHRONICLES 9:1

*So all Israel were reckoned
by genealogies; and, behold,
they were written in the
book of the kings of Israel
and Judah, who were
carried away to Babylon for
their transgression.*

We have read the record of the Israelites. The tribe of Benjamin were “mighty warriors”. (Saul, the first king of Israel, was from this tribe.) The Levites were priests and kings from Judah.

Sadly, all did not last forever and we read that they ended in tragedy because of unfaithfulness resulting in sin. God intended to be the King of Israel but the people wanted a human king. God’s original plan was for the Israelites to be represented to God by a priest, who is their mediator, approaching God on their behalf, in all his humanity. God is represented to his people by the king, who is the viceroy, governing them with divine authority. The record shows to us that the rule of frail human nature will end eventually.

Thank God for His wisdom in sending Jesus Christ. Jesus is both human as well as God. As human, he is our high priest. He is the only mediator between God and man. He is the only one able to offer the perfect sacrifice once and for all. It is the shedding of His precious blood that made us all guiltless before the Almighty God. He is unlike the human priest who has to first offer sacrifice for his own sins. Jesus is sinless and thus there is no need for Him to sacrifice anything for Himself.

For this reason we have an everlasting kingdom that never ends. Have you accepted Jesus as King of your life?

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 7**

THOUGHT

**It is most important to be obedient to the Lord
and He will bless you with your work for Him.**

6 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
1 Chronicles 10–11

LESSON
**Fearing God
and keeping His
commandments**

I CHRONICLES 11:9
*So David waxed greater
and greater: for the LORD of
hosts was with him.*

In 1 Chronicles 10, we read of King Saul's tragic death and God's turning over of the kingdom to David. The reason for Saul's downfall was that he was unfaithful to God. He neither kept God's commandments nor sought His guidance [1 Chronicles 10:13–14]. In contrast, as we will see in subsequent chapters, David was faithful, obedient and often sought the Lord's counsel. This character made him fit to be a true ruler over the people of Israel.

David had the unified support of the people. His first act as king was to capture the citadel at Jerusalem, thereby finishing the work of the conquest begun by Joshua. He made Jerusalem his capital and from there on, this former shepherd boy went on and became great because "the Lord of hosts was with him" [1 Chronicles 11:9]. God blessed him with a strong army and many courageous and able lieutenants.

The way God dealt with the first two kings of Israel is consistent with the way He dealt with the other kings and the nation as a whole. He blesses those who love Him and keep His commandments but "repayeth them that hate Him to their face, to destroy them" [Deuteronomy 7:10]. This should serve as a valuable reminder to all who want to serve God, especially those in positions of leadership.

"And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes" [Luke 12:47].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 8

THOUGHT

**To the Lord our God belong mercies and
forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against
him. – Daniel 9:9**

BIBLE LESSON
1 Chronicles 12–13

LESSON
Joy in the church

I CHRONICLES 12:38
All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king.

Chapter 12 paints a beautiful picture of the beginning of King David's glorious reign over a united Israel. It stands in sharp contrast to the dark days that had gone before. During the time of Judges, the tribes went their different ways and everyone "did that which was right in his own eyes". Repeatedly, God had to chastise them through their enemies. Then the people rejected God's rule and demanded a king, just like the nations around them. Israel's first king, Saul, was a disaster. But David was different.

The people, happy to see the days of Saul behind them, united themselves behind David. 1 Chronicles 12 compiles a list of the different military groups that came to serve under David while he was still at Hebron and had not yet become king. A sizeable army of 300,000 descended on Hebron to anoint David and the chapter ends with these glorious words: "For there was joy in Israel."

Like Israel during David's time, our church comprises individuals and families of diverse backgrounds and personalities. But we too can experience this joy if we have godly men to lead us, men who watch over our souls and are ready to give an account to the Master.

On our part, we must "come with a perfect heart" [1 Chronicles 12:38] and be humble and willing to submit to their rule, so that they will not find it a burden but a joy to minister unto us [Hebrews 13:17].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 9

Thought

In what ways have you been supporting and encouraging your leaders?

BIBLE LESSON
1 Chronicles 14–15

LESSON
Following
instructions

I CHRONICLES 15:15
And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD.

Chapter 14 records David's victories over the Philistines. Did you notice that before each battle, David sought God's guidance [1 Chronicles 14: 10, 14]? David's secret of success was that he trusted in the Lord to direct his path and did not lean unto his own understanding [Proverbs 3: 5–6].

However, when it came to liturgical matters, he was slothful and incurred God's wrath. We read earlier of David's first disastrous attempt to move the Ark of God to Jerusalem. He failed to consult God's explicit instructions as set out in Numbers 4:15. Consequently, he made several fundamental mistakes, like placing the Ark on an oxcart instead of having it carried on the shoulders of Levites, with poles inserted into the rings on the chest.

But the second attempt was a success and the Ark of the Covenant was brought home "with joy" [1 Chronicles 15:25]. The difference this time was that David and the elders consulted God's Word and made the necessary preparations before carrying out the task exactly as God had instructed.

The lesson for us is clear. In all our affairs, we are to seek God's direction through prayer. When it comes to doing God's work, we must make doubly sure that we follow His instructions as spelt out in His Word. Do not be too quick to bring worldly methods and devices into the Church without first praying about it and consulting the Scriptures. Above all, hide His Word in your heart that you may not sin against Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 10

THOUGHT

God's work must be done God's way.

9 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
1 Chronicles 16–17

LESSON
Amazing grace

I CHRONICLES 17:16
*And David the king came
and sat before the LORD,
and said, Who am I, O
LORD God, and what is
mine house, that thou hast
brought me hitherto?*

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound; that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.” Even non-Christians are familiar with these immortal lines from John Newton’s hymn, “Amazing Grace”. Did you know that this hymn was inspired by verses 16 and 17 of 1 Chronicles 17? Like King David, Newton, a former slave trader, was moved by God’s amazing grace to see his own unworthiness and smallness.

These two verses were part of David’s prayer of gratitude in response to God’s promises in what is called the Davidic Covenant. God had declined David’s request to build a temple to house the Ark of the Covenant, saying that his son and successor (Solomon) would build the Temple instead. God further promised that the throne of this kingdom would be established forever, meaning that the Messiah would come from David’s line.

Earlier, David had composed a psalm to praise God for all that He had done as the Ark was installed in Jerusalem. He exhorted all Israel to sing the Lord’s greatness and to seek His face. They were to remember His deeds and the marvellous works that He had done in the past, as well as His covenant to their fathers.

Like David and John Newton, Christians should humble themselves and never cease to praise our great God for His amazing grace towards us unworthy sinners by sending the Lord Jesus to die on the Cross for our sins.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 11

THOUGHT

**‘Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, And
grace will lead me home.**

10 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
1 Chronicles 18–19

LESSON
**Victorious Christian
living**

I CHRONICLES 18:6
*Then David put garrisons
in Syria-damascus; and
the Syrians became David's
servants, and brought gifts.
Thus the LORD preserved
David whithersoever he
went.*

Chapters 18 and 19 record the numerous victories that David's armies had won against Israel's many hostile neighbours. Up till then, sin and disobedience had kept Israel in servitude under those whom God had intended for her to subdue. Now, tribute was sent from these Gentile nations to Israel in recognition of her superiority and power, and David dedicated the tribute to the Lord's service.

God's promise to Abraham centuries earlier had been fulfilled. Abraham's descendants now occupied all the land from the Euphrates River in the north to the river of Egypt in the south. To the west, all the Philistine land was under Israelite domination while to the east, on the other side of the Jordan River, the Moabites had been subjugated. And David ruled wisely. He was not only a good general but also an efficient administrator.

What was the "secret" of David's success? The answer is found in the words, "The Lord preserved David whithersoever he went" [1 Chronicles 18:6, 13]. Just as He was with Joseph in the dungeons of Egypt [Genesis 39:23], so was He with David in the palaces of Jerusalem.

It does not matter what your estate is in life. As long as you trust and honour God, and serve him faithfully, He will cause you to be "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" [Psalm 1:3].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 12–13

THOUGHT

**For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous:
but the way of the ungodly shall perish. – Psalm
1:6**

11 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
1 Chronicles 20–21

LESSON
The sin of idleness

I CHRONICLES 21:1
*And Satan stood up against
Israel, and provoked David
to number Israel.*

The account we read in 1 Chronicles 20–21 takes place after David was delivered from all the fighting and conflicts in the earlier chapters. Joab took the troops out for battle against the Ammonites during the spring season and destroyed their capital, Rabbah. All this time, David waited at Jerusalem.

While there, David committed his sin of adultery with Bathsheba [2 Samuel 11:2]. He was complacent in his duty as king and in his commitment to God. Instead of leading his troops in battle, he was relaxing in luxurious pleasures. He let his guard down and gave Satan the opportunity to lure him into sin.

Christians are in the world but not of the world. The Bible warns: “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” [1 John 2:16]. Those who think they can withstand temptations are most likely to fall. We are to “flee also youthful lusts” [2 Timothy 2:22] and not to purposely place ourselves in situations where temptations abound.

Charles Spurgeon rightly said that “idleness and luxury are the devil’s jackals, and find him abundant prey”. The person who falls prey to temptation is like one who is caught in a complex web, where escape is tough. But our God is merciful to forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteousness if we repent [1 John 1:9].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 14–15

THOUGHT **An idle mind is the devil’s playground.**

12 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
1 Chronicles 22–23

LESSON
**The building of the
Temple**

I CHRONICLES 22:1
*Then David said, This is
the house of the LORD God,
and this is the altar of the
burnt offering for Israel.*

We read previously that God had punished David for taking the census but David found favour in God's sight again and he was commanded to "set up an altar unto the Lord" [1 Chronicles 21:18]. The building of the altar would become an integral part of the Temple. God had determined that David could not build the Temple because he had "shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars" [1 Chronicles 22:8]. David's son, Solomon, would see to the project, as he was a man of peace in God's sight [1 Chronicles 22:7–10].

Exciting times were in store as David made elaborate preparations for the construction of the Temple by Solomon [1 Chronicles 23:26–29]. He was enthusiastic, dedicated and passionate about ensuring the success of the project.

Organising the construction and operations of the Temple was no easy task. 1 Chronicles 22–23 describe in detail the exact requirements. It was a huge project that required skilful organisation. The logistics of gathering the materials were massive. There were "iron in abundance" and bronze in quantities beyond weighing [1 Chronicles 22:3]. All these materials were gathered to build God's house—it was to be magnificent and well-known throughout all the lands [1 Chronicles 22:5].

Similarly, God expects the best from us. He is the Source of all our blessings. Do we use them for His glory so that we become channels of blessing to others in need?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 16

PRAYER

Dear Lord, all that I am, all that I have, help me use them for Your glory. Fill me with Your love and power.

13 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
1 Chronicles 24–25

LESSON
Orderly service

I CHRONICLES 24:19
These were the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the LORD, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him.

After making detailed plans for the construction of the Temple, important jobs in the Temple needed to be filled. Tasks were to be carried out in an organised manner. Specific job scopes were assigned to the priests [1 Chronicles 24:1–19] and Levites [1 Chronicles 24:20–31] according to their families.

Shemaiah, a Levite and law officer, noted the names of the 24 appointed chiefs of priests and drew lots to determine their order of service. While the priests were responsible for matters relating to worship, the Levites were to attend to the priests in the service of the house of God. The Levites were appointed as musicians, gatekeepers, treasurers, and officers and judges.

Our God is a God of order, not confusion. He is a God of peace. Each of us may have different functions and roles in the Church but we are equally important in the body of Christ, in the order of worship. Whatever our roles, God's Word reminds us "that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another" [1 Corinthians 12:25]. We are to build up the Church in a way that pleases God.

Things run smoothly when every member knows and functions in his place. Whether we are called to be preachers, leaders, musicians, Sunday-school teachers or kitchen helpers, God expects the best from us. Are we doing our part in the service of the house of God?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 17

THOUGHT

Be faithful in everything. No task can be too small when we are serving Christ!

14 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

1 Chronicles 26–27

LESSON

Taking care of God's house

I CHRONICLES 26:20

And of the Levites, Ahijah was over the treasures of the house of God, and over the treasures of the dedicated things.

Although the Temple had not been built, roles were assigned to the Levites in anticipation of Solomon's reign. Four classes of porters were appointed to guard the four gates of the Temple [1 Chronicles 26:1]. Shelemiah took charge of the eastern gate; Zechariah, the northern gate; Obed-edom, the southern gate; and Shuppim, the western gate. They were the captains of the porters at the different stations.

The treasury department of the house of God was under the charge of Ahijah [1 Chronicles 26:20]. The Levites who were assigned to guard the treasures were neither musicians nor porters. They belonged to the 24,000 and were assigned special services regarding the sacred treasures. Maintaining the Temple daily would require much work. Daily items such as flour, wine, oil, salt and fuel needed to be replenished. The sacred vestments and utensils had to be kept in good condition.

God provides all things for us. How is our attitude in caring for the things He has given? We are accountable to Him for what we do with them—not only in our personal lives but also in God's house. That includes the way we handle resources, equipment and anything that He has provided for the Church. Everything should be done and used for His glory.

Just as we take special care of the things that are precious to us, let us be responsible stewards of the things of God's house. The world sees our attitude towards God through our attitude towards His things.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 18

THOUGHT

**Every believer should be a walking sermon. –
Matthew 5:16**

15 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

1 Chronicles 28–29

LESSON

A heart of gratitude

I CHRONICLES 29:9

*Then the people rejoiced,
for that they offered
willingly, because with
perfect heart they offered
willingly to the LORD: and
David the king also rejoiced
with great joy.*

The concluding chapters of First Chronicles signal the transfer of responsibility for the building of the Temple to Solomon. In his exhortation to the people, David honoured and glorified God. He told them to be obedient and faithful to God so that blessings would come upon them.

The building of the Temple was a massive project that required vast amounts of resources. David challenged the people to contribute voluntarily to show their gratitude to God. It is heartening to note the people's response. When David asked, "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?" [1 Chronicles 29:5], the people responded by offering their service and gifts wholeheartedly. They rejoiced because they did all these with a perfect heart.

What is our response when God calls us to serve in a certain ministry or shows us a need that we can help to meet? Do we gladly respond to the call? When Christ called the disciples to follow Him, they immediately stopped what they were doing and obeyed.

We show our gratitude and love to God when we give of our time and resources willingly towards His work. Supporting the ministries of the local church is the responsibility and privilege of every believer. When all of us do our part by offering our service and resources joyfully unto the Lord, much more can be accomplished. With the active support of every believer, the Church can be a powerful lighthouse for Christ in the neighbourhood and beyond.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 19

THOUGHT

God loves a cheerful giver. – 2 Corinthians 9:7

16 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

2 Chronicles 1–2

LESSON

Solomon's wisdom

2 CHRONICLES 1:7

In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee.

First Chronicles focuses mainly on the life of David. At the end of the book, David established Solomon as his successor. Second Chronicles focuses on the lives of the kings of Judah, from Solomon to the return of the Jewish remnant from the Babylonian captivity.

Once Solomon secured the throne, he ordered his subordinates to assemble at Gibeon, where the Tabernacle was located. He offered burnt offerings to express his devotion and loyalty to God. God appeared to him that night and said to him: "Ask what I shall give thee" [2 Chronicles 1:7b]. Solomon did not ask for material blessings or selfish things like glory and honour. He asked for wisdom and knowledge.

Wisdom is the ability to make good decisions based on proper discernment and judgement. Knowledge refers to practical know-how, necessary for handling day-to-day matters. Solomon needed wisdom and knowledge to govern his country. God was pleased and granted Solomon what he asked for, as well as gave to him the things he did not ask for, such as wealth, honour and glory. Solomon's wealth encompassed luxuries such as silver and gold, houses and chariots. Solomon put the needs of his people first.

How can we acquire wisdom? We must ask God for it [James 1:5]. We must devote ourselves wholeheartedly to the study and application of God's Word in our lives. God's Word is the source of divine wisdom.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
1 CHRONICLES 20

QUESTION

What would you ask of God?

17 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

2 Chronicles 3–4

LESSON

**Building the house of
God**

2 CHRONICLES 3:1

*Then Solomon began to
build the house of the Lord
at Jerusalem in mount
Moriah, where the Lord
appeared unto David his
father, in the place that
David had prepared in the
threshingfloor of Ornan the
Jebusite.*

King David wanted to build a temple for the Lord. However, the Lord told him not to do it, as he was a warrior. Instead, Solomon would build the Temple. Before David died, he made plans for the Temple and helped gather many building materials. He assembled stonemasons and construction workers, and accumulated a large building fund. The location selected for the temple was Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. This site is currently occupied by the Mosque of Omar. It was on this site that Abraham nearly sacrificed his son, Isaac.

Solomon's activity in the building of the Temple was real. It expressed the devotion of his heart. The construction of the Temple began in the fourth year of his reign, with more than 150,000 workmen and almost unlimited resources. It would take more than seven years to complete.

Solomon followed the plan of God in great detail and used the best quality of materials. The whole interior of the sanctuary—and almost everything in it—was covered with gold. The walls were encrusted with precious stones [2 Chronicles 3:6]. The bronze furnishings were mainly employed outside such as the altar of burnt offering and 10 lavers [2 Chronicles 4:6].

All these details about the Temple demonstrated the care, devotion and the kind of service Solomon gave to God. He gave his best and his all to the Lord. Are you fully committed to tasks given to you?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
1 CHRONICLES 21–22

PRAYER

**Help me to be dedicated in my service for You,
Lord.**

18 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
2 Chronicles 5–6

LESSON
**The prayer of
Solomon**

2 CHRONICLES 6:40

*Now, my God, let, I beseech
thee, thine eyes be open,
and let thine ears be attent
unto the prayer that is
made in this place.*

Once the Temple was completed and the furnishings were in place, the final task was to move the Ark into the Temple. This event would symbolise the beginning of a new era. From now on, the people of Israel would worship God in the Temple. It would be their permanent place of worship.

The celebration was accompanied by sacrifices. The people praised the Lord, saying, “For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever” [2 Chronicles 5:13c]. The Temple was filled with the glory of God [2 Chronicles 5:14b].

Solomon reminded the people of the occasion and led them in prayer. He recalled how God had chosen his family to build the Temple. He looked above and asked God to fulfil the covenant promises that He had made with David. He pleaded for God to keep His promises to David as long as his descendants obeyed Him. The promises included the coming of Jesus Christ, Who was born of the house of David. He looked to the future and asked God to help His people in their various trials and to forgive them when they sinned. He also asked God to help the Gentiles. It was God’s desire that Israel would be a blessing to all the world [Genesis 12:1–3]. Solomon ended his prayer by asking God to forgive Israel. He asked God to bless everyone present: the priests, the people and himself.

What kind of prayer do you make each day?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
1 CHRONICLES 23–24

PRAYER

Teach me to pray, O Lord.

19 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
2 Chronicles 7–8

LESSON
Obey and live

2 CHRONICLES 7:17

And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgements.

As soon as Solomon had finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and sacrifices. Then, the glory of the Lord filled the Temple. When the people saw the glory of God coming down, they bowed and worshipped Him. The dedication feast lasted for seven days.

When Solomon returned to his palace, the Lord appeared to him at night with promises and warnings. If Solomon would love and obey the Lord, He would establish his throne. If he and his people forsook the Lord and went after other gods, they would be carried into exile and God would also reject the Temple. God said, “For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there for ever” [2 Chronicles 7:16a]. This implied that the Temple would last forever. However, we know that it was destroyed by the Babylonian army in 586 BC. The reason is that this promise of God was conditional, based on Israel’s faithfulness and obedience to God’s commandment [2 Chronicles 7:17–18].

God made it clear to Solomon that if he followed Him, he and his descendants would prosper. If he did not, his kingdom would be destroyed. In Deuteronomy 27–28, these conditions were clearly stated before all the people.

Sin is deceptively attractive. Solomon eventually turned away from God. The lesson is that turning away from God brings suffering, punishment and ultimately destruction. God’s command to us is to obey Him and to live according to His will.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 25

PRAYER

If ye love me, keep my commandments. – John 14:15

20 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
2 Chronicles 9–10

LESSON
**The richest and
wisest king**

2 CHRONICLES 9:22
*And king Solomon passed
all the kings of the earth in
riches and wisdom.*

Solomon started well in building the Temple. “So the house of the Lord was perfected” [2 Chronicles 8:16b]. The Lord blessed him in all his business. We read of his sea trade in partnership with Hiram. The ships travelled between Eziongeber in the southern end of his country and Elath on the northern coast of the Red Sea. He used these ships to increase his gold supply [2 Chronicles 8:17–18].

Solomon became very wealthy. He had all his drinking vessels made of gold. His throne was overlaid with pure gold. He made shields, large and small, of gold for display, not defence, and hung “them in the house of the forest of Lebanon”. Solomon became the richest king on earth. He died after he had reigned for 40 years and was succeeded by his son, Rehoboam [2 Chronicles 9:31].

The Chronicler does not mention Solomon’s apostasy—how he turned away from God [1 Kings 10:26–11:43]. The book leaves him at the height of his glory. According to Solomon, wisdom is better than wealth [Proverbs 3:13–15; 8:10–11], although most people would prefer money. He said, “If you want wisdom, you must seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasure.”

Wisdom comes in two ways. It is a divine gift, and also the result of seeking and searching. If we need wisdom, we should ask God [James 1:5]. God gives to those who earnestly seek for it.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
1 CHRONICLES 26

REMINDER **Choose wisdom over wealth.**

21 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
2 Chronicles 11–12

LESSON
**Heeding the voice of
God**

2 CHRONICLES 12:2
*And it came to pass, that
in the fifth year of king
Rehoboam Shishak king
of Egypt came up against
Jerusalem, because they
had transgressed against
the Lord,*

The author of Chronicles focused on the positive aspects of the rulers of the Southern Kingdom, Judah. There are many practical lessons that we can learn from their successes. However, we ought to take equal note of their failures too. The accountability and responsibility of those who are in leadership positions—whether in the government, company or family—are grave and great towards the people under their leadership.

It was humiliating to King Rehoboam that he lost the 10 tribes and substantial territory. It was natural for him to gather all his forces to fight against Israel and to regain the lost territory. But he heeded the voice of God and decided not to proceed with military action [2 Chronicles 11:4]. With his decision, he avoided the loss of his people's lives.

For the first three years of his rule, Rehoboam made available his land to be a place of worship of the only true God. He welcomed not only the priests and Levites but all the people of the tribes of Israel. It was his decision to place God in priority that he became strong [2 Chronicles 11:13–17].

Sadly, after a good start, Rehoboam forsook the law of the Lord and disobeyed the Lord. All Israel followed his disobedience [2 Chronicles 12:1]. Because of this, King Shishak of Egypt invaded, went into Jerusalem and took away many treasures. When those in leadership decided to repent, God delivered them and did not destroy them [2 Chronicles 12:7].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
1 CHRONICLES 27

PRAYER

**Lord, let me heed Thy voice and not forsake
Thee.**

22 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
2 Chronicles 13–14

LESSON
**Seek the Lord our
God**

2 CHRONICLES 13:18
*Thus the children of Israel
were brought under at that
time, and the children of
Judah prevailed, because
they relied upon the Lord
God of their fathers.*

Abijah succeeded his father Rehoboam and became king of Judah. He reigned for three years, and it was in his reign that there was an all-out war between Judah and Israel. He led an army of 400,000 against Jeroboam, who had an army twice as large.

Compare the theocracy of both kingdoms. Israel worshipped golden calves as gods, cast off the priests of the Lord, set up priests according to the practice of a foreign land and forsook God [2 Chronicles 13:8–9, 11]. Judah, on the other hand, worshipped the Lord, did not forsake Him, followed the law of Moses and kept the commandments of the Lord. The outcome was obvious. Judah relied on the Lord. Jeroboam was smitten by God and never recovered.

After Abijah, his son Asa succeeded the throne. Asa did right in the sight of God. He led and commanded his people to seek the Lord and to obey the Law. Under his leadership, the people sought to follow the Lord. The Lord gave them peace and prosperity [2 Chronicles 14:7].

Then Zerah of Ethiopia came to fight against Asa. The Ethiopian army numbered to a million. Asa trusted God fully and prayed, “Help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee” [2 Chronicles 14:11]. Asa led his people to seek the Lord their God, and He gave them victory, peace and prosperity.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
1 CHRONICLES 28

PRAYER

Lord, let me be mindful of my position and be a good leader to seek Thee.

23 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
2 Chronicles 15–16

LESSON
**The peril of success:
Ignoring providence**

2 CHRONICLES 16:9
*For the eyes of the Lord
run to and fro throughout
the whole earth, to shew
himself strong in the behalf
of them whose heart is
perfect toward him. Herein
thou hast done foolishly:
therefore from henceforth
thou shalt have wars.*

For the first 35 years of King Asa's reign, there was peace, prosperity, joy and material wealth. This is the desire of every king and leader. They were enjoying these blessings not because of their military strength or abundant natural resources.

Asa led a spiritual revival. He sought after the Lord, took away and broke down idols. He led his people to return to the Lord and they pledged to follow God with all their heart and with all their soul [2 Chronicles 15:12]. The result? "And there was no more war unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa" [2 Chronicles 15:19]. God blessed them for they set their heart right with God.

On his thirty-sixth year, when Baasha, king of Israel threatened, Asa decided to face his enemy on his own and not to rely on the Lord Whom he had trusted for years. He decided to take the treasures that belonged to the Lord and form an alliance with a foreign nation, Syria. He had dedicated these treasures to God earlier. Asa, as king, had the power to dispose of the resources under him. But he abused his power and took the treasures of the Lord for his own gain. Though his plan was successful, the Lord said to Asa, "Thou has done foolishly" [2 Chronicles 16:9].

How often did we make similar foolish decisions, using the treasures, talents and time that belong to God?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
1 CHRONICLES 29

PRAYER

Lord, forgive us if we have made such foolish decisions.

24 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
2 Chronicles 17–18

LESSON
**The peril of success:
Ignoring prudence**

2 CHRONICLES 17:3
*And the Lord was with
Jehoshaphat, because he
walked in the first ways
of his father David, and
sought not unto Baalim.*

After Asa, his son Jehoshaphat took over as king of Judah. He ruled the country wisely and kept God's commandment. He sent his officials together with Levites to all the cities in his country and taught his people the laws of God. He took away idol worship. He strengthened and established a strong military force. God blessed Judah with peace and she was great among her neighbours. Jehoshaphat was blessed with riches, wealth and honour [2 Chronicles 17:5; 18:1].

2 Chronicles 18 also gives us a warning on the perils of success. By all accounts, Jehoshaphat was a successful king, but success was also the cause of his downfall. He established an alliance with King Ahab of Israel, the northern kingdom. Ahab was the king who did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him [1 Kings 16:30]. In spite of Jehoshaphat arranging for his son Jehoram to marry Ahab's daughter [2 Chronicles 18:1; 2 Kings 8:18], Jehoshaphat would not follow in the ways of Israel.

Jehoshaphat then went to Samaria—the place of golden calves, pagan gods and idols—and enjoyed the honour that was afforded him. Jehoshaphat also decided to join Ahab to fight against Syria. Finally, Jehoshaphat ignored the advice of the prophet Micaiah.

Jehoshaphat allied with Ahab to war against Syria and they were both defeated, as prophesied. Ahab was killed. God protected Jehoshaphat and he returned to Jerusalem safely. But Jehoshaphat had incurred the wrath of God. Jehoshaphat's success led to his self-confidence and his self-confidence led to his downfall.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 1–2

CHALLENGE

Even in our success, continue to walk closely with God.

25 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
2 Chronicles 19–20

LESSON
God of our fathers

2 CHRONICLES 20:17
*Ye shall not need to fight in
this battle: set yourselves,
stand ye still, and see
the salvation of the Lord
with you, O Judah and
Jerusalem: fear not, nor be
dismayed; to morrow go out
against them: for the Lord
will be with you.*

King Jehosphaphat set his heart to seek after God [2 Chronicles 19:3] and governed his country based on the law of God. He personally went from city to city to lead his people to return to the God of their fathers. He instructed his officials to fear the Lord and to discharge their duties faithfully and with a perfect heart. He had gained the trust and support of his people. When he was faced with the invading army from Syria, his people gathered solidly behind him. They trusted his leadership.

Syria came with a great multitude. What was the response of Jehosphaphat? He was fearful but he sought the Lord and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. The people of Judah gathered together to pray for deliverance. Who is the God of their fathers? In his prayer, Jehosphaphat revealed that God ruled over all, including the kingdoms of the heathen. He is all-powerful and none is able to withstand Him. Above all, He hears and helps.

When Jahaziel declared that the battle is not theirs but God's, and told the people not to fear but to see the salvation of the Lord, Jehosphaphat and the people bowed before the Lord in worship. God smote the army of Syria and delivered Judah.

How powerful is our God? He is all-powerful. Is there a crisis in your life that He could not handle? Absolutely none. Then, how much do you trust Him?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 3–4

PRAISE

**Lord, we praise Thee for Thou art a great and
fearful God.**

26 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
2 Chronicles 21–22

LESSON
**The chain reaction
of sin**

2 CHRONICLES 21:14
*Behold, with a great plague
will the Lord smite thy
people, and thy children,
and thy wives, and all thy
goods.*

In 2 Chronicles 21 we read of Jehoram's cruel reign and his horrible death. The first 11 verses detail Jehoram's murder of his brethren and his own idolatrous way, resulting in revolt from Edom and Libnah. Then came God's warning of the final judgement upon Jehoram's disobedience and evil deeds. 2 Chronicles 22 records the evil reigns of Jehoram's son, Ahaziah [v. 1–9] and Jehoram's wife, Athaliah [v. 10–12]. Ahaziah was misguided by his mother, who usurped the royal throne by destroying all the royal family of the house of Judah.

Jehoshaphat, one of the good kings of Judah, was succeeded by his son, Jehoram, one of the worst. Jehoram undid all the good done by his father and grandfather, Asa. With the daughter of Ahab as his wife, Jehoram committed spiritual whoredom.

How can a good father end up with a bad son? Foreign influence, wealthy family inheritance and personal irresponsibility caused Jehoram's downfall. It is true that power corrupts, more power corrupts more and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Jehoram abused his power by destroying all his brethren.

God's judgement on Jehoram serves as a warning to us not to trifle with sin. Take note of its chain reaction. When we sin, it does not just affect ourselves. Its repercussions go a long way—to the people, their children, their wives and all their goods. God does not treat sin lightly. His just nature demands judgement on sin. Let us be warned thereby.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 5

WARNING

Beware of the chain reaction of sin.

27 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

2 Chronicles 23

LESSON

**United as God's
people**

VERSE 16

*And Jehoiada made a
covenant between him,
and between all the people,
and between the king, that
they should be the LORD's
people.*

Jehoiada the priest busied himself with the preparations for the coronation of the rightful heir, Joash, to the throne. The people were informed of his plans and the kingdom set right [v. 1–11]. Athaliah the tyrant was then deposed and slain. Jehoiada made a covenant to subject themselves to God as His people. To show their devotion, the altars of Baal and its priest, Mattan, were destroyed. There was great rejoicing in the land after that [v. 12–21].

The two main characters in this chapter depict the difference between a believer and a non-believer. As a priest, Jehoiada sought to please the Lord in all his responsibilities towards God and man. At the other end, Athaliah, an idolater, was influential in the worship of Baal. This usurper-queen reigned in tyranny for six years.

As a church, we must be united in our service for God. The Lord's people must only seek to please Him in all that we do. Putting off strife and vainglory, we must learn to set our affections on things above [Colossians 3:2]. Only then can we focus on Christ-centred values.

Is your heart right with the Lord? If there is anything hindering your service for Him, pray and ask for cleansing, forgiveness and guidance. Serving our Lord together results in spiritual rejoicing among His people. Let us emulate the example of Jehoiada and dedicate ourselves to our Lord Jesus. Do not allow anything to distract you from your service to God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 6

CHALLENGE

Let us resolve to be united as God's people.

28 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

2 Chronicles 24

LESSON

Testimony of a strong church

VERSE 13

So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it.

Under the guidance of Jehoiada, Joash reigned in Judah well. His loyal devotion to God was shown in his repairing of the temple [v. 1–14]. However, after the death of Jehoiada, Joash strayed and committed the sin of apostasy. God’s judgement was seen in the death of Joash at the hands of his own servants [v. 15–27].

Before we can physically set the house of God in order, we must ensure that our own hearts are right before the Lord. Closet heart preparation comes first before outward public worship. When our motives in serving our Lord Jesus are not right, we are only offering lip service.

What is the physical condition of your church today? A neglected church building reflects poorly on its worshippers. First and foremost, every church member must be concerned about the state of his own spiritual welfare. God’s people in a loving church would then be united in seeking to promote the good of the church.

Do not assume that a well-established church is a spiritual church. Its good, physical state is an indication of the generosity of its members in maintaining it. What matters more is the heart condition of its members. When every member is zealously serving our Lord Jesus, then we will naturally be more willing to give of our material means to support the church. How faithfully have you been giving to your church?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 7

QUESTION

What’s the condition of your church?

29 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
2 Chronicles 25–26

LESSON
Being presumptuous

2 CHRONICLES 26:17
*And Azariah the priest
went in after him, and with
him fourscore priests of
the Lord, that were valiant
men.*

Amaziah started well in avenging his father's death but ended badly by worshipping the gods of Edom [2 Chronicles 25]. The next chapter describes Uzziah's good reign. However, his disobedience in assuming the office of a priest led to God's judgement of leprosy upon him.

The Israelites knew the law and duties of a priest. Offering incense and sacrifices belongs only to the tribe of Levi. No one is allowed to trespass and break this law, not even the king. The priest had the right to stop the king from doing so. We read of the courage of Azariah and his 80 priests, who were brave enough to withstand King Uzziah for his sin of presumption.

Saul, the first king of Israel, was guilty of such disobedience [1 Samuel 15]. His punishment was the loss of his kingdom. The emphasis of God's blessing for obedience and punishment for transgression is always true. The Christian life is based on obedience to God's Word. Beginning from the Garden of Eden, disobedience caused the downfall of Adam and Eve.

We have been guilty of being presumptuous now and then. Is it not true that we think someone is a believer just because he attends church regularly? A person is also not a Christian just because he is known for his good deeds. All these are important but we must first experience a personal relationship with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 8

PRAYER

Help me guard against the sin of presumption.

BIBLE LESSON
2 Chronicles 27–28

LESSON
**Allegiance to God
 only**

2 CHRONICLES 28:2
*For he walked in the ways
 of the kings of Israel, and
 made also molten images
 for Baalim.*

Not all the kings of Israel were bad. There were actually a few good kings in Judah. Jotham was one of them. He did right before the Lord, just like his father Uzziah. Though his reign was short, it was prosperous [2 Chronicles 27:1–9]. In comparison, Ahaz was a very wicked king. Today’s text describes his utter depravity and God’s hand of judgement upon him [2 Chronicles 28:1–8]. The Israelites had some reprieve when they heeded the prophet’s admonition not to enslave their brethren from Judah [2 Chronicles 28:9–15]. Ahaz’s idolatrous reign resulted in more trouble for his people [2 Chronicles 28:16–27].

Just like all the previous bad kings, Ahaz was guilty of the sin of idolatry. The heinous deeds committed by him are mentioned in 2 Chronicles 28:1–4, 2 Kings 16 and Isaiah 7. Child sacrifice was a part of the worship of Molech, practised during the days of Solomon [1 Kings 11:7]. What made it worse was the fact that he offered his own son [2 Kings 16:3] for sacrifice.

Our God is a jealous God [Exodus 34:14]. We must worship only Him. As His creation, He demands our allegiance and complete devotion. Spiritual adultery is an absolute abomination to God.

How sad that King Ahaz patterned his life after the evil kings of Israel. Idolatry was so strong during his reign that not even his son, the good King Hezekiah, was able to wipe it out. As God’s children, we must be careful of the company we keep.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 9

QUESTION

To whom do we owe our allegiance?

31 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
2 Chronicles 29–30

LESSON
First things first

2 CHRONICLES 29:5
And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place.

The apostate and compromiser, Ahaz, was succeeded by one of the most godly kings in Israel's history. Hezekiah fully understood that the problems his kingdom faced were the direct result of their sin and rebellion against God. He resolved in his heart to make things right with God.

In the face of a military threat from a superpower, Hezekiah's first order of business was not to strengthen his army but to restore temple worship. He called a meeting of the religious leaders and asked them to re-consecrate themselves to the Lord's service. He organised an orchestral group and appointed a Levitical singing choir. He also carried out the greatest Passover celebration since Solomon—obviously to remind his subjects that Jehovah is the great Deliverer.

Did you notice that the very first item on Hezekiah's "to do" list was a physical cleansing of the Temple [2 Chronicles 29:5, 15]? He obviously regarded outward, ritual cleansing as very important in true worship.

Many of our churches appear dirty. Sometimes, as Christians, we ought to feel ashamed with the way we treat God's house. Take a good look around the next time you go to church. Do you see facilities in a state of disrepair, dirty and stained furniture, or kids horsing around and behaving like they are in an amusement park? May God have mercy on us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 10–11

THOUGHT

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. – 1 John 1:9

1 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

2 Chronicles 31

LESSON

**Evidence of true
worship**

VERSE 5

*And as soon as the
commandment came
abroad, the children
of Israel brought in
abundance the firstfruits
of corn, wine, and oil,
and honey, and of all the
increase of the field; and the
tithe of all things brought
they in abundantly.*

In this chapter, we see evidence of true faith and worship. As soon as Hezekiah's orders went out, the Israelites responded generously with the firstfruits of the grain harvest, new wine, oil, honey—everything they grew. They did not hold back, turning over a tithe of everything. Beginning with the residents of Jerusalem, and then the people of the whole country, they brought in their gifts until there was more than enough.

And it all began with a king who loved and served his God with all his heart [v. 21] and who led by example—appointing a portion of his personal possession for God's use [v. 3].

The people of Judah demonstrated their faith through their works. Their actions clearly reflected the spiritual work going on in their hearts. We cannot study this chapter without asking: "What about our church?" Is there similar evidence of such faith in our worshippers? Are we experiencing, like the people of Judah, the joys of worship? Do we support our leaders wholeheartedly and joyfully? Whenever an appeal goes out for volunteers, do we respond heartily or do we see the same faithful few shouldering the bulk of the work of the church? Do we come to church to minister or to be ministered unto?

Can our pastor, like King David in 1 Chronicles 29:17, say, "And now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee?"

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 12-13

THOUGHT

Must the Pareto principle apply to a church, that is, 20% of the people doing 80% of the work?

2 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON
2 Chronicles 32

LESSON
Let God fight your battles.

VERSE 22
Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side.

There are many lessons to be learnt from just this one chapter. Do not fear the world but trust in our God Who will surely deliver you from your enemies. In the face of a threat of invasion from the mighty Assyrian army led by King Sennacherib, Hezekiah told his people to be strong and courageous, and not to be afraid or dismayed, “for there is more with us than with him: With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles” [v. 7–8].

True enough, God did fight the foolish and arrogant Sennacherib who boasted that no god could deliver any nation from his mighty forces. He utterly destroyed Sennacherib’s army so that he returned in ignominy to his own country without firing a single arrow, just as God had promised through his prophet Isaiah.

Second, beware of the sin of pride. The Bible records for our instruction many godly men of outstanding faith who fell prey to this insidious sin. After the spectacular defeat of Sennacherib, Hezekiah’s fame grew among the nations and he momentarily allowed pride to fill his heart. God had to send a fatal illness to humble him.

Third, repent and our merciful God will forgive. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust” [Psalm 103:13–14]. And thus God forgave Hezekiah and continued to bless him and his people richly.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 14

THOUGHT

As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. – Psalm 55:16

BIBLE LESSON*2 Chronicles 33–34***LESSON****Our merciful and
longsuffering God****2 CHRONICLES 34:27**

Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 15**

THOUGHT

Our God is merciful and will forgive all who come to Him in true repentance. He forgave the good king Hezekiah as well as his evil son, Manasseh. Likewise, He turned away from pouring out His wrath upon the people of Judah when their young king Josiah led them to humble themselves before God.

These two chapters give a striking contrast between two kings of Judah. Manasseh was so evil that it took all of 10 verses of Chapter 33 to list his sins. He was even more wicked than his grandfather, Ahaz. Yet God, in His sovereign will, showed mercy by bringing trouble into his life. “And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers” [2 Chronicles 33:12].

God freely forgave, restored and blessed. However, the ills of Judah were by this time incurable and their spiritual decline continued during the reign of Amon, Manasseh’s wicked son, who did not humble himself as his father did, but “trespassed more and more” [2 Chronicles 33:23].

In 2 Chronicles 34, we see Josiah ascending the throne at the age of eight. He soon began to seek God. When he was 20, he started to rid Judah of all forms of idol worship. The book of Moses, which was providentially discovered among the debris in the Temple, was used by him to lead Judah in a great revival. He was one of the best kings of either Judah or Israel.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. – Psalm 103:8

4 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON
2 Chronicles 35–36

LESSON
The wrath of God

2 CHRONICLES 36:16
But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.

God had warned Judah through His Word, as interpreted by the prophetess Huldah, that He was about to pour out His wrath on the nation because of their sin and rebellion. But that judgement would only come after the death of the godly king, Josiah [2 Chronicles 34:24–28].

True enough, one by one, a succession of four wicked kings who came after Josiah were disposed of by heathen kings. The Temple too was systematically plundered by their enemies and finally burnt to the ground. The people were “cut off out of the land” and the land became desolate, “a proverb and a byword among all people”, just as King Solomon had been warned in 1 Kings 9.

Likewise, God is warning the people of the world today through His Word, the Bible, that He is about to pour out His wrath on this wicked and evil generation. We are living in perilous times, which are like the “days of Noah”. We Christians, who claim to live by faith and who are “being warned of God of things not seen as yet”, had better “move with fear” to save ourselves and our families [Hebrews 11:7]. We must follow the example of Josiah and “make a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all our hearts, and with all our souls, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book” [2 Chronicles 34:31].

Our faithful God will surely preserve a remnant to serve Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 16

THOUGHT

... for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. – Acts 4:12



5 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezra 1

LESSON

That it might be fulfilled

VERSE 1

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

Ezra records the return of the exiles from Babylon, the rebuilding of the Temple and the restoration of God's people spiritually. It begins with a decree by Cyrus. The remarkable thing about the decree is that it was God who stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to make it. This happened so that the Word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah [Jeremiah 29:10–14] might be fulfilled [v. 1].

On a human level, we have a polytheistic king following his programme of religious tolerance, superstitiously asking the subjects to pray to their gods for his wellbeing. He even provided for funds to be raised to support the restoration. And he returned the Temple objects that Nebuchadnezzar had taken years before. But behind it all was the sovereign God turning this king's heart as channels of water to fulfil His purpose [Proverbs 21:1].

This decree by Cyrus reminds us that when God makes promises, He delivers. When He delivers, nothing can stand in His way, not even the human heart. Moreover, He will also ensure that the resources needed to fulfil His promise are available. Every piece of the Temple items donated by Cyrus was a witness to God's sovereign care and the continuance of His faithful covenant.

There is simply no human explanation for this. God was the only reason for it.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 17

THOUGHT

God's work done in God's way will not lack God's means of support. – Hudson Taylor



BIBLE LESSON*Ezra 2***LESSON****Lessons from a list****VERSE 62**

*These sought their register
among those that were
reckoned by genealogy,
but they were not found:
therefore were they, as
polluted, put from the
priesthood.*

Ezra 2 is a list of the Jews who were the first Exiles to return to their homeland. The list was categorised into five groups, namely the priests, the Levites, the singers, the doorkeepers and the temple servants. The first thing that the returning Jews did upon arrival in Jerusalem was to go to the site where the Temple once was and offer their gifts to rebuild it [v. 68–69].

The list shows how Israel was organised for the purpose of worship. Apart from their generous giving [v. 69], they each—just as the name of each group implied—had a duty to perform. Some, like the priests and singers, were more visible and prominent. Others, like the doorkeepers and temple servants, toiled behind the scenes, but were no less important. Even so, every member in a church has been given a spiritual gift to exercise in serving the Lord for His glory [1 Peter 4:10–11].

Priests who could not confirm their ancestry were considered unclean and prevented from serving [v. 62]. This shows that holiness is an essential factor in proper worship. To be living as the world live all week and then pop into church for a few hours of worship is an affront to God.

All week long, our lives should bring glory to God and be a testimony to those around us, through holy thoughts, words and deeds. Our public worship on Sunday should be an expression of the overflow of our gratitude and obedience to Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 18

QUESTION

Is your name in the Lamb's Book of Life?



7 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezra 3

LESSON

As it is written

VERSE 2

Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God.

This chapter describes the initial efforts of the returning Jews to rebuild the temple. The first task that the leaders, Jeshua and Zerubbabel, did when they saw the pile of rubble where the Temple once stood was to rebuild the altar [v. 2]. This was followed by a reinstatement of the Feast of Tabernacles and the reconstruction of the foundation of the Temple.

Why did they begin with the altar? Because their fundamental need if they want to draw near to God is forgiveness of their sins. And the altar is the place where God had designated that they could come to do so by offering up a burnt sacrifice [Leviticus 1:3]. The sacrificial animals pointed ahead to God's perfect, once-for-all sacrifice for sins, our Lord Jesus Christ.

How did they know to set up the altar? "As it is written in the law of Moses the man of God" [v. 2]. So the Jews were not making things up according to their own preferences or liking. Neither did they conduct a survey to find out what the people wanted to do. They simply went back to the Word of God and did as it is written.

The same applies to us when we approach God. We need to ask: What does the Bible say about it? God will only be pleased when we approach Him the way He has instructed us to do, that is, as it is written in the Scripture.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 19-20

THOUGHT

New beginnings with God must focus on obedience to His Word.





8 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezra 4

LESSON

Ye have nothing to do with us

VERSE 3

But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.

The returning Jews began to rebuild the Temple. Their enemies were watching and wanted to have a part [v. 2]. They came with offers to help, on the pretext that the same God was being worshipped. But the Jews led by Zerubbabel and Jeshua were firm. They replied, “Ye have nothing to do with us.”

How rude can you get? That is no way to win friends. Beside, won't it be nice to have some additional helping hands? Some of the returned remnant could have accused Zerubbabel and Jeshua of being too hard on these men. But they were doing the right thing.

The problem with these enemies was that they had blended false religions with the worship of the one true God. They added God to their religion but they never dropped their idols [2 Kings 17:41]. Had the enemies been allowed to participate, the Lord's people would have fallen into spiritual compromise, mingling idolatry with the worship of God. The danger of the appeal of these enemies was that their words were not absolute lies. They were right in that they did worship God and sacrifice to Him. The problem was that they did not worship God alone.

There is great pressure today to compromise the Gospel by joining with those who claim to believe it but who add things to it that totally destroy the grace of God. We need to be firm.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 21-22

THOUGHT

Whenever you make a commitment to the Lord, be prepared to face the enemy's unrelenting attempt to set you back.



BIBLE LESSON*Ezra 5***LESSON****The eye of God****VERSE 5**

But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this matter.

The work on rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem stopped [Ezra 4:4]. The people's focus shifted to the building of their own houses [Haggai 1:4–9]. To turn things around, the Lord raised up two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, who confronted the Jews of their sin and exhorted them to get their priorities right. However, no sooner had the people begun to rebuild the temple, Tatnai, the governor over Israel, came and questioned the validity of their work [v. 3]. A letter was then sent to Darius to seek verification.

The interesting thing about the letter is that it shows that the Jews have given a strong testimony to Tatnai and his colleagues of God and His ways. It is also surprisingly accurate, unlike the letter of Ezra 4:11–16, which distorted the truth to make the Jews look worse than they were. Here, it simply stated the facts and asked the king to confirm or deny those claims. While waiting for the king's reply, Tatnai allowed the Jews to continue the rebuilding, because "the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews" [v. 5].

When we maintain a strong witness of our faith in Jesus Christ, we too can expect His eye to be upon us in whatever response our enemies come back with. However, to do that, we have to expose ourselves to God's Word and set our priority right.

If we have been on the sidelines for a while, we need to get back to work for Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 23

THOUGHT

The encouraging thing about serving God, especially if you have been on the sidelines for a while, is that He can use you in spite of your previous failures.

BIBLE LESSON*Ezra 6***LESSON****Great is Thy
faithfulness****VERSE 16**

*And the children of Israel,
the priests, and the Levites,
and the rest of the children
of the captivity, kept the
dedication of this house of
God with joy,*

King Darius issued a decree that Babylon's archives be searched for the original decree of Cyrus. The document was found in Achmetha. It authorised the Jews to rebuild their temple and even gave the limits of its dimensions. The project was to be financed by funds from the royal treasury.

Darius then instructed Tatnai and his associates not to interfere with the rebuilding of the Temple. Tax money was to be used to help finance the project and animals and items for sacrifice had to be provided without fail. Anyone who disobeyed the edict would suffer a horrible fate [v. 11–12]. He ended with the words, "Let it be done with speed." Tatnai and his companions then proceeded to diligently do as the king had commanded. The work of the Temple proceeded and the Jews were able to complete the rebuilding of the Temple. Their main responsibility was to restore the altar and all the offerings and feasts that they had neglected before their captivity.

A dedication ceremony was held. The priests and the Levites, as well as the people, gathered to rejoice and worship God in accordance with God's law through Moses [v. 16–18]. After the purification, the priests and the Levites celebrated the Passover and together with the Israelites kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with joy. The people were rejoicing because of the faithfulness of God.

No matter what our circumstances may be, we can trust God to be faithful.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 24

THOUGHT**Meditate on Psalm 89:1.**

11 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezra 7

LESSON

The good hand of God

VERSE 9

For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.

The chapter commences with a genealogy of Ezra. He was a descendant of Aaron and a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses. His personal concern was to prepare his heart to seek God's law. He was committed to study, obey and teach statutes and ordinances in Israel. The steps Ezra followed were the right steps in the right order. The underlying secret of his successful life and ministry was "the good hand of the Lord was upon him", a phrase found six times in Ezra 7 and 8.

King Artaxerxes, aware of Ezra's skill in leadership ability, authorised him to lead a second group of God's people to Jerusalem. He generously provided the Jews with gold, silver and mandated aid from area treasurers. He allowed them to offer sacrifices on the altar at the Temple [v. 17]. They could take back the utensils of worship for the Temple [v. 19–20]. Ezra recognised that it was God Who had put this desire in the king's heart and praised Him for His goodness, providence and faithfulness.

The king granted the Temple personal exemption from the payment of taxes. He also authorised Ezra to set up judges and other rulers to make sure God's law was properly enforced. Ezra could punish those who did not obey [v. 26].

God uses all kinds of people to accomplish His will. If God's hand is not at work in us and through us, nothing will be accomplished.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 25

QUESTION

How often do you stop to praise and thank God for His goodness and faithfulness to you?

BIBLE LESSON*Ezra 8***LESSON****Prayer, work and
praise****VERSE 23***So we fasted and besought
our God for this: and he
was intreated of us.*

The family heads who accompanied Ezra from Babylon to Jerusalem are recorded in verses 1–14. Ezra assembled the returning Israelites at the river Ahava. He discovered that there were no Levites in their group. His spiritual sensitivity was demonstrated as he sent representatives to appeal to the Levites to join them. God's hands were upon the venture, and 38 Levites and 220 Nethinims responded to Ezra's plea. Then he proclaimed a religious fast and a great prayer meeting to know God's will.

His faith in God was demonstrated when the Israelites had to transport a large quantity of gold and silver to Jerusalem. This might open them to raids by robbers along the way. Ezra was ashamed to ask the ruler for a military escort. He wanted to witness to the outsiders that God could protect His own people. The people fasted and prayed until they received assurance of God's protection.

Ezra entrusted valuable gifts to 12 leading priests. They were responsible for transporting gold, silver and other items safely to the Temple. Ezra reminded the priests that the Temple items were holy before God. With God's blessing, the Jews and all their valuable offerings arrived safely in Jerusalem. Ezra left Babylon with God's law in his heart and the king's letter in his hand. His mission was a success because the good hand of God was upon him.

Prayer, work and praise—it is God's honouring combination.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 26

THOUGHT

Prayer and praise moves the hand that moves the world.

BIBLE LESSON*Ezra 9***LESSON****The grace of God****VERSE 15**

O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this.

In Jerusalem, Ezra discovered that some of the Jews, including priests and Levites, had intermarried with pagan neighbours and were being pulled into idolatry. He was deeply grieved. He tore his garments and plucked out his hair and beard as signs of his sorrow. He could not understand how the people could so gravely disobey and offend God Who had blessed them abundantly.

He fasted and prayed. He fell to his knees and spread out his hands towards God but was too ashamed and humiliated to lift up his face to God. A crowd gathered around him. They “trembled at the words of the God of Israel”. They realised the severe consequences of disobeying God. Ezra interceded for his people, acknowledging God’s gracious help.

Ezra also recognised God’s grace in the firm restoration of Israel’s remnant [v. 8–9]. Because of God’s grace, Israel was given a “nail in his holy place”—security, stability and a new life and joy. The Lord’s graciousness allowed the kings of Persia to grant the Jews freedom to return home to rebuild the Temple. But now they were in bondage—bondage of sin.

Only the mercy of God, the confession of sin and the grace of God could make it possible for Him to restore and revive the Israelites. Because God is righteous, He punishes. Grace leads God to offer us salvation and forgiveness despite the fact that we deserve punishment.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 27**

THOUGHT

The Lord promised, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” [2 Corinthians 12:9a].

BIBLE LESSON*Ezra 10***LESSON****Public confession of
sin****VERSE 1**

Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 28–29**

CONSIDER

Ezra's humiliation and public confession of sin moved God's people deeply. A large group of people joined him in grieving for their sin. The pattern of confession has been duplicated often in church history. Many revivals began with the confession of sins.

The solution to the problem was proposed by Shechaniah. He acknowledged the unfaithfulness of the people but felt there was still hope with repentance. He urged the people to make a covenant with God to rectify the situation by sending away their pagan wives and children. Ezra urged the priests, Levites and other Israelites present to swear that they would fulfil the covenant Shechaniah had proposed. Then Ezra fasted, mourned and prayed for God's guidance.

Three days after the proclamation, the people gathered at the temple [v. 9–15]. As Ezra addressed the people, he cited their sin of unfaithfulness, pronounced their guilt and challenged them to confess their sins and put away their pagan wives. The concluding section of the book of Ezra lists the names of those who were guilty. They put away their heathen wives and children. They offered sacrifices to seek God's forgiveness.

The book of Ezra shows us that although life is not always easy, it can be lived with God's help. The struggles of God's people seemed overwhelming but they made it through. Their strength came from the Lord. If we can learn this lesson, we can make it through as well.

What does the exhortation “not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers” [2 Corinthians 6:14a] imply?

15 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Nehemiah 1

LESSON

A powerful prayer

VERSE 8

Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant

Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations.

The book of Nehemiah is sometimes called the second book of Ezra. This is not surprising when they (Ezra and Nehemiah) are one book in the Hebrew Bible. The author is probably Nehemiah, with Ezra serving as the editor. Nehemiah 7:5–73 and Ezra 2:1–70 are almost identical.

When Nehemiah learnt about the condition of the Israelites in Jerusalem and of the city itself, he felt very sad and prayed earnestly to God. His actions showed that he was aware that God was calling him to a completely new sphere of service, for which his position and training had uniquely prepared him. He identified with his people [v. 4–7] and prayed continuously for four months [Nehemiah 2:1] before he acted.

The prayer of Nehemiah showed that he felt deeply about the poor and miserable state of the Israelites. Nehemiah knew his doctrines well, in particular the attributes of the Holy God. He addressed God as “the great and awesome God Who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commandments.” Next, he said things that might be misunderstood by some as taking liberty with God, as if speaking to a God Who is asleep and not caring about His children. He called upon God to open His ears to pay attention, and to open His eyes to see.

Although Nehemiah cried to God, he was not desperate as God’s Word promises that there is hope for those who put their trust in Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 30–31

THOUGHT

God has promised that He will “gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that He has chosen to set His name there”.

BIBLE LESSON
Nehemiah 2

LESSON
**Strangers have
no part in God's
kingdom.**

VERSE 20

*Then answered I them, and
said unto them, The God of
heaven, he will prosper us;
therefore we his servants
will arise and build: but
ye have no portion, nor
right, nor memorial, in
Jerusalem.*

Three months after receiving the news concerning Jerusalem, Nehemiah looked for an opportunity to make request to the king for leave. He wanted to go to the city of his fathers to rebuild it. Nehemiah obtained the permission, together with letters to the governors allowing him to pass through their provinces and to the keeper of the royal forests to supply wood for building the walls and gates. The king sent an army to go with him for his protection.

On the third night after his arrival at Jerusalem, Nehemiah went round the city to survey the walls and encouraged the rulers of the people and priests to undertake the work of rebuilding them. Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem, enemies of God's people, ridiculed them. But Nehemiah countered them with strong and prophetic words [v. 20].

God promised Abraham a land (Canaan) that would belong to him and his descendants forever. This promise is tied to the condition that they remain faithful to their covenant with God. There are blessings for keeping the covenant [Deuteronomy 28:1–14] and curses for breaking it [Deuteronomy 28:15–68]. The ultimate severity of breaking the covenant is God Himself uprooting them from the land [Deuteronomy 29:27–28]. When the Israelites were faithful, He brought them back again [Deuteronomy 30:1–20].

Our covenant-keeping God fulfilled to the letter what He promised Abraham [Joshua 21:43–45]. There, they returned to keeping God's Word and were blessed.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 32

THOUGHT

The law of Moses leaves sinners under the curse, and rooted out of the Lord's land but the grace of Christ towards penitent believing sinners plants them again upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up, being kept by the power of God.

BIBLE LESSON

Nehemiah 3

LESSON

**The Church's one
foundation—Jesus
Christ her Lord**

VERSE 12

*And next unto him
repaired Shallum the son of
Halohesh, the ruler of the
half part of Jerusalem, he
and his daughters.*

This chapter contains the names of the builders of the Wall of Jerusalem, the order in which they worked, where they began, and where they ended, which was the Sheep Gate. It seems to consist largely of unpronounceable names and long-forgotten people, seemingly irrelevant details.

However, in organising the people of Jerusalem to rebuild their walls and their gates, we know that almost everyone was involved in the project. The whole city dedicated itself to building the walls and the gates for 52 days. The priests began the work with the Levites. People from all sorts of occupation—gatekeepers, guards, farmers, perfume makers—were involved in the work. Even the rulers, two of them, each of whom ruled half the city of Jerusalem, dirtied their hands re-building the walls.

The whole project illustrates a very important principle of the New Testament—the responsibility of building the church in the world today belongs to everyone in the congregation.

The main lesson is that for a church to be strong and effective, the members need help from one another. They cannot do it alone. They need cooperation. It teaches the truth concerning the body of Christ—that believers in Christ are part of a worldwide body. They belong to each other and so they are to help one another and bear one another's burdens.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 33

THOUGHT

One of the marks of spiritual maturity is responsibility. The mature members in a congregation are the ones who remain with the work assigned to them until it is done.

BIBLE LESSON*Nehemiah 4***LESSON****Carrying on despite
being derided****VERSE 4**

*Hear, O our God; for we
are despised: and turn
their reproach upon their
own head, and give them
for a prey in the land of
captivity.*

The children of Israel faced severe and violent opposition to their work of rebuilding the walls and gates of Jerusalem. They were mocked and derided at. Sarcastic remarks came forth and they were threatened by their enemies—Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabians, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites. (The geographic area occupied by the enemies, as described in Nehemiah, is now occupied by the very enemies facing the present-day political-Israel. Many of these countries surrounding political-Israel are bent on destroying it). Nehemiah did not answer them but prayed to God for deliverance, for their destruction and he carried on with the work.

Nehemiah prayed that these enemies would be destroyed. What happened to forgiveness and love of enemies that Christ taught? There appears to be a contradiction. How do we reconcile Nehemiah's prayer with what our Lord taught us? Our Lord taught us to pray for those who have wronged or persecute us but the prayer of Nehemiah falls into the category of what is called the imprecatory (containing a prayer for evil to befall a person) found, for example, in Psalm 83.

The imprecatory psalms are national anthems. They express national wrath, not personal vengeance. Meekness and forgiveness of an enemy are virtues in an individual, not necessarily so of a nation. The Jews knew by revelation that God willed that they would be a great nation and should put out their enemies from the land that He had given them.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 34

THOUGHT

All of us have been ridiculed and mocked by our enemy, Satan. Like Nehemiah, we must persist against the mockery and scorn of our enemies through prayer, praying that the Lord's will be done.

BIBLE LESSON*Nehemiah 5***LESSON****Exploitation of the poor****VERSE 6**

And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words.

In Chapter 4, Nehemiah successfully handled the threatened attack from outside but now a problem has arisen from within his own people. The project of building the Wall meant that resource that was normally used for farming and other gainful employment was diverted into this needful enterprise.

The rich and the ruling class made use of the opportunity to exploit the poor. Hence great discontent arose, which soon vented itself in loud complaints. Those who had no property demanded corn to support their many families [v. 2]. Others had to pledge their fields and vineyards to buy corn to eat, and some in order to pay the king's tribute. They complained that they now had to give their sons and daughters to slavery [v. 3–5].

When Nehemiah heard these complaints, he was angry with the rulers. He called an assembly and set before them the great injustice of usury, calling upon them to renounce it, to restore to their brethren their mortgaged lands and to give them what they had borrowed. The noble and wealthy resolved to perform what was required. Nehemiah then made them take a solemn oath to this effect, indicating by a symbolical act that the heavy wrath of God would fall upon all who should fail to act according to their promise. The assembly expressed their agreement to this, and the people carried out the resolution.

Nehemiah was a good and just ruler, not oppressing the people because he had the fear of God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 35

THOUGHT

Many leaders seek to line their pockets with money while they are in office. Nehemiah did the work of a governor but did not eat the bread of a governor because the bondage was heavy upon the people.

BIBLE LESSON
Nehemiah 6

LESSON
**Not yielding to
temptation**

VERSE 12

*And, lo, I perceived that
God had not sent him; but
that he pronounced this
prophecy against me: for
Tobiah and Sanballat had
hired him.*

The series of attacks and threats against Nehemiah by his enemies made very little impact on the building works of the wall surrounding Jerusalem. Indeed, the project was nearing completion as all the gaps had been repaired and only the doors at the gates [entrances] were yet to be fitted.

Nehemiah's enemies now changed their method of discouraging him. Instead of threats, they resorted to being friendly and used persuasion on him. They sent a messenger to ask him to meet them in a village outside the wall but Nehemiah turned them down. Next, they accused him, saying that the rebuilding of the wall was seditious and treasonable, but he dismissed their allegations [v. 5–9]. Then, they hired false prophets to advise Nehemiah to hide in the Temple for his own safety. “Should such a man as I flee? And who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in” [v. 11], Nehemiah answered them, and stood his ground.

In spite of the secret correspondence between Nehemiah's enemies (chiefly through Tobiah's connections) and some false and treacherous Jews, the work was finished in a short time—within 52 days. “When all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God” [v. 16].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 36

THOUGHT

We may have overcome temptations at first but gave in after repeated pressure. Like Nehemiah, one of the most helpful things that we can do to resist temptation is to remember that God has called us to a great task.

BIBLE LESSON
Nehemiah 7–8

LESSON
Family gathering

NEHEMIAH 8:1

And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.

After the walls to Jerusalem were repaired and the gates fortified, Nehemiah appointed responsible gatekeepers. He then took a census of all the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem.

The repaired walls not only gave the Jews security but also an opportunity to serve God. Providentially, the celebration of the new wall falls on the same day as the Jewish New Year's festival. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were called to gather before the Water Gate and they listened to Ezra and the Levites read and interpret God's Word. They listened for at least six hours before Nehemiah sent them home to continue their celebrations. On the fifteenth day of that month, they celebrated the Festival of Booths [Tabernacles].

The world at large celebrates the New Year. It represents the passing of an old year with its mistakes and missed opportunities. The new year represents new opportunities, new hopes and new plans. With every new year, we can say with Paul that we can forget "those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" [Philippians 3:13–14].

For the Christian, every new year presents new opportunities to serve our Lord. It is customary to wish one another "Happy New Year," but consider this: What good is a happy new year if it is not lived for God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZRA 1-2

QUESTION

Carpe diem—Seize the day. Seize every day for God.

BIBLE LESSON
Nehemiah 9–10

LESSON
Keeping a promise

NEHEMIAH 10:29

They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and his judgements and his statutes;

After the two joyous festivals, the conviction of sin of the people grew. Towards the end of the month, a crowd gathered and they dressed in sackcloth. The Jews separated themselves from foreigners as they confessed their national sin. Ezra led the people in a national prayer of confession as they recounted their unfaithfulness and God's faithfulness. The theme of the prayer is that they had forsaken God but God in His " manifold mercies forsookest them not" [Nehemiah 9:19].

As a result of the reading and exposition of the Word, the people of Jerusalem came under great conviction. They were remorseful of their sins. As a sign of their repentance, they made a binding contract in public to follow God's law and commandments. Every representative of the Jews was there and each entered into an oath to follow God's law by entering into a curse should they break their promise.

There are two infamous sayings, "Promises are meant to be broken" and "Rules are meant to be bent". Unbelievers may think nothing of breaking promises that they had made, but as Christians, our words must be matched by our character. Our Lord Jesus reminds us, "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" [Matthew 5:37].

Even though we may not bind ourselves into a curse for breaking a promise, let us remember to keep the word that we have given. By doing so, we set a good testimony for Christ and we maintain an honourable reputation to our name.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZRA 3-4

QUESTION

Mean what you say and say what you mean.

BIBLE LESSON
Nehemiah 11

LESSON
**Building a godly
nation**

VERSE 1

*And the rulers of the people
dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest
of the people also cast lots,
to bring one of ten to dwell
in Jerusalem the holy city,
and nine parts to dwell in
other cities.*

The chapter begins with the movement of people into Jerusalem. It was only right that the city, being the capital, should be occupied by the leaders. However, there was a need for more people to reside in Jerusalem to ensure its proper running and security. But most of the exiles who had returned to Jerusalem chose to live in the surrounding areas. It was therefore necessary to choose, by way of the casting of lots, a tenth of the population of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to live in the city.

There were also some Jews who, moved by duty, volunteered themselves and came forward in answer the call to populate Jerusalem. They earned admiration from the rest, implying that the decision was one that involved some element of sacrifice. They sacrificed their own personal interests for the security and interest of the community. Bear in mind that Jerusalem had been a target of the enemies before the walls were built, and it remained so because the capital would be one of the chief targets of any foreign invasion.

We live in an age that promotes and glorifies individualism. Everyone wants to promote his own agenda and be number one. The Bible teaches the opposite, that we are to “esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” [Philippians 2:3–4].

The church of Christ is also looking for such selfless followers, who would put their self-interests aside and advance the cause of the Gospel.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZRA 5

THOUGHT

JOY—Jesus first, others second, and yourself last.

BIBLE LESSON
Nehemiah 12

LESSON
Orderly celebration

VERSE 27

And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps.

The list of priests and Levites were recorded for several reasons: to authenticate membership in the Jewish community, since Israel was re-establishing itself, and an introduction to the dedication of the wall and subsequent ceremonies. Family names were used rather than personal names denoting that entire families returned to Jerusalem. Nehemiah listed these names in a certain hierarchy to show order.

Nehemiah proceeded with the festivals of the seventh month with a general confession of sin and rededication of the people and a repopulation of the city of Jerusalem. When that was done, it was time to dedicate the wall of Jerusalem to God—the climax of his ministry. In that dedication service, special arrangements were made: distant Levites were brought in, special emphasis was given to the music, and every man, woman and child was allowed to celebrate.

The celebration marked the end of a great accomplishment. The plan to rebuild the wall was carefully orchestrated and beautifully executed despite the various obstacles and opposition. God's work also requires and demands much planning. Our spiritual lives also require planning and direction. Our Lord Jesus asks, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?" [Luke 14:28].

However, besides careful and meticulous planning, it is even more important to commit our plans to God. We may be expert planners but God is the One Who gives success [1 Corinthians 3:7].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZRA 6

THOUGHT

Plan, but do not plan God out of your life.

25 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON
Nehemiah 13

LESSON
Proper leadership

VERSE 9

Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense.

There is a time gap of several years between Nehemiah 12 and 13. After the dedication of the city wall, Nehemiah returned to the Persian court. During his absence, the people backslid. The Jews might have moved to Jerusalem but they carried the values and the morality of the world into the city with them.

Upon his return to Jerusalem, Nehemiah discovered that Eliashib the priest was using the Temple as storage space for Tobiah—the enemy who had opposed the building of the wall. Nehemiah also found that the Levites were not given their due material support, and they had to leave the service of the Temple to find their own livelihood. Nehemiah rebuked the officials for neglecting the Temple. There was also widespread violation of the Sabbath, with merchants found peddling their wares on the holy day.

Nehemiah's actions were harsh and severe. He banned all worldly business on the Sabbath. He closed the gates to the city on the Sabbath to prevent any movement of goods. He also drove away families who married non-Jews, as this would bring foreign influence into God's people. Throughout all these, Nehemiah asked God to remember him. Nehemiah's prayer is that just as God had led him in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, God would continue to lead him now as he re-established order in the Temple.

We see that without a firm leadership, any church or family can go wayward. Likewise, biblical discipline in the covenant home and church are absolutely necessary to maintain purity.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZRA 7

PRAYER

Remember me, O my God. – Nehemiah 13:14

BIBLE LESSON*Esther 1–2***LESSON****Repercussion of the king's wrath****ESTHER 1:15**

What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?

Persian kings in Bible times enjoyed hosting lavish banquets. They would use every opportunity to impress their guests by displaying their power and wealth. King Ahasuerus invited the key military and political dignitaries of his empire in Shushan. The wives of those dignitaries were presided over by Queen Vashti. Wine was plentiful, and everyone drank to his hearts' content.

On the last day of the feast, King Ahasuerus ordered his queen to appear before the drunken nobles to show off her beauty. Her refusal provoked the king's wrath [Esther 1:12]. The king agreed with his wise counsellors to replace Queen Vashti. This quick action will save the king from his embarrassment, ego and reputation. The king accepted this new decree and commanded that it should be published according to the language of the people [Esther 1:22].

Such an act would put fear in the women in the empire and generate respect for their husbands. Evidently, the king allowed anger and pride to control his life. We should be careful not to give in to anger and pride, as it will surely blind our eyes and deaden our hearts to that which is good and noble.

Knowing the king's strong sensual appetite, his advisors suggested forming a new harem of pretty virgins. In Chapter 2 we see how God prepared Esther, a lovely Jewess, for her role as the new queen. She was the adopted daughter of Mordecai. We shall see God's hand at work in these two people.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZRA 8

THOUGHT

Determine to do what is right, no matter how embarrassing or painful the situation may be. – Proverbs 12:16

BIBLE LESSON*Esther 3–4***LESSON****Dare to stand tall****ESTHER 3:2**

*And all the king's servants,
that were in the king's gate,
bowed, and revered
Haman: for the king had
so commanded concerning
him. But Mordecai bowed
not, nor did him reverence.*

Mordecai's determination came from his faith in God. He refused to kneel down before Haman, whose ancestors were ancient enemies of the Jews. Doing what is right will not always make you popular [Acts 5:29] but obeying God is more important than obeying men. We must worship only our Creator God [Exodus 20:5].

Haman enjoyed his power and the prestige of his position. He was furious when Mordecai did not respond with a respectful bow [Esther 3:5]. For that slight, Haman decided to kill Mordecai and wipe out all the Jews. Haman had an astrologer to cast lots to choose the day on which he would carry out his murderous act—the thirteenth day of the twelfth month. The decree was approved by the king, who did not even ask who the victims were. Haman also had the king's signet ring, which authorised him to do whatever he wished. Little did the king realise that his own ring would be used to sign the death warrant of his beautiful queen.

When Mordecai learnt about Haman's plot to kill the Jews, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and wailed loudly and bitterly [Esther 4:1–3]. He sought Esther to plead with King Ahasuerus to spare her people. Esther knew that it could cost her life but she responded, "If I perish, I perish" [Esther 4:16c].

We should have the courage to do what is right regardless of consequences. Do you try to save yourself by keeping quiet or standing tall for God?

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZRA 9–10**

THOUGHT

Many of us become soft-hearted when we excuse evil and allow criminals to get away because we do not wish to be involved.

BIBLE LESSON*Esther 5–6***LESSON****The sovereign hand
of God at work****ESTHER 5:2**

And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NEHEMIAH 1-2**

THOUGHT

God has placed Esther in a high position in Persia. He also used events to bring Mordecai into the king's favour. The three days of fasting and prayer were over and the time of action drew near. Esther and Mordecai trusted God to do a miraculous work with the king.

Esther was confident that Haman would be caught off guard in the privacy of her own apartment than in the king's room. Therefore, she proposed to the king to attend a special banquet with Haman the next day. This would allow her to expose Haman's evil plot to massacre Mordecai and the Jews.

That night, the king could not sleep [Esther 6:1]. He decided to read all the events recorded about his reign. He came across an account of Mordecai exposing a plot to assassinate the king [Esther 2:21–23]. He discovered that Mordecai was not rewarded for saving the king's life and asked what should be done. Haughty and over-confident Haman suggested that such a person should be given the king's robe to wear. He should be given the honour to ride the king's horse and be king for a day [Esther 6:8–9]. King Ahasuerus assigned Haman to do exactly what he had said. Mordecai rode through the street in glory. Shamed and humbled, Haman returned home depressed and sorrowful.

The events that came together for good are the result of God's sovereign control over the affairs of men. God is patiently and quietly at work in your life, too.

Many are the plans in a man's heart but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails. – Proverbs 19:21

BIBLE LESSON*Esther 7–8***LESSON****Reaping what you
sow****ESTHER 7:10**

*So they hanged Haman
on the gallows that he had
prepared for Mordecai.
Then was the king's wrath
pacified.*

Esther courageously revealed her race to the king. She pled for her people and confronted Haman with his evil plan to exterminate all the Jews. As the banquet progressed, the king encouraged Esther to make her request known. Her request was direct and frank [Esther 7:3–4]. Her words of sincerity touched the king's heart.

The king responded immediately, "Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so" [Esther 7:5]? His anger knew no bounds when he found out that Haman was the culprit. Justice moved quickly in the king's realm. His decision that Haman must die was final. His servants hanged Haman on the gallows that were erected for Mordecai.

Haman sowed anger against Mordecai and he reaped anger from the king. Haman wanted to kill Mordecai and the Jews. He was killed by the king. This unchanging principle of sowing and reaping is illustrated throughout the Bible. Jacob killed an animal and lied to his father, pretending to be Esau [Genesis 27:1–29]. Years later, Jacob's sons killed an animal and lied to him that Joseph was dead [Genesis 37:31–35].

Esther brought Mordecai to see the king. The king gave Haman's place of honour to him. He also gave Mordecai the job of writing a new edict that would protect the Jews from extermination. Like Esther, how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred? Have you any passion to witness to your loved ones who are perishing in their sins?

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NEHEMIAH 3–4**

THOUGHT

He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity; and the rod of his anger shall fail. – Proverbs 22:8

BIBLE LESSON*Esther 9–10***LESSON****Remembrance the
hallmark of gratitude****ESTHER 9:28**

*And that these days
should be remembered
and kept throughout every
generation, every family,
every province, and every
city; and that these days of
Purim should not fail from
among the Jews, nor the
memorial of them perish
from their seed.*

Do you take the time to tell your family about God's leading in your life? Retelling your life experiences, how God saves and answers many of your prayers will help them to remember God's goodness and faithfulness.

The thirteenth day of the last month was to be a day of remembrance for the Jews. The new decree signed by the king had changed that day from destruction to deliverance. The tables were turned around and the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them [Esther 9:1]. Their mourning turned to dancing. The Feast of Purim was to be celebrated yearly. It is a reminder to them how God had saved Israel from destruction. Today, the Jews still celebrate Purim. It reminds them of God's specific act. Similarly, remembering special occasions such as Christmas and Easter helps believers to remember the goodness of God. Do not let the exchange of gifts hide the meaning of these great events.

In the Book of Esther, we clearly see God at work in the lives of individuals and in the progress of a nation. Esther, who risked her life appearing before the king, became a heroine. Mordecai, who was condemned to death, rose to become the prime minister of Persia. Both used their authority to do the will of God for the benefit and blessings of God's people.

Let us give all we have and use our gifts to serve our Lord joyfully until we see Him face to face in eternal glory.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NEHEMIAH 5**

HYMN

**God never moves without purpose or plan
When trying His servant and moulding a man.
Give thanks to the Lord though your testing
seems long;
In darkness He giveth a song.**

BIBLE LESSON*Job 1–2***LESSON****The man who feared
God****JOB 1:1**

*There was a man in the
land of Uz, whose name
was Job; and that man was
perfect and upright, and
one that feared God, and
eschewed evil.*

Job is probably the oldest book in the Bible. The opening chapters of the book tell us that the events in Job preceded the time of Moses because there was no mention of the Tabernacle or the Levitical priesthood. In fact, Job assumed the role of a priest when he offered burnt offerings for his children [Job 1:5]. There are some who dismiss Job as a fictional character but biblical evidence shows otherwise. The Lord mentioned Job together with Noah and Daniel [Ezekiel 14:14, 20].

The theme of Job can be summarised as “the child of God seeking answers to circumstances in his life”. The book begins with a description of Job’s character. He was “perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” [v. 1]. Job was a man of integrity. He was an upright man who revered God. Job practised what he preached and was a man whom all who knew him or have read of him would say, “Here’s a Christian who walks his talk.”

Job did not say these things of himself. These testimonies were from God. Our Lord “seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” [1 Samuel 16:7; Psalm 44:21], and He knows you and me perfectly.

It was said that reputation is what man thinks you to be and character is what God knows you to be. As Christians, we must bear a striking likeness to our blessed Saviour.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NEHEMIAH 6**

THOUGHT

**We are the living biography of the truth and life
of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

BIBLE LESSON

Job 3

LESSON

Job cursing the day of his birth

VERSE 11

Why did I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?

In one day, Job lost everything. He lost his children, his wealth, his health and even the respect of his wife [Job 2:9]. Job was at the lowest point in his life. Where would he go for encouragement? Job's three friends—Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar—heard what Job had experienced and they came to comfort him. They sat with Job in silence for seven days. At the end of seven days, Job spoke. What followed was a series of speeches by Job and his three friends [Job 3–31].

"After this opened Job his mouth and cursed his day" [v. 1]. Job began by cursing the day of his birth. He did not curse God as Satan said he would. Job also did not curse God as his wife told him to. But Job cursed the day of his birth. He wanted to die, and it is not difficult to see why. This man was devastated. His suffering had prompted Job to question the goodness of God. "Why, God? Why me?" Job asked "why" five times in Chapter 3 [v. 11–12, 23].

The change in Job's temperament began with his trying to find reasons for his suffering. At first, Job did not sin with his lips [Job 2:10] but when he opened his mouth, he began by questioning God's providence.

Like Job, under stress and provocation, we may be tempted to speak too soon for our own good. This is a reminder that we must be careful of uncontrolled lips in times of adversity.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NEHEMIAH 7

THOUGHT

Job cursed the day of his first birth but he never cursed the day of his second birth. No born-again Christian ever and totally denies the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

BIBLE LESSON*Job 4***LESSON****Truth wrongly applied (I)****VERSE 17**

*Shall mortal man be more
just than God? Shall a
man be more pure than his
maker?*

Eliphaz was the first of Job's three friends to give his opinion on Job's suffering. Eliphaz begins with a commendation [v. 3–4].

Then he followed up with a theological lecture on God's attributes. First, on God's righteousness, he said that God's dealings with man were always just and righteous [v. 7]. Eliphaz argued that God would vindicate the righteous and He would punish the unrighteous. Second, on God's sovereign providence, Eliphaz said that "by the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed" [v. 9]. Eliphaz also lectured Job on human frailties, saying that man did not suffer without just cause, implying that Job had sinned and the severity of Job's suffering commensurated with the severity of his sins.

In all, Eliphaz was telling Job that he should not be surprised by the prevailing adversities in his life. God's hand was in them. Eliphaz's opinions and counsel were not wrong per se. However, they were wrong for two reasons. First, his opinions were based on what he had seen [v. 8; Job 5:3]. His theology was founded on empirical observation. Second, he showed little compassion for Job because Eliphaz's personal experiences with God had been shallow.

If only Eliphaz had been in Job's shoes, perhaps he would have shown more empathy.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NEHEMIAH 8

THOUGHT

God is our hope in hopeless times. "But though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies" [Lamentations 3:32].

BIBLE LESSON*Job 5***LESSON****Truth wrongly
applied (II)****VERSE 17**

*Behold, happy is the man
whom God correcteth:
therefore despise not thou
the chastening of the
Almighty.*

Eliphaz continued with his soliloquy. The “call” in verse 1 refers to Job’s earlier outburst. He was saying that Job had become a fool by speaking out against God. Job’s foolishness, according to Eliphaz, was that he did not know that humanity was linked with calamity [v. 7].

Eliphaz said that if he were in Job’s shoes, he “would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause” [v. 8]. Eliphaz added that Job should rejoice in his sufferings because “happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty”, and God Who punished also relieved [v. 17–18].

Eliphaz’s words are all worthwhile truths. God is able to deliver. God is faithful. With every temptation, God will “make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” [1 Corinthians 10:13]. With every testing, God’s grace is always sufficient for us [2 Corinthians 12:9]. Are you troubled? Are you distressed? Cast your cares upon God, “for He careth for you” [1 Peter 5:7].

If only Eliphaz had not said a word more. But he said one word too many. What did Eliphaz say that Job should do? “Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good” [v. 27]. Eliphaz made it clear that Job’s only way out was to take his advice. Eliphaz’s deference ends with dogmatism and his words, which were meant to help Job, only hurt him more.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NEHEMIAH 9

THOUGHT

Speak truthfully and graciously. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” [Proverbs 25:11].

BIBLE LESSON

Job 6

LESSON

Being a friend indeed

VERSE 14

*To him that is afflicted pity
should be shewed from his
friend; but he forsaketh the
fear of the Almighty.*

In Chapters 6 and 7, Job answered Eliphaz. He began by lamenting his present state [v. 2–3]. Job began to doubt the goodness of God and even implied that God was out to kill him [v. 4]. As far as Job was concerned, his adversities did not come just from God but that God had become his adversity. Setbacks in life can affect a believer’s spiritual condition. They can drive a believer away from God.

Job added that God might have granted his request [v. 8]—his desire to die, which stemmed from his awareness of his own frailties. Job considered death now a matter of spiritual victory because he would die knowing that he had not denied God [v. 10].

Job was not afraid to die but he was certainly disappointed with the conduct of his friends. He compared them to a stone-dry river that disappointed the thirsty traveller [v. 15–20]. Eliphaz said the “right words” and he had made an irrefutable case [v. 25]. But Job said that his friend’s words were empty and had done nothing to soothe his suffering except to dig a pit for him [v. 27].

As Christians, we must be careful not to pass quick judgements on others. The disciples thought that a certain man was born blind because of his sin or his parents’ sin but our Lord Jesus said, “Neither ... but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” [John 9:3].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NEHEMIAH 10–11

THOUGHT

Be a friend in need, be a friend indeed. “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” [Proverbs 17:17].

BIBLE LESSON*Job 7***LESSON****The privilege of a restful sleep****VERSE 4**

*When I lie down, I say,
When shall I arise, and the
night be gone? and I am full
of tossings to and fro unto
the dawning of the day.*

Job was tormented and could not sleep peacefully for he was covered by worms, dust and broken skin. He contrasted his plight by alluding that a servant could expect to rest in the shade at the end of a working day, or to a mercenary who would be paid after a campaign, but he could not see an end to his misery. How he wished for a resolution to end his current situation.

How sweet it is to have a good night's sleep. This is a privilege that is often taken for granted until one experiences difficulty in sleeping. Something as basic as sleep becomes a real challenge if one is mentally troubled or physically unwell. Once sleep deprivation sets in, the body weakens and one's disposition breaks down.

According to a year 2000 study published in the *British Medical Journal*, people who drove after being awake for 17–19 hours performed worse than those with a blood alcohol level of .05 per cent, which is the legal limit for drunk driving in most Western European countries. Medical cures for severe insomnia often call for the popping of sleeping pills. Surely there must be a better way to overcome sleeplessness.

There is no better cure to sleeplessness than to pray for the Holy Spirit to calm your nerves and bring peace to your heart and mind. Our supreme God is in control of the situation and He has His reasons for taking us through adversities.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NEHEMIAH 12–13**

PRAYER

Rid yourself of worries and fear, and enjoy your sleep. “When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet” [Proverbs 3:24].

BIBLE LESSON*Job 8***LESSON****Guarding your
tongue****VERSE 2**

*How long wilt thou speak
these things? and how
long shall the words of
thy mouth be like a strong
wind?*

Bildad's manner of speech was more severe and coarse than that of Eliphaz. He started off abruptly by accusing Job of mere talk. He purported that Job's words were like a "strong wind". A strong wind rarely does any good and is often of little value. What irony! Job had not been speaking irrelevantly. It was Bildad who was pouring out "strong wind" by speaking in such a manner to Job.

The tongue, though one of the smallest members of our body, is mighty in power [James 3:5]. History has shown that words uttered can either bind or separate family and friends. When used wrongly, the tongue can destroy the reputation of godly men, poison and destroy a person or even doom a nation. Such is the power of the tongue that there are many warnings in the Bible to guard it [Psalm 34:13; 39:1; 52:2; Proverbs 21:23].

We are instructed to use our tongue to glorify God [Psalm 37:30; 71:24; 119:172]. A Christian's manner of speech is an expression of either his spirituality or his lack of it. We need to heed the exhortation in James 4:11, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren ..."

How have you been using your tongue? Look at those who cannot speak even though they want to. Therefore, having received a tongue by our Maker, let us endeavour to use it well and be a blessing to those around us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ESTHER I
MATTHEW I

CHALLENGE

**And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness
and of thy praise all the day long. – Psalm 35:28**

BIBLE LESSON*Job 9***LESSON****Acknowledging our
sins to our daysman****VERSE 33**

*Neither is there any
daysman betwixt us, that
might lay his hand upon us
both.*

Chapter 9 is Job's answer to Bildad's earlier remarks. Job acknowledged God's sovereignty in his plight and his own insignificance as a human being. He also showed signs of impatience for deliverance from his sufferings. Job's mistake was to look at his own sins rather than to the grace and mercy of God. Job was looking for a "daysman", someone righteous enough to go into the presence of God and yet human enough to approach sinners like himself.

A daysman is a go-between, a mediator or an umpire. Praise God that the daysman has come in the person of Jesus Christ, the God-Man Who is perfect in His humanity and deity. Jesus has purchased salvation for us all with His blood on the Cross. If we trust in His name, our sins will be forgiven. We shall be washed from all our filthiness so that none may heap any charge upon us. May we learn the difference between justifying ourselves and being justified by God.

Knowing that we are sinners is not good enough. Many sinners try to atone for their sins by doing good. Having the revelation from the Bible, we know that this is futile. Only Jesus can be our daysman. Only Jesus is able to cleanse us from our sins and present us faultless before the presence of God's glory with exceeding joy.

Therefore, let us acknowledge our sins to only Jesus and plead for His forgiveness.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ESTHER 2
MATTHEW 2

THOUGHT

**For there is one God, and one mediator between
God and men, the man Christ Jesus. – 1 Timothy
2:5**

BIBLE LESSON*Job 10***LESSON****Our unchangeable
God****VERSE 15**

*If I be wicked, woe unto
me; and if I be righteous,
yet will I not lift up my
head. I am full of confusion;
therefore see thou mine
affliction;*

We now see a confused Job who felt that he did not deserve the pain and suffering that he was being put through. He was confused over God's measurement of sin. Job did not deny that as a sinner he deserved his sufferings but he thought that justice was executed upon him with peculiar rigour. His gloom, unbelief and hard thoughts of God were as much to be ascribed to Satan's inward temptations as to his outward trials. Job had forgotten one important attribute of God: "For I am the Lord, I change not ..." [Malachi 3:6a].

God is a constant and has no double standards. He is never confused in His ways. It is we who are. We think with our finite mind, feel with our changeable heart and demand justice in a certain way. Job's main issue with God was that he did not deserve such suffering due to the little good in him.

How about you? Do you complain and wonder about the tribulations that come your way? You have kept the 10 Commandments, tithed and served God, so trying to comprehend the rough ride life offers is difficult to understand. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing" [Proverbs 25:2a]. In addition, we are all guilty [Ecclesiastes 7:20]. No one knows why certain things must come our way. Only He knows. Nothing more is necessary.

Forget not Romans 8:28. God will not forsake us. Put your trust in Him. His grace is sufficient and He will see you through any calamity.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ESTHER 3
MATTHEW 3

PRAYER

**God is unchangeable so seek His will in
everything you do.**



10 DECEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Job 11

LESSON

**Encourage, not
condemn**

VERSE 4

*For thou hast said, My
doctrine is pure, and I am
clean in thine eyes.*

These were the sarcastic words of Job's third friend, Zophar the Naamathite. Like his other two friends, Zophar condemned Job of vain babbling, lying and hypocrisy. Zophar was thoroughly disturbed at Job's self-justification of pure doctrine and cleanliness. He went on to call Job to repentance, and then it would be well with him.

While Zophar and the other two friends were kind enough to visit Job, they did little to comfort him. Rather, they judged and condemned him. This is a stern reminder to us. A well-intended visitation can turn awfully wrong when we start to assume full knowledge of the situation and judge our fellow brethren. Remember to "judge not, that ye be not judged" [Matthew 7:1]. Beware when we become critical of another person's sin. We may be harbouring greater sins ourselves.

Human judgement is often flawed. Fortunately, God's judgement is not. "But we are sure that the judgement of God is according to truth against them which commit such things" [Romans 2:2]. As a child of God, the benchmark for us is not man's but God's. God is the supreme Judge. Be mindful, "for whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalteth" [Luke 14:11].

Let us therefore not be like Job's three friends who thought too highly of themselves and were all too assuming. Rather, when encouraging our fellow friends in times of trials, humble ourselves, seek God's wisdom, listen and encourage through prayer.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ESTHER 4
MATTHEW 4

THOUGHT

In times of infirmities, there is no better encouragement and comfort than God's promises, as "He keepeth the paths of judgement, and preserveth the way of his saints" [Proverbs 2:8].



BIBLE LESSON

Job 12

LESSON

Creator, creation and creature

VERSE 7

But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee.

In this and the two following chapters, Job replied Zophar, who had misrepresented him as an ignorant man. Job resented it and made his defence with biting sarcasm and charged his friends as being self-conceited and having a high opinion of their own wisdom. He put forth his claim as one who was not inferior to them. The knowledge that they had concerning God and His providence was common and can be learnt from the brute beasts. He then proceeded to discourse most admirably and excellently of the wisdom and power of God in the dispensations of His providence in a variety of instances.

All animate and inanimate nature is men's teacher. Its lessons are manifold. Heaven and earth is an open Bible, speaking both from God and of God. The night sky is a wide unfolded scroll. David, the man of God, delighted to spell in it the glory and perfection of God. Every rising sun proclaims anew His mercies. King Solomon sent his readers to ants for a lesson of industry. Our Lord points us to the birds and flowers to learn implicit confidence in the care of the heavenly Father.

Nature's works are designed to lead us to God. But for man to know the way of pardon and reconciliation with God, the volume of nature required has to be supplemented by the volume of divine revelation.

We must search the Scriptures. Only then can we find the Way, the Truth and the Life.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ESTHER 5
MATTHEW 5

THOUGHT

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. – 1 John 5:11

BIBLE LESSON*Job 13***LESSON****Being faithful unto death****VERSE 15**

*Though he slay me, yet will
I trust in him: but I will
maintain mine own ways
before him.*

In this chapter, Job was very bold with his friends. He compared himself with them, and sharply reproved them for their falsehood and their forwardness to judge. He expostulated with them about their wicked and deceitful way of pleading for God, and against him. He was very bold with his God. He protested to God concerning the deplorable condition he was in, complaining of the confusion he was in and his inability in finding out the sin that provoked God to afflict him. He concluded with a complaint of the bitterness and sharpness of his afflictions, with which he was consumed.

Satan's charge was that Job would give up all, even his religion, to save his life. Thus it would be shown that God had not one sincere disinterested servant in the world. All religion would be mere selfishness and time-wasting. God would be stripped of His honour in the universe. For Job to give up his integrity and acknowledge that he was not the man he appeared to be would have given the victory to Satan. But Job preferred to die and Satan was defeated.

So it is with the New Testament saints. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" [Revelation 12: 11]. Many a believer, like Job, is the battlefield between God and Satan.

Let us be faithful even unto death, so that God is honoured and Satan put to shame.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ESTHER 6-7
MATTHEW 6

THOUGHT

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. – Revelation 2:10

BIBLE LESSON*Job 14***LESSON****The two natures of man****VERSE 4***Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.*

Now Job, having turned himself from his friends, found it no purpose anymore to reason with them. He went on to speak to God and himself. He discoursed of the frailty of man, the shortness of his life, the troubles that were in it, the sinfulness of it and its limited duration, beyond which it could not continue. He pleaded with God, Who, he thought, was too strict and severe with him, begging that, in consideration of his frailty, He would not contend with him, but grant him some respite. He engaged himself to prepare for death, and encouraged himself to hope that it would be comfortable to him.

Job understood the doctrine of original sin. God created Adam in His own likeness. Adam, after the Fall, begat children not in God's likeness but his own. From sinful parents can only come sinful offspring. Man is now shaped in iniquity and conceived in sin.

Deceit, envy, coveting and self-will are common in early childhood. No clean or holy thing was ever brought forth out of man's sinful nature. God does not produce the fruit of the Spirit from man's old sinful nature but from a new one. The presence of the new nature makes the man a saint, that of the old a sinner. The new produces holy fruits and the old produces sinful fruits.

"Two natures beat within my breast,
The one is foul and the other blest.
The one I love, the other I hate,
The one I feed will dominate."

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ESTHER 8-9
MATTHEW 7

THOUGHT

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. – Romans 8:13

BIBLE LESSON*Job 15***LESSON****Prayer—the breath of
the Christian life****VERSE 4***Yea, thou castest off fear,
and restrainest prayer
before God.*

Job's three friends, having had their turns to attack him, now had answers given back to them respectively. Eliphaz, who began the attack, now entered into a debate with Job again. He kept close to the principles upon which he had condemned Job and endeavoured to defend his former sentiments, falling upon Job with greater vehemence and severity. He reproved Job for justifying himself, and heaped on him many evil accusations that were unfairly inferred. He persuaded Job to humble himself before God and take shame to himself. He read him a long lecture concerning the woeful estate of wicked people who hardened their hearts against God and the judgements that had been prepared for them.

Though Eliphaz's reproofs might have been good and his doctrine sound, both were misapplied to Job. Job spoke rashly but neither cast off the fear of God nor restrained prayer before God. Job's sin seemed more of complaints to God than restraining prayer to Him.

Prayer is a principal part of God's worship and man's religion. A life without prayer is the mark of a heart without grace. A prayer-less soul is a Christ-less soul. Prayer is restrained either from distaste of it, or from disbelief in its efficacy or from disdain and self-sufficiency. To restrain prayer to God is to be a god to ourselves.

Believing prayer opens the door of mercy and the windows of blessing. To restrain prayer is to shut both against us. Let us pray without ceasing and without fainting.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ESTHER 10
MATTHEW 8

THOUGHT

God loves the guileless soul even when in his ignorance he is actually guilty of rashness in prayer but for the insincere, there is no cure. – AW Tozer



15 DECEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Job 16

LESSON

Comforters or tormentors?

VERSE 2

I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all.

Now comes Job's reply to the preceding discourse of Eliphaz, in which he complained of the conversation of his friends as unprofitable, uncomfortable, vain, empty and without any foundation. He said that if they were in his stead, he would have behaved differently towards them. He would not have mocked them but comforted them.

Then he turned to God and spoke to Him—of what He had done to him, both to his family and to himself. He represented his own case as very deplorable upon all accounts but he still held fast his integrity, concerning which he appealed to God's righteous judgement from the unrighteous censures of his friends.

Job's friends came with a design to comfort him. Professing to come as comforters, they became tormentors. Instead of offering anything to alleviate Job's affliction, they added affliction to it and made it more grievous. They applied useless remedies and misapplied good ones. They set out on the false principle that great sufferings proved great sins and temporal prosperity must always accompany true piety. They concluded that Job must be both a hypocrite and a transgressor. Consequently, they employed arguments to bring him to humiliation, repentance and prayer.

The great want in Job's friends is a genuine sympathy. God's Word teaches us to rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Let our speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that we may know how to heal the broken-hearted and bind the wounded.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 1
MATTHEW 9

THOUGHT

Read 2 Corinthians 1: 3–4 on the Comforter.





16 DECEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Job 17–18

LESSON

**Judge not, that ye be
not judged**

JOB 18:21

*Surely such are the
dwellings of the wicked, and
this is the place of him that
knoweth not God.*

In his second speech, Bildad emphasised the fate of the wicked. Irritated that Job should treat his advice with contempt, he was no longer able to keep his passions within the bounds of courtesy. He charged Job to “be sensible, and then we can talk”. This sounded good but being sensible for Bildad meant agreeing that the root of Job’s problem was sin and the solution, repentance. So Bildad reminded Job of the horrors that awaited those who refused to repent. Although he was talking about the things that would happen to the wicked, Bildad presumptuously assumed that Job was a great sinner.

When we face difficulties, we can expect well-meaning Bildads to come along and give advice without listening or identifying with our pain. Rather than seeking to understand, they give unhelpful and trite answers. When we may listen politely to such useless advice, talk to God later about what was said and ask Him to help you sort out the helpful advice from the empty words.

When we counsel people it is more important to help them think about God and talk to Him than to get them to adopt all our theology. Avoid empty words. It is more important to convey care and support than to say exactly the correct word.

Job’s companions seemed to have given up on Job because he would not agree with their theological presuppositions. They failed to give him credit for being sincere in his desire to come to terms with God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 2
MATTHEW 10

THOUGHT

**It is not the voice of man but the voice of God
that must govern us all.**



17 DECEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Job 19–20

LESSON

**Hold fast your
confidence in the
sovereign goodness
of God**

JOB 19:2

*How long will ye vex my
soul, and break me in
pieces with words?*

It has been said: “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me.” That is not all true. Words of hate and words of wrath that come from the heart of man can hurt and destroy people. That was Job’s situation. He was broken and tormented by his friends’ words. Be careful of what you say. Words can be very destructive. May the words of Jesus and not the words of man come from your lips.

Job’s reply rose above these cruel words. His friends were vexing him with words and breaking him in pieces, but he did not claim to be perfect. He admitted to erring but he claimed that his errors had only affected himself and not other people. What had befallen him, he took from the hand of God. Yet he felt that God’s dealings had been unnecessarily severe.

Suffering is a test of our faith, our character, our values and our love for God. It is a test that can make us bitter or better. It can make us bitter if we jump to the wrong conclusions about why God has allowed our pain. It can make us better if our eyes are open to the power, wisdom, goodness and love of God. Job went into the fire a good and godly man. He came out better for his trouble.

May you come to a deeper appreciation not only of Job but of the God he had learnt to trust.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 3
MATTHEW 11

THOUGHT

Job had a true Friend amid cruel friends.

BIBLE LESSON*Job 21***LESSON****God's knowledge
extending
everywhere****VERSE 22***Shall any teach God
knowledge? seeing he
judgeth those that are high.*

Job was agonising over these questions. His anguish over not understanding what God was doing is proof that he was not indifferent. But the apparent silence of God was deafening, and Job was overwhelmed. In a broader context, Job was questioning the ways and wisdom of God in not bringing judgement sooner upon the wicked man. At the same time he sensed that this was wrong, so he corrected himself with his own rhetorical question.

Shall we tell God how he should govern the world, what sinner he should spare and whom he should punish? Is anyone so bold as to direct and instruct God whom he should afflict, and whom not to, and in what manner? God has the authority to judge those who are high.

He manages them and makes what use as he pleases of them. Shall He then be accountable to us, and receive advice from us? He is the Judge of all the earth, and therefore no doubt He will do right those proceedings of His providence, which seem to contradict one another not only to agree, but jointly to serve His own purposes.

We cannot tell God anything He does not already know. Is it not pleasant to talk with one who knows the whole case perfectly? And is it not a relief to feel that His answers depend not on the requests we make but on His infinite and perfect knowledge of our circumstances and conditions?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 4
MATTHEW 12

THOUGHT

No one can tell God what to do, but we can always pray in His will.

19 DECEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Job 22

LESSON

**Wherefore I abhor
myself, and repent in
dust and ashes**

VERSE 23

*If thou return to the
Almighty, thou shalt be
built up, thou shalt put
away iniquity far from thy
tabernacles.*

These words introduce a most exquisite picture of the blessings consequent upon one's return to God. However, they do not fit in the case of Job, to whom they were addressed, because he had not left God. It also sounded strange, coming from Eliphaz. Eliphaz was telling Job to get right with God and be blessed and be restored. He spoke of knowing God and then being at peace with Him.

The problem for Job was that he could not find the sin that they claimed he was guilty of. As he examined his life, he knew there was nothing he had not dealt with, and though he did not claim to be sinless, he did say that he could not find what the trouble was and thus the words of Eliphaz were empty.

There is some truth in Eliphaz's statement but it was wrongly applied and misleading. Some people want us to believe that Christians should never have problems. But what do you do when a Christian faces problems? There is plenty of trouble in our lives that are indeed caused by sin. If we repent of our sins, many of them will go away. We must put away unrighteousness from our home life and business engagements so that our tent may be free from idols.

However, when the sovereign God deems it fit to deal with us "inequitably", we must learn to submit and be content to lay our most treasured possessions in the dust at God's feet for Him to deal with as He pleases.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 5-6
MATTHEW 13-14

THOUGHT

**A glad relief shall always follow closely on
disaster.**

BIBLE LESSON*Job 23***LESSON****The will of God****VERSE 14**

*For he performeth the thing
that is appointed for me:
and many such things are
with him.*

God's irresistible power and inscrutable behaviour made Job afraid. Job was speaking of the sovereignty of God when he said that He was in control. Job had to admit that God would do as He pleased in his life and would not be held hostage to his demands. Job understood that the reasons and wisdom of God's work were ultimately His and not Job's.

Job here seemed to come closer to the place that God wanted him to be in his crisis. He came closer to realising that God could be trusted and that God does in fact love and care for him. But at the same time, He is sovereign and His ways are beyond his knowing.

Perhaps your heart has been asking how God could have allowed a certain event to happen in your life. Perhaps there are clouds that have shut out the sun from your life. Your heart is right before the Lord and there is no known sin in your life. You may not know now and you may never know in this life the reason for it. But you know that it is no accident and in the design of God, it will work together for good.

So in patience possess your problem with the assurance that the outcome will be according to His sovereign will.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 7-8
MATTHEW 15-16

THOUGHT**Don't be afraid of God's will.**

BIBLE LESSON*Job 24***LESSON****The coming
judgement of God****VERSE 1**

*Why, seeing times are not
hidden from the Almighty,
do they that know him not
see his days?*

Job lamented the heart condition of the people of his time, where the wicked continue to prosper and ignore the commandments of God. They continued to sin against God. Yet they claimed to know God. Evidently, knowing God is not sufficient. Even the Devil knows God. Here, God's Word says that they all take lightly the signs of the coming judgement day of God. Let us take heed that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement" [Hebrews 9:27].

Though it now seems that the wicked are "free" to do what they please, note that God is watching [v. 23]. He does not immediately send His judgement but is longsuffering and patient. Remember how we also were once like them. Yet, God condescended to save us [1 Corinthians 6:11].

Let us be forewarned, then, that God's patience and longsuffering will not be without an end. Signs of our Lord's coming are all around us: pestilences, wars and rumours of war. Let us, like our Lord Jesus, set our sights on the souls that are yet outside God's kingdom. Let us work while it is yet day; the night comes when no man can work.

But before we can start to do God's work, let us examine ourselves by asking these questions. Do you truly know Him? Do you walk close to Him? Only when we truly know our Lord and walk close to Him can we start to "see His days" and start to do His work effectively.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 9
MATTHEW 17

MEDITATION

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. – Hebrews 9:27–28

BIBLE LESSON*Job 25–26***LESSON****Being born of the Spirit****JOB 25:4**

How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?

In his third speech, Bildad the Shuhite described the sovereignty of God [Job 25:2]. He is the blessed and only Potentate [1 Timothy 6:15] and, as such, we should fear and revere Him. God is also omniscient and omnipotent. His light touches all creation and nothing is hidden from Him.

He goes on to contrast the lowliness of man and asks a pertinent question: How can a man be justified with God, seeing that since the Fall, man has been separated from God because of sin? Even the whole creation [Job 25:5] is not pure in God's sight.

We thank God that He has given us the Bible, which is divinely inspired. As such, every book in the Bible is true. The Bible is God's Word and it tells us only the truth. Some may read the Bible and find it hard to believe that God created everything. They prefer to believe in evolution. Would you rather believe what God says or what a few scientists say?

Unless we, through the Holy Spirit's illumination, believe that we have inherited the sinful nature from our first parents, we will not have the desire to be reconciled with God. Every man that is born of woman is a sinner. How can we be justified? By being born again of the Spirit. How then can we be born again? By believing in Jesus. Will you believe in Jesus, and be born again?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 10
MATTHEW 18

MEDITATION

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. – John 4:23

BIBLE LESSON*Job 27–28***LESSON****True wisdom and understanding****JOB 28:28**

*And unto man he said,
Behold, the fear of the
Lord, that is wisdom;
and to depart from evil is
understanding.*

Job asserted that since God is sovereign, he should not be suffering because he is not as the wicked. He insisted that he had kept his integrity and faith. He went on to describe the fate of the wicked, whose end is to be separated from the presence of God. Next, Job described the wisdom of God, which is demonstrated in all creation. God knows even the hidden things within creation.

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth, and all the living and non-living things in them. He then created Adam and gave him dominion over all creation. The complexity of the physical creation is a visible testimony to God's wisdom and creative power [Job 28:1–11]. A man can spend his whole life learning about the physical world, and still could only acquire a fraction of the sum of knowledge. The world today regards science as the ultimate in human endeavour and many people put their complete faith in what science can do, from healing diseases to making better and more powerful machines to help their fellow man.

As Christians, we should put science in its right place. All knowledge and wisdom comes from God, and science is merely a tool that has been given to man. Real science should glorify God, as it reveals the marvellous wisdom of God's creative work in the physical world.

There is no end to learning and the gathering of knowledge. To be truly wise is to fear God, and depart from evil.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 11
MATTHEW 19

MEDITATION

Read Ecclesiastes 12:12–14. Fear God and keep His commandments.

BIBLE LESSON*Job 29***LESSON****Living a comfortable life****VERSE 18**

*Then I said, I shall die
in my nest, and I shall
multiply my days as the
sand.*

Job recalled how he had done great works in his past, even though it now seemed that God had left him. He had everything going for him: God's blessings, family and children, and the respect of the people in his community. He was also a great help to those in need, and he expected this blessing of prosperity to continue indefinitely.

Many people in the world also look towards their lives as a series of continual improvements. When we are young, we study hard and work hard so that we can achieve financial independence. Then, we buy a new house to build a home. We find our life partners, get married and start a family. Our children grow up and we expect to settle comfortably into the roles of grandparents.

However, life does not always go as smoothly as planned. In uncertain economic times, many are finding that the nest eggs that they have worked hard to achieve are insufficient. Some fail in their relationships, or worse, end up with an abusive spouse. Some fall ill with chronic diseases.

Let us not get too comfortable with this present life. Our days are as the dew, which appears in the morning but is soon gone with the heat of the day. Instead, let us focus on the purpose that God has planned for us in this life, regardless of what condition we find ourselves in. Let us glorify God with our lives, by living it so that others can see Jesus in us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 12
MATTHEW 20

THOUGHT

“Then live for Christ both day and night; Be faithful, be brave, and true, And lead the lost to life and light; Let others see Jesus in you.”

BIBLE LESSON*Job 30***LESSON****Jesus, the light of the world****VERSE 26**

*When I looked for good,
then evil came unto me:
and when I waited for light,
there came darkness.*

Having lost everything, including his health, Job also lost his former status. He was no longer recognised and respected in his community. People avoided him, and some even derided him because of his circumstances. Job accused God of allowing him to suffer. He felt as if God had totally abandoned him.

Job's suffering alludes to the suffering that our Lord went through on the Cross. Jesus was the revered Master and Rabbi but at Pilate's court, He was mocked, beaten and spat upon. Though innocent, He was crucified, a punishment reserved for the worst of criminals. But worst of all, God the Father turned His face from Him as He bore our sins on the Cross. But Jesus condescended to suffer all these so that we can be reconciled to God.

At times, when our lives seem to be going from bad to worse, when we feel as if God has abandoned us, let us turn our eyes upon Jesus. Let us cast our cares upon Him, Who has suffered more than any man on earth, and hold on to His promise that peace and rest is freely offered to all who put their trust in Him.

In this world of darkness, let us remember that true light has appeared and was first witnessed in the lowly town of Bethlehem. Let us praise and worship God, Who became flesh and dwelt among us, Who has suffered for our sakes, and has redeemed us with His sacrifice on Calvary. Hallelujah! Christ is born.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 13-14
MATTHEW 21

THOUGHT

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face; And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.”

BIBLE LESSON*Job 31–32***LESSON****Job treating his servants well****JOB 31:13**

If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maidservant, when they contended with me;

Job testified to his own integrity in the most solemn of terms. He was so confident of his innocence that if his three friends could prove him guilty, he was willing to suffer the most severe punishment, even to the extent of being deprived of his wealth and bereaved of his family.

Job said that he had been fair to his servants [Job 31:13–15]. When they complained, he listened. The goodness of a man or a woman is often best shown by how they treat people who are their subordinates, not how they treat their peers or their superiors. Job knew that he had a Master in heaven to Whom he would have to answer for his actions towards others, including his servants. He accepted the responsibility of treating his servants justly as a God-given obligation, knowing that on Judgement Day God would rise to their defence.

The Apostle Paul taught a similar lesson where he told masters to treat their servants well: “And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him” [Ephesians 6:9].

Another reason why Job treated his servants well was that he recognised their essential humanity. Job’s attitude was admirable at a time when masters exercised absolute power over their servants, often refusing to do them justice. But Job treated them humanly, as he was aware that “did not he that made me in the womb make him?” [Job 31:15].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 15–16
MATTHEW 22

THOUGHT

Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers? – Malachi 2:10

BIBLE LESSON*Job 33–34***LESSON****Reaping what you****sow****JOB 34:11**

*For the work of a man shall
he render unto him, and
cause every man to find
according to his ways.*

Claiming to be Job's spokesman before God, Elihu denounced Job for denying God His justice. It is painful to see this brash young man speaking to the faithful Job in such a manner. There is no doubt of Elihu's intention—he thought he was helping Job to come to his senses.

When proclaiming that “for the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways,” Elihu resorted to the simple “you reap what you sow” equation claimed earlier by Job's friend Eliphaz in Job 4:8. Paul has also said: “For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” [Galatians 6:7b].

These sow-and-reap statements in the Bible should never be construed as a spiritual law of karma. Instead, they serve as a useful guiding principle for believers to conduct their lives. We cannot live our lives one way and expect to receive a different kind of reward. We cannot walk the worldly path and expect to end up in heaven. We either walk after the flesh or after the Spirit. There is no middle ground. A man who says that the seed he is sowing is neither worldly nor spiritual deceives himself.

The fruit that we reap is consistent with the seed we sow. Whatever we give to others, God will eventually give back to us. This is the basics of God's justice.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 17–18
MATTHEW 23–24

THOUGHT

Forgive others and be forgiven by God; love others and be loved by God; have mercy on others and receive mercy from God.

BIBLE LESSON*Job 35–36***LESSON****Our
incomprehensible
God****JOB 36:26***Behold, God is great, and
we know him not, neither
can the number of his years
be searched out.*

Elihu heard and sensed how Job demanded answers from God for his suffering, and therefore counselled him to understand that God was beyond his comprehension. This was Elihu's most truthful argument but it was based on a faulty premise that Job had transgressed gravely against God. It was a powerful principle but wrongly applied in Job's case, as Elihu did not know that God allowed Satan to test Job [Job 2:3].

Yes, God is incomprehensible. He will never be known clearly, fully and perfectly. God is great and His greatness is beyond our conception and expression. "For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward" [Deuteronomy 10:17]. But at the time, "gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful" [Psalm 116:5].

Our knowledge of God is based on what the Bible has revealed to us. We can never know enough of God's mind to answer questions relating to the misfortunes in our lives or tragic events in the world. Life always creates more questions than we have answers for. But we must still trust God and seek His wisdom and strength to cope with life's dilemmas.

No matter how much we think we have learnt about God, we are only just scratching the surface. The more we learn of God, the more we marvel at His greatness. The more we learn of God, the more willing we will be to serve Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 19
MATTHEW 25

THOUGHT

**He hath made every thing beautiful in his time:
also he hath set the world in their heart. –
Ecclesiastes 3:11a**

BIBLE LESSON*Job 37–38***LESSON****God speaking in a storm****JOB 38:1***Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,*

Elihu saw an approaching storm and described it as an example of the power of God. But God was in that storm, and from the tempest He spoke to Job and his friends, to testify His displeasure against them, that they might be more humbled and prepared to receive the instructions He was about to give.

The mighty voice of God is not lost even in the noise of a whirlwind. God designed it to startle Job and command his attention. A whirlwind is often associated with divine presence. It speaks to us of the powerful nature of God. Consider some other verses in the Bible that link God to the whirlwind.

- And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal [2 Kings 2:1].
- The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet [Nahum 1:3].
- For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire [Isaiah 66:15].

One commentator says, “In many ways a storm serves as an ideal metaphor for the spiritual problems in Job. While a storm presents all the outward appearance of chaos, of nature run amok, still throughout it all we know that the Creator remains in absolute control of every detail.”

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 20
MATTHEW 26

THOUGHT

Sometimes God answers His own people in terrible corrections, as out of the whirlwind, but always in righteousness. – Matthew Henry

BIBLE LESSON*Job 39–40***LESSON****Job being speechless
before God****JOB 40:4***Behold, I am vile; what
shall I answer thee? I will
lay mine hand upon my
mouth.*

Confronted with the great power of God, Job fell in humble reverence before Him, speechless. Job had spoken many foolish words earlier because of his suffering. But when God spoke of His greatness, Job ceased his complaints and accusations at once. “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee?” [Job 40:4].

Job would have no more long speeches or rage. He spoke with a different tone now. He was still in pain and had lost virtually everything. His tone changed because he felt God’s presence once more, not because his physical situation had changed.

Job felt ashamed of the way he spoke about God earlier and now said, “I will lay mine hand upon my mouth”. He would argue no more. Mason said this is perhaps one of the “most worshipful gestures of all”. The act of Job covering his mouth with his hand is “a demonstration of total submission. One can fall on one’s face and yet continue to blubber and babble. But to yield the tongue is to yield everything.”

God came to Job as a teacher—a loving, vivid and powerful teacher. Job had had a wonderful time of fellowship and teaching with his Creator. God taught Job all about His greatness using the world as His classroom. God answered Job’s heart without specifically answering his questions. God was once again with Job and that was enough for him. He experienced much peace of mind, amid his suffering.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 21
MATTHEW 27

THOUGHT

**Only the revelation of God could so humble Job
and set him in his right place before the Lord.**

BIBLE LESSON*Job 41–42***LESSON****Job repenting before
God****JOB 42:6***Wherefore I abhor myself,
and repent in dust and
ashes.*

Job confessed his presumptions and lack of knowledge. He had said many imprudent things, both in his agonised cry and in the bitter debate with his three friends. Now Job returned to humble contentment, though he still did not know the answers to the questions arising from his personal crisis. “Wherefore I abhor myself.” With this statement, Job was formally retracting his previous statements made in ignorance and bitterness.

“And repent in dust and ashes.” Job had done nothing to invite the crisis into his life. The reason for his pain was rooted in the contention between God and Satan [Job 1–2]. Yet he had to repent of his wrongdoing in giving in to despair excessively and also of his unwise speeches as he argued with his friends.

Spurgeon suggested that in addition to speaking “beyond his knowledge and ability to know”, Job also repented of “the terrible curse he had pronounced upon the day of his birth, his desire to die, his complaints against and challenges to God and his despair”. For Job, the greatest trial was not the pain or the loss. It was not being able to understand why God allowed him to suffer. He finally learnt that when nothing else was left, he had God and that was enough.

Similarly, we must trust God regardless of whether He allows blessing or suffering to come upon us. Testing is difficult but the result is often a deeper relationship with the Lord. Those who endure the testing will experience God’s great rewards in the end.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
PSALM 22
MATTHEW 28

THOUGHT

It is easy to think that we have all the answers. In reality, only God knows exactly why events unfold as they do.

