

DEVOTIONAL QUARTERLY

SUNDAY SCHOOL SPRING QUARTER, 2005 MARCH, APRIL, MAY



WALKING WITH GIANTS AND GNATS

Devotional Quarterly

Through-the-Bible Series

Vol. 15, No. 2

March 1, 2005

Walking with Giants and Gnats

These Daily Devotionals will encourage believers to use wisdom in making difficult decisions in life. Examples of Solomon's wisdom will provide ways to use wisdom. These devotionals include warnings about following advice that is unwise, the care of God for His faithful servants and a challenge to remember that judgment is coming and that Jesus will be the Judge.

Personal and Daily Devotionals for Spring Quarter, 2005

Prepared by Marc Shultz, Mary McCalister
and Beverly Barnett

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Read Through the Bible in a Year

To help you with your Bible reading, we are providing a suggested reading list for each day of the quarter. You will find these suggested readings at the beginning of each devotional quarterly.

The readings include the “Daily Readings” and the “Daily Devotionals.” The devotional for each day is based on the Scripture from the “Daily Devotionals” list. The “Daily Readings” cover other Scriptures not lesson related. By reading both passages each day, you will have read the entire Bible at the end of the year.

You may use the box beside the date to check when you have read the Scriptures for that day.

March Scripture Readings

DATE	DAILY READINGS	DAILY DEVOTIONALS
<input type="checkbox"/> February 28	Numbers 35; 36	1 Corinthians 1:18-31
<input type="checkbox"/> March 1	Deuteronomy 1; 2	Proverbs 2:1-9
<input type="checkbox"/> March 2	Deuteronomy 3—5	James 1:5-7
<input type="checkbox"/> March 3	Deuteronomy 6:4—8	James 3:13-18
<input type="checkbox"/> March 4	Deuteronomy 9—11	1 Kings 2:1-12
<input type="checkbox"/> March 5	Deuteronomy 12—14	1 Kings 2:13-46
<input type="checkbox"/> March 6	Deuteronomy 15; 16	
<input type="checkbox"/> March 7	Deuteronomy 17—19	2 Chronicles 2:7-18
<input type="checkbox"/> March 8	Deuteronomy 20—22	Psalms 96:1-10
<input type="checkbox"/> March 9	Deuteronomy 23; 24	1 Kings 5:1-18
<input type="checkbox"/> March 10	Deuteronomy 25—27	1 Kings 6:1-10
<input type="checkbox"/> March 11	Deuteronomy 28; 29	1 Kings 6:11-14
<input type="checkbox"/> March 12	Deuteronomy 30—32	1 Kings 6:21-38
<input type="checkbox"/> March 13	Deuteronomy 33; 34	
<input type="checkbox"/> March 14	Joshua 1—3	1 Kings 9:1-9
<input type="checkbox"/> March 15	Joshua 4; 5	1 Kings 9:15-28
<input type="checkbox"/> March 16	Joshua 6—8	2 Chronicles 5:11-14
<input type="checkbox"/> March 17	Joshua 9; 10	2 Chronicles 6:12-42
<input type="checkbox"/> March 18	Joshua 11—13	2 Chronicles 7:1-11
<input type="checkbox"/> March 19	Joshua 14—16	2 Chronicles 7:12-22
<input type="checkbox"/> March 20	Joshua 17; 18	
<input type="checkbox"/> March 21	Joshua 19—21	2 Chronicles 8:1-18
<input type="checkbox"/> March 22	Joshua 22—24	2 Chronicles 9:1-12
<input type="checkbox"/> March 23	Judges 1—3	2 Chronicles 9:13-28
<input type="checkbox"/> March 24	Judges 4; 5	1 Kings 11:11-25
<input type="checkbox"/> March 25	Judges 6—8	1 Kings 11:26-40
<input type="checkbox"/> March 26	Judges 9; 10	1 Kings 11:41-43; 2 Chronicles 9:29-31
<input type="checkbox"/> March 27	Judges 11; 12	
<input type="checkbox"/> March 28	Judges 13—15	1 Kings 12:1-15; 2 Chronicles 10:9-11
<input type="checkbox"/> March 29	Judges 16—18	1 Kings 12:16-24; 2 Chronicles 10:12-15
<input type="checkbox"/> March 30	Judges 19—21	James 3:13-16
<input type="checkbox"/> March 31	Ruth	Galatians 5:19-21

April Scripture Readings

DATE	DAILY READINGS	DAILY DEVOTIONALS
<input type="checkbox"/> April 1	1 Samuel 1; 2	1 Corinthians 6:1-8
<input type="checkbox"/> April 2	1 Samuel 3—5	1 Corinthians 1:11-13
<input type="checkbox"/> April 3	1 Samuel 6; 7	
<input type="checkbox"/> April 4	1 Samuel 8—10	1 Kings 13:1-10
<input type="checkbox"/> April 5	1 Samuel 11—13	1 Kings 13:11-32
<input type="checkbox"/> April 6	1 Samuel 14; 15	1 Kings 14:1-14
<input type="checkbox"/> April 7	1 Samuel 16; 17	1 Kings 14:21-31; 2 Chronicles 12:1-16
<input type="checkbox"/> April 8	1 Samuel 18—20	1 Kings 15:1-8; 2 Chronicles 13:1, 2
<input type="checkbox"/> April 9	1 Samuel 21—23	1 Kings 16:23-33
<input type="checkbox"/> April 10	1 Samuel 24; 25	
<input type="checkbox"/> April 11	1 Samuel 26—28	1 Kings 17:5-16
<input type="checkbox"/> April 12	1 Samuel 29—31	1 Kings 17:17-24
<input type="checkbox"/> April 13	2 Samuel 1; 2	1 Kings 18:1-16
<input type="checkbox"/> April 14	2 Samuel 3—5	1 Kings 19:8-18
<input type="checkbox"/> April 15	2 Samuel 6—8	2 Kings 1:1-18
<input type="checkbox"/> April 16	2 Samuel 9—11	2 Kings 2:1-11
<input type="checkbox"/> April 17	2 Samuel 12; 13	
<input type="checkbox"/> April 18	2 Samuel 14—16	1 Kings 20:1-21
<input type="checkbox"/> April 19	2 Samuel 17; 18	1 Kings 20:22-43
<input type="checkbox"/> April 20	2 Samuel 19—21	1 Kings 21:5-11
<input type="checkbox"/> April 21	2 Samuel 22—24	1 Kings 22:1-28
<input type="checkbox"/> April 22	1 Kings 1; 2 Kings 14; 15	1 Kings 22:29-53
<input type="checkbox"/> April 23	2 Kings 16; 17	2 Chronicles 20:3-30
<input type="checkbox"/> April 24	2 Kings 18; 19	
<input type="checkbox"/> April 25	2 Kings 20—22	2 Kings 2:19-22
<input type="checkbox"/> April 26	2 Kings 23—25	2 Kings 3:1-27
<input type="checkbox"/> April 27	1 Chronicles 1—3	2 Kings 4:1-7
<input type="checkbox"/> April 28	1 Chronicles 4; 5	2 Kings 4:8-37
<input type="checkbox"/> April 29	1 Chronicles 6—8	2 Kings 4:38-44
<input type="checkbox"/> April 30	1 Chronicles 9—11	2 Kings 5:1-27

May Scripture Readings

DATE	DAILY READINGS	DAILY DEVOTIONALS
<input type="checkbox"/> May 1	1 Chronicles 12—14	
<input type="checkbox"/> May 2	1 Chronicles 15—17	2 Kings 8:16-29
<input type="checkbox"/> May 3	1 Chronicles 18—21	2 Chronicles 21:1-7
<input type="checkbox"/> May 4	1 Chronicles 22—24	2 Chronicles 21:8-11
<input type="checkbox"/> May 5	1 Chronicles 25—27	2 Chronicles 21:12-20
<input type="checkbox"/> May 6	1 Chronicles 28; 29	Isaiah 63:1-6
<input type="checkbox"/> May 7	2 Chronicles 25—27	1 Thessalonians 5:1-10
<input type="checkbox"/> May 8	2 Chronicles 28; 29	
<input type="checkbox"/> May 9	2 Chronicles 30—32	2 Kings 9:1-4
<input type="checkbox"/> May 10	2 Chronicles 33; 34	2 Kings 9:8-20
<input type="checkbox"/> May 11	2 Chronicles 35; 36	2 Kings 10:1-9; 2 Chronicles 22:1-9
<input type="checkbox"/> May 12	Ezra 1—3	2 Kings 10:12-17
<input type="checkbox"/> May 13	Ezra 4—6	2 Kings 10:18-28
<input type="checkbox"/> May 14	Ezra 7—10	2 Kings 10:32-36
<input type="checkbox"/> May 15	Nehemiah 1—3	
<input type="checkbox"/> May 16	Nehemiah 4—6	2 Kings 11:4-12; 2 Chronicles 23:1-10
<input type="checkbox"/> May 17	Nehemiah 7; 8	2 Kings 11:13-16; 2 Chronicles 23:12-15
<input type="checkbox"/> May 18	Nehemiah 9; 10	2 Kings 12:1-16
<input type="checkbox"/> May 19	Nehemiah 11—13	2 Kings 12:17, 18
<input type="checkbox"/> May 20	Esther 1—3	2 Chronicles 24:20-22
<input type="checkbox"/> May 21	Esther 4—6	2 Kings 12:19-21 2 Chronicles 24:25-27
<input type="checkbox"/> May 22	Esther 7—9	
<input type="checkbox"/> May 23	Job 1—3	Joel 1:1-20
<input type="checkbox"/> May 24	Job 4—7	Joel 2:1-11
<input type="checkbox"/> May 25	Job 8—10	Joel 2:20-27
<input type="checkbox"/> May 26	Job 11—14	Joel 1:28-31
<input type="checkbox"/> May 27	Job 15—19	Joel 3:2; Matthew 25:31-46
<input type="checkbox"/> May 28	Job 20—24	Joel 3:9-11
<input type="checkbox"/> May 29	Job 25—31	

Jesus Brings Wisdom

KEY VERSE: “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord,” 1 Corinthians 1:30, 31.

Two little boys debated whose father was smarter. Jon said his father was smarter because he discovered a medicine that stopped hair from falling out. Brad said his father was smarter because he discovered a medicine that caused hair to grow back. Both fathers were bald. This is about the amount of our earthly wisdom.

Jesus gives us heavenly wisdom that does not end when we die. God’s wisdom is Christ and Christ in us. We are given wisdom through Christ Jesus as the Holy Spirit tutors us in the love story of God. This story is so simple it confuses a genius but gives wisdom to an illiterate because he accepts it by faith. That message is this—God so loved the sinner that He sent His sinless Son to die in the sinner’s place.

REFLECTION: *In Christ, one has His wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption; so if one is outside Christ, what does that make him?*

Beverly Barnett

The Source of True Wisdom

KEY VERSE: For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding,” Proverbs 2:6.

Our society hungers for knowledge. We go to great lengths to obtain it, but somehow we miss getting wisdom because true wisdom comes from God. He generously gives wisdom to those who seek it (like a child looking for a hidden gift).

God, who made Heaven and earth, created the stars, perfectly positioned the sun and the moon in the expansive heavens, took “the dust of the ground” (Gen. 2:7) and formed the first man, filled his lungs with the breath of life and made him a living soul, then anesthetized him without drugs, removed a rib without leaving a scar, formed woman so perfect that Adam called her the “mother of all living,” offered us common, ordinary, fallible people His wisdom.

However, some shun God’s wisdom for the knowledge of a college professor, who has a finite mind and a possible IQ of one hundred fifty and who might not be sure there is a God. Whoever possesses godly wisdom will reverently and worshipfully love and respect God.

REFLECTION: *I totally agree with having a college education when possible, but I would rather take advice from a graduate of high school whose wisdom is from God than from a graduate of Harvard whose only wisdom is from books.*

Beverly Barnett

God Gives Wisdom to Those Who Ask

KEY VERSE: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him,” James 1:5.

Prejudice is a terrible thing and goes hand in hand with pride. The conceited arrogance of one person over another halts the forward momentum of both people. One person is stuck in a rut of jealousy and fear while the other person is stuck in his circumstances. Can you image how it will be to live in a place where prejudice is not present? We will all be finally living on level ground. We will sing praises to God with one united voice.

Jesus was the first person to break barriers in Jerusalem. He sustained His Father’s love for people. I am so glad He did. The Key Verse today is a perfect example of broken barriers. Want wisdom? Ask God, who gives to all liberally. He does not taunt us by withholding wisdom like a schoolyard bully holding a piece of candy out of reach of a shorter child. Nor does He scold us like a teacher who knows the answer and seeks to embarrass us for asking. Whether we are man or woman, child or adult, beautiful or plain, educated or illiterate, rich or poor, He gives wisdom generously to the unwavering petitioner.

REFLECTION: *Dear God, thank You for giving wisdom to those who ask. Now help us use it for Your glory.*

Beverly Barnett

The Evidence of True Wisdom

KEY VERSE: “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy,” James 3:17.

In these verses, James, guided by the Holy Spirit, gave us two contrasting types of wisdom. One is with bitterness, envy, dissension and selfishness. The other is pure, peaceable, gentle, approachable, merciful, fruitful, practices equality and is genuine. Is there any doubt where each one originated?

Earthy, sensual wisdom prompts us to feel superior, falsely important and causes us to think we are always right. People with this type of wisdom are difficult to live and work with. Nothing ever pleases them nor will they sacrifice for others. Their wisdom is devilish.

On the other hand, wisdom from above will point away from self. Godly wisdom will cause our actions to be mindful of Christ, His love and sacrifice for us as well as others. Nothing, not even our feelings, will be more important than giving God the glory and telling the good news. It will blind our eyes to nationality, wealth or age and cause our Christian walk to be fruitful and genuine. Unbelievers will see Christian living as peaceable, gentle and merciful.

REFLECTIONS: *Live for Christ—practice godly wisdom.
Live for self—practice devilish wisdom.*

Beverly Barnett

David's Charge to His Son, Solomon

KEY VERSE: "Be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; and keep the charge of the LORD thy God,"
1 Kings 2:2, 3.

King David may have been successful as the King of Israel but as a father, his parenting skills lacked much. David, like some fathers today, allowed many things to come before his family, resulting in a dysfunctional family. David, an old man, was looking back over his life with twenty-twenty vision. It was his last opportunity to encourage Solomon not to make the same mistakes he had made.

From my days as a hospice nurse, I have seen many scenes like the one in the reading today. The patriarch of the family is terminally ill, fully aware of the prognosis. Hence, in knowing this morbid news, he has time to say things his children need to hear from their father, admonitions about the future and apologies for the past. Patients are told this is a reckoning of time so do not waste it. Say what you need to say, hug and hold close those you will leave behind. Sadly, though too often, they hold back afraid to cry, to hug or to speak from the heart.

REFLECTION: *"A wise man will hear and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels" (Prov. 1:5).*

Beverly Barnett

Solomon Puts His House in Order

KEY VERSE: “Now therefore, *as* the LORD liveth, which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who hath made me an house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day,”
1 Kings 2:24.

We could retitle this lesson today, “Spring Cleaning the Kingdom,” but whatever we call it, this was payment day for some. Solomon knew this truth. Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. There is a time to stand unyielding and a time to extend grace. If a kingdom (or family) is about to fall into the hands of Satan, it is the time to stand!

God has appointed the position of family leader to the husband. Being a courageous leader is not always pleasant or popular, and everyone may not agree with his decisions. The father is responsible for his family and is accountable to God for his actions.

However, if God is not at the center of the family, we labor in vain (Psalm 127:1). We must make sure our families are centered in God’s love and His will. In loving God with all our hearts, souls and might, we will teach this concept to our children in words and deeds.

REFLECTION: *Satan attacks the family today more than ever. We must guard our families against these attacks and establish godly homes.*

Beverly Barnett

Helpers in the Temple Construction

KEY VERSE: “Send me now therefore a man cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in iron, and in purple, and crimson, and blue, and that can skill to grave with the cunning men that *are* with me in Judah and in Jerusalem, whom David my father did provide,” 2 Chronicles 2:7.

Imagine, a steamy morning in Thailand and you and I are shopping at Baan Tawai Market. Here are shops where skilled artisans can sell their handmade specialty wares.

In the silversmith’s shop, the silversmith hammers a design onto a large silver bowl. Shelves hold silver bowls, platters and tumblers each design unique. The sets of silver tableware are turned and twisted into a variety of patterns, some that resemble flowers, some bamboo canes and all polished until glistening.

In a dressmaker’s shop we can buy beautiful dresses made from handwoven Thai silk. In an artist’s shop picturesque paintings match those of the great artists of the past. At each shop are skilled crafters much like the people Solomon employed to build the Temple. God also has a job for each person in His churches, but we do not have to be specialists, just willing and available.

REFLECTION: *I love how God intertwines in a church body people with varied talents who are willing to use the gifts that He gave them for His glory.*

Beverly Barnett

Reasons To Glorify God with Our Best

KEY VERSE: “For the LORD *is* great, and greatly to be praised: he *is* to be feared above all gods,” Psalm 96:4.

Glorify God according to His greatness! We should come into His presence with praise and thanksgiving for He is worthy! These are facts that few would dispute, but we have yet to list the reasons to do our best for God’s glory. Maybe after reading some of the great Christian writers’ and philosophers’ works, you will be given a thorough list.

In addition, it is difficult to list all the reasons to glorify God with our best. The Bible is filled with attributes of God that urge us to do our best for Him. Moreover, each believer has his own personal reasons or favorite attribute of God that he recalls when he honors God with his actions. Paul listed a few reasons in Romans 11:33-36.

One reason to glorify God with our best is that He gave His best in the person of Jesus Christ.

“We cannot praise him too much, too often, too zealously, too carefully, too joyfully. He deserves that nothing in his worship should be little, but all the honour rendered unto him should be given in largeness of heart, with the utmost zeal for his glory.”—Charles Spurgeon.

REFLECTION: *Our challenge is to declare His glory louder with our actions than with our voices.*

Beverly Barnett

Solomon's Preparation for Building the Temple

KEY VERSE: “And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God,” 1 Kings 5:5.

Everything begins with a vision. Every successful sports team, business, school, church or mission team needs a vision. Vision helps one know when the goal has been reached. Yogi Berra, Hall of Fame catcher, joked, “If you don’t remember where you’re going you’ll end up somewhere else.” To accomplish the goal, we need preparation, planning and seeing the end from the beginning.

Solomon had a mental picture of the finished Temple. He could see how far he was from achieving the goal. He knew he must have all the needed resources. No matter whether you are building a house, starting a business, church or climbing a mountain, you must have funds, facilities, equipment, workers and purpose to reach the goal.

Solomon matched the skill to the job. He did not ask the stonemason to sew the delicate veils or the engravers to be lumberjacks. This is as important in our churches. We should match the role of the church worker with his God-given talent. We should not be afraid to put the right people in the right place so that they can glorify God with their gift. The goal is more important than the role.

REFLECTION: *Vision, resources, gifted people in place and giving up personal agendas—all contribute to seeing the goal accomplished.*

Beverly Barnett

The Unique Construction of the Temple

KEY VERSE: “And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe *nor* any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building,” 1 Kings 6:7.

Have you ever been around a house under construction? It is noisy. Saws are piercing in octaves so high it leaves eardrums ringing. Hammers pounding, boards slapping together and drills screaming are loud enough to give a person a major headache; however, the noise is necessary for the construction. Now imagine a quiet construction job where the only sound is a stone sliding perfectly into its spot—a feat of great architectural planning.

Similarly, when the Holy Spirit moves into the spirit of the believer, there are no trumpets, bells or whistles to announce His indwelling, just the peace of knowing God will do what He has promised. There is no foaming, seizures, fainting or laughing, just the Comforter quietly teaching the truths of God. The Holy Spirit guides, teaches and seals the spirit until the day of redemption.

This type of indwelling of the Holy Spirit scares some people because it cannot be measured in quantitatively loud decibels, only in qualitative peace.

REFLECTION: *Do you know that you are the temple of God that and the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

Beverly Barnett

God's Promise Concerning His House

KEY VERSE: "If thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee, which I spoke unto David thy father: And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel," 1 Kings 6:12, 13.

In today's reading a two letter word carries a lot of importance. The *if* in this promise of God to Solomon and to all the people of Israel made them accountable for their worship and obedience to Him. Often, we, too, are guilty of wanting to claim the promises of God without being accountable to God in our obedience and worship of Him.

Alcoholics, Gamblers, Sex Addicts Anonymous and many other groups realize that holding a person accountable will help them stay focused on the main goal. How successful would a person be if he could slide, skip or pass over the necessary and sometimes difficult steps to reach the intended goal?

The Christian life can be difficult because of Satan's constant attacks, but, by being accountable to another person, it will help us stay focused on the final goal. That goal is to give God all glory, honor and praise for giving His Son as the perfect sacrifice for our sins and to follow His will for our lives.

REFLECTION: *Does your life get sidetracked? Do not be afraid to ask for help because the goal is more important than the game!*

Beverly Barnett

The Beauty of God's Temple

KEY VERSE: “And the whole house he overlaid with gold, until he had finished all the house: also the whole altar that *was* by the oracle he overlaid with gold,” 1 Kings 6:22.

Wow! Beautiful! Look at that! Look at the detailed carving in those two cherubim. The gold alone is worth a fortune. Did you notice the clean smell of the cedar when we walked in? This is what we might say if we could tour the Temple Solomon built. However, we cannot because along with all its richness and beauty, delicately detailed carvings, the golden overlaid pieces, all of them were destroyed and the golden treasures of the house of the Lord were carried away by King Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army many centuries ago.

Solomon's life ambition was to build a beautiful Temple, pleasing to God which would be the final resting for the Ark of the Covenant; yet, it was destroyed as if it were made of straw. We forget God is more interested in a beautiful believer than in a beautiful temple. There is nothing magical or spiritual about a corruptible building made of wood and brick. Christians in whom the Spirit of God dwells should be more concerned with building a relationship with the true and living God (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Heb. 3:6).

REFLECTION: *We should keep in mind the Spirit of God does not dwell in a temple made with mortal hands, but in a life changed by Jesus.*

Beverly Barnett

God's Second Appearance and Promise to Solomon

KEY VERSE: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel," 1 Kings 9:5.

God saw the Temple that Solomon had completed as the dwelling place for Him among the people of Israel. He was pleased. He hallowed it by placing His name, love and knowledge there forever. God then turned His instructions to Solomon.

God made a conditional promise to Solomon. If Solomon would walk in integrity of heart and follow God's commandments, statutes and judgments, then, God would keep a man on the throne of Israel forever.

God places more value on our obedience and worship of Him, on our Christian testimony and our willingness to follow His will for us than on a temporary building. Whether it is made of mud or mortar, grass or glass, it is destructible. It is not eternal, but we are.

What we choose to do for God in this life is lasting. It precedes us in the form of rewards to Heaven, and it is a testimony of our love toward God daily. Wherever we go, people are watching to see whether God has first place in our lives.

REFLECTION: *God's promise to Solomon called for his total commitment.*

Beverly Barnett

The Worldwide Fame of Solomon

KEY VERSE: “And all the cities of store that Solomon had, and cities for his chariots, and cities for his horsemen, and that which Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion,” 1 Kings 9:19.

A successful builder, an entrepreneur in shipping, a booming economy and wisdom: these are a few of the things that made Solomon a legend in households of kings, queens and peasants. Solomon, a talented leader, made a list, counted the cost and assembled a talented team with a goal in mind.

Everything improves with good leadership. Leaders are challengers. A leader will assemble a team of talented people then release them to do their jobs. A leader will lead the team to the next level. Solomon took the people of Israel to the next level.

In our churches today, we need pastors who are not afraid to challenge church members to go forward in the Lord’s work. However, each member responds to a different type of motivation. One may need encouragement, another a gentle push, while another is jump started by a challenge. A pastor must be able to lead people and find the key that motivates them to take responsibility.

Effective pastors will help each member develop his potential. He does this by preaching challenging messages, teaching sound doctrine and helping them discover the barrier(s) keeping them from developing their best. He will not allow them to use the mistakes of others as an excuse for their own failure (Col. 3:23).

REFLECTION: *There are two reasons one becomes famous—failure and success.*

Beverly Barnett

Music, Priests, Praise and the Glory of God Fills the House

KEY VERSE: “It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers *were* as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up *their* voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the LORD, *saying*, For *he is* good; for his mercy *endureth* for ever: that *then* the house was filled with a cloud, *even* the house of the LORD; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God,” 2 Chronicles 5:13, 14.

It was a beautiful ceremony to sanctify the house of God. The carefully rehearsed songs, accompanied by well-tuned instruments, were sung in worshipful melodies that praised and glorified the Lord. Each dedicatory speech, spoken from the heart, flowed like the tears streaming down their cheeks.

Permission was finally given by the head man in the village—the ten year wait was over. They had a place to worship the one true God as a covenanted local body. Though, it was not the ornately carved and gold laden Temple of Solomon, the bamboo building was no less a place of worship.

The old people thought this day would never come, but now as Kanetchu Baptist Church joined together, they thankfully bowed their heads as the pastor prayed the dedicatory prayer. Behind him the Psalm 145:9 banner, written in their own Karen language, fluttered as a hot, humid breeze blew through the slits in the bamboo walls.

REFLECTION: *Come let us worship and heap extravagant praise upon the Lord God—He alone is worthy!*

Beverly Barnett

Only God Knows Man's Heart

KEY VERSE: “When every one shall know his own sore and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house: then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men:)” 2 Chronicles 6:29, 30.

God the Father knows us from the inside out. He knows what we fear, the voids in our lives—the real person. Some of us conceal our true selves because Christians must always be happy. When a clown paints on a face (mask), he looks happy and content. We, too, can mask our pain. We are fun to be around, always laughing, joking but on the inside God sees a person who is hiding an emotional scar. God wants to help us look inside ourselves and uncover the real person.

“Becoming aware of our deepest longings is a painful process and therefore will not come easily,” says Dr. Larry Crabb. A quick look beneath the surface of our lives reveals there is more going on than loving God and others. In a moment of failure we see our imperfections. Then we search for whatever will restore our sense of well-being.

God knows what we look like without the makeup, and He still loves us; we need to let Him abide in His strength, rest in His arms of grace, forgive ourselves and forgive others. He has already forgiven us.

REFLECTION: *“Perfectionism is the most disturbing emotional problem among evangelical Christians. It walks into my office more often than any other single Christian hang-up.”*
David A. Seamands

Beverly Barnett

The Fire Fell from Heaven with Divine Confirmation

KEY VERSE: “And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD’s house,” 2 Chronicles 7:2.

Acceptable worship and praise of God begins with preparation. Solomon prepared a place for the worship of God, and, although it was smaller than some church buildings today, it was still the place dedicated for the sacrificial worship of God. All the surrounding kingdoms recognized Solomon’s Temple as the earthly dwelling place of God.

Sad but true, the community around your place of worship associates the condition of the building with the dedication the membership has to the worship of God. Take a critical look at the Lord’s house as if you were a first time visitor. Do the building and property appear to be clean and neat because the membership takes pride in the facilities? However, please do not worship the building.

Solomon also prepared his heart. No church building in the world can take the place of a heart prepared for worship. Prayer, personal confession and a hunger to feast on God’s Word is conducive to worship. Famished by the world, we hunger and thirst for manna from God through His Word. God has promised to abide with (and feed) those who seek Him (Deut. 4:29; Matt. 5:6).

REFLECTION: *It would be great this Sunday for the glory of God to fill our hearts and overflow into our worship.*

Beverly Barnett

God's Conditional Promise of Revival

KEY VERSE: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land," 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Revival comes to those who have met the conditions of repentance.

As Christians we suffer from smooth knees and calloused hearts. Humility is not a sought after character trait in the world, but it is essential to revival of the spirit. Prostrating oneself before God is an act showing personal insignificance and a good position for seeking God's will. From this position, we are in no position to demand anything from God. Humility and haughtiness cannot dwell together.

Seeking God is like the woman who swept her house clean, desperately looking for the missing coin and was not satisfied until she found it. God loves it when we purposely look for Him. He also enjoys receiving our best because we love Him.

Humbly seeking God and turning from sin toward God will bring revival in our lives. However, it takes effort to repent, turning ever so slowly from our selfishness, leaving our wills behind and looking ahead to His will. As a result, God will hear, forgive and heal, and revival will come.

REFLECTION: *I sought the Lord and there He was in a place just behind my pride next to my sins. As I stepped toward Him, He stepped over my sins, covering them with His blood.*

Beverly Barnett

The Splendor of Solomon's Kingdom

KEY VERSE: “Now all the work of Solomon was prepared unto the day of the foundation of the house of the LORD, and until it was finished. So the house of the LORD was perfected,” 2 Chronicles 8:16.

The kingdom of Solomon was a vast region east of the river of Egypt (now Wadi el-Arish). From today's kingdom of Jordan to the northeast, it reaches past the Golan Heights all the way to the Euphrates River. Many new cities were built during this time. These were cities where children could safely play in the streets while their mothers visited with the neighbors. It was a time when all the Israelites benefited from the majestic kingdom.

Solomon, unlike many kings, was not satisfied to sit idly on the solid ivory throne overlaid with pure gold waiting until all the construction was finished. He was actively involved in overseeing every phrase of each building project until the last nail was driven. But as time passed, the pomp and circumstance of the vast accomplishment lost its glitter. The king of the most beautiful kingdom of that time declared it was all vanity and vexation of spirit in Ecclesiastes chapter 2.

Similarly, we build fine houses, church buildings, build portfolios and drive nice cars, and like this king, we too may proclaim it was all in vain if God has not been King of our lives.

REFLECTION: *Have you lost your heart? Look for it in your treasures (Matt. 6:19-21).*

Beverly Barnett

Solomon's Visit by the Queen of Sheba

KEY VERSE: "And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions . . . she said to the king, *It was* a true report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts, and of thy wisdom," 2 Chronicles 9:1, 5.

It is nice to have friends come for a visit. It is the time to break out the grill, dust off the patio chairs and prepare for a pleasant visit.

Being a proper guest is not difficult if you follow a few simple rules.

1. Do not be demanding of special treatment or diets.

If you must, because of doctor's restrictions, eat certain foods at specified times, take them with you.

2. If you are staying more than two days, take your host out for a dinner.

3. If you are staying overnight, take your favorite pillow.

4. Be interested in your hosts' lives and activities. Life is a lot more interesting if it is not all about you.

5. To show interest in your host's activities or work, ask questions, but not in such a way that seems probing.

6. Taking a gift to the host or hostess is thoughtful.

7. Relax and help yourself, but do not take over the house.

8. Leave a thank-you note or mail, or e-mail, a thank-you note when you return home.

REFLECTION: *Now host, you might be entertaining God's messenger, so be as hospitable as Paul encourages (Heb. 13:2).*

Beverly Barnett

The Wealth of Solomon's Kingdom

KEY VERSE: “Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and threescore and six talents of gold. And king Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom,” 2 Chronicles 9:13, 22.

With gold, silver, ivory, ships, horses and wisdom, Solomon could have been inducted into the successful men's hall of fame. He was able to see his vision for Israel and the Temple of God from development to completion. It seemed every investment he pursued succeeded effortlessly. His friends and fellow kings were inspired by his natural leadership abilities. He was a purpose driven man who realized he could not succeed without God's help.

As depicted in the 1995 hit movie, *Apollo 13*, for thirty-nine intense seconds, astronaut Lovell focused keeping the earth in view. By not losing sight of the earth as a reference point, the astronauts avoided disaster and were able to return to their anxiously waiting families. They remained focused on the goal.

The Scriptures remind us to keep focused on the end, or goal, to finish life successfully. Sometimes, however, the finish line is blurred by success. When this happens, we have a friend who will help us refocus on the benchmark, Jesus the Christ.

REFLECTION: *Fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2).*

Beverly Barnett

The Chastisement of God upon Solomon and His Kingdom

KEY VERSE: “And the LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he *was* of the king’s seed in Edom,” 1 Kings 11:14.

In these devotionals, we have studied about Solomon from the beginning to his present situation. It had been a productive, successful, God-fearing and God-worshiping life up until now. I wonder how a man who only asked God for wisdom, and, yet, God blessed him with wealth, too, could possibly move so far from Him in his daily walk. The answer is He may not have noticed the baby steps of sin that were moving him off the path with God. Sin has a way of doing that.

Don’t we wish that sin did not have consequences? Americans are the fattest people in the world. Diabetes, heart disease and strokes are killing many and costing million of dollars every year. Drug and alcohol rehab facilities have waiting lists; addictions cost millions in absenteeism and lost wages on the job. Upstanding citizens are arrested for possessing illegal substances and families are torn apart. Sexually transmitted diseases are epidemic across the country and the world. All the while, Christians remain knowledgeable but powerless, churchied but loveless.

REFLECTION: *“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11).*

Beverly Barnett

The Introduction of Jeroboam and Prophecy of Ahijah

KEY VERSE: “And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee,” 1 Kings 11:31.

God did just as He promised Solomon He would do if the people of Israel forsook His statutes and commandments. God always does what He says He will do, but our actions at times seem as though we want to test God’s warnings.

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon reflected on a life given to sinful pleasures and excess and the result of such a life. Every day we have examples before us of people who step across the boundaries of God. When will we learn that the closer to the fire one stands, the more likely he will get burned. The fact is that we continue to live in denial believing it cannot happen to us.

Sometimes we think we have somehow slipped by the omniscient God, squeaking past His statutes and commandments. Maybe it is because chastisement often does not come swiftly, but years later, sin will hunt us down. Our fair and loving Heavenly Father will not let us get by with sin without teaching us the right way.

REFLECTION: *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccl. 12:13, 14).*

Beverly Barnett

The Death of Solomon

KEY VERSE: “And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead,” 1 Kings 11:43.

Suppose it was like this. It was a night of feasting and music, a normal night in Solomon’s palace. After some lively conversation, the king imparted one of his proverbs as entertainment, then, danced to a few songs with his wives or concubines. Solomon was much older than any of his wives or concubines and tired easily. He excused himself and retired to the royal bedchamber. He lay down for a peaceful night’s sleep never to rise again.

Solomon left a legacy of wisdom and folly in Israel. He was one of the richest and wisest kings, but his extravagant life-style of numerous wives and concubines corrupted his walk with God. His wives influenced him into providing altars for their worship of false gods.

We all have an appointment with death, and we, too, will leave a legacy behind. Life does not consist in the valuables we have obtained but in what we have given. Have you given your life to God and yourself to the service of others? Have you turned the other cheek? Have you given that cup of water in Jesus name?

REFLECTION: *O death when you come for me, will I be ready? Will I have run the race, and stayed the course. Will my treasures be waiting in Heaven? Will those who remain say of me, “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints” (Psalm 116:15).*

Beverly Barnett

The Cost of Following Foolish Advice

KEY VERSE: “And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men’s counsel that they gave him,” 1 Kings 12:13.

Although Solomon is often called the wisest man on earth, his actions as king belied that description. He mistreated his subjects, treating them as slaves and greatly increasing their taxes to support his ambitions. Sad to say, his son, Rehoboam, who became king after him, acted with arrogance, saying, “My little finger shall be thicker than my father’s loins” (1 Kings 12:10). It is safe to say that Rehoboam learned from his father, but he did not learn anything good.

What was the worst mistake Rehoboam made? It was in choosing the wrong advice to follow. He first consulted with the older men of the kingdom, who advised him to lighten the yoke his father had placed on the people. Instead, he chose to follow the advice of the younger men who encouraged him to make their burdens heavier and their punishment greater.

Whose advice do you seek? Do you show respect to those who have experience in living a godly life, or do you ask advice of the ungodly who have no concept of what it means to serve God and honor Him? Do not make the mistake Rehoboam made. Seek godly advice, and especially seek God’s will in all your actions.

LIVING IT: *Seek the counsel of those who know what it is to serve God and please Him.*

Mary McCalister

The Kingdom Divided

KEY VERSE: “So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day,” 1 Kings 12:19.

The results of Rehoboam’s actions had repercussions which would be felt throughout the kingdom for hundreds of years. His arrogance when he confronted his people, saying, “I will add to your yoke: . . . I will chastise you with scorpions,” (1 Kings 12:14) caused the people of the ten tribes of Israel to rise up in rebellion. They said, “What portion have we in David? . . . See to thine own house, David” (1 Kings 12:16). Thus the kingdom was divided and the history of the people of Israel forever changed.

It is ironic that Rehoboam’s name is listed in the lineage of Christ (Matt. 1:7), but this serves as proof God’s promises to the people of Israel were given through a lineage and not through human behavior. Even David’s behavior was not all it should have been. God’s promises are not based on human behavior and for that we can be thankful.

What lesson can we learn from this? We can learn our actions do have consequences. We cannot rely on family or name to keep us in the center of God’s will. We must choose our actions wisely, knowing God is watching everything we do. We need to realize our actions can have far-reaching consequences which affect not only us, but those who come after us.

There are a couple of adages which fit well here—Be Sure Your Sins Will Find You Out and You Cannot Do Wrong And Get By. These are lessons Rehoboam needed to learn and they are good advice for us as well. Our sins are evident to God, and judgment is sure to come.

LIVING IT: *God will not bless bad behavior.*

Mary McCalister

Envy and Strife Result in Confusion and Evil

KEY VERSE: “For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work,” James 3:16.

On a scale of 1 to 10, what is the measure of the peace and harmony in your church? How does your homelife measure up on the harmony scale? Some people like to brag about causing a fuss. The attitude is that I say what I think and I don't care what people think. The problem is these people do not really think before they speak. James told us we are not to glory in bitterness and strife. Doing so places us in the category of being worldly, sensual and devilish.

How can we best avoid this sin? By following Jesus, our supreme example. He said of Himself, “I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29). We can look at Jesus and see what true humility is. He was holy, set apart and dedicated to the task for which He was born.

Meekness and humility will counteract the sins of envy and strife. In fact, they cannot co-exist when envy and strife are present. It is better to preserve the peace and harmony of a church than always to have our own way.

Humility is a perfect quietness of heart. It is to expect nothing, to wonder at nothing that is done for us and never to take offense at what is done against us. It is to be at rest when nobody praises us and when we are blamed or despised. The humble person is not one who thinks meanly of himself. He simply does not think of himself at all.

LIVING IT: *Be humble as Christ was humble and avoid the sin of envy.*

Mary McCalister

The Works of the Flesh Produce Strife and Division

KEY VERSE: “Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: . . . they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” Galatians 5:21.

A zookeeper tossed a hot dog into a snake pen. Two snakes immediately began to devour the meat, one on either end. When the two met in the middle, the snake with the larger mouth kept on going and consumed the other! What a picture this is of the Key Verse! Strife and division will cause us to destroy one another. Nothing good can come from this kind of behavior.

When you read the list of fleshly sins listed in this devotional, do you find yourself described? Most of us would say, Oh, no! I do not commit adultery. I am not a murderer. I am not a drunkard. But what about envy, strife, jealousy and anger? Who of us can say we never fall prey to these sins? They are listed along with what we consider the more terrible sins.

We can all find room for improvement in our lives. It is not enough to say we do not commit gross sins like adultery, murder or drunkenness. If we are envious and jealous of others, fall prey to fits of anger and cause strife with others because of them, we can disturb the fellowship of a church and destroy the lives of others as well as our own testimonies. Paul’s admonition to “be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10) would be a good motto for all of us to adopt.

LIVING IT: *Yield your life to the leadership of the Spirit, not the lusts of the flesh.*

Mary McCalister

The Wrong Way To Handle Disagreements

KEY VERSE: “Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?” 1 Corinthians 6:3.

An anonymous Spanish proverb states, “The Jews ruin themselves at their passover; the Moors, at their marriages; and the Christians in their lawsuits.” I do not know when this proverb was written, but it is sad that lawsuits among Christians have become so common as to be the subject of a proverb.

This was not something new. Read this devotional again. It was such a problem in the church at Corinth that Paul felt he had to address it. Some commentators reveal that the habit of suing is a result of the Greek influence.

Paul reasoned that, if saints are to judge the world in the Millennium, can we not settle disputes among ourselves? Paul said that it is a shame when brother goes to court against brother.

Are you willing to accept the solution Paul gave? “Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?” (1 Cor. 6:7) You will be blessed of God if you take wrong and suffer unjustly instead of asserting your rights and harming a brother.

Follow Christ’s example. “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:23). Jesus suffered for us, and we should be willing to endure suffering as a witness for Him.

LIVING IT: *Be willing to suffer for righteousness’ sake instead of destroying your testimony.*

Mary McCalister

Churches Should Not Be Divided

KEY VERSE: “Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”
1 Corinthians 1:13.

When someone asks you who baptized you, is your answer, Brother Smith, a pastor I dearly love? Wrong answer! Your answer should be, I was baptized by one of the Lord’s churches. It is important to magnify the Lord’s church and not the man.

This was a problem Paul was dealing with in the beginning of his letter to the church at Corinth. His prayer for them was that there be no divisions among them and that they “be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).

The problem was they were indeed divided. Some, Paul said, were followers of him, or of Apollos, or of Cephas. Some even bragged that they were followers of Christ, which would have been great if it were true. This was a problem then, and it is often a problem now. Churches become divided over preachers more than any other issue which may divide them.

We should not be the followers of any man. As much as we might love our pastor, we should always remember that he is the undershepherd, and we should follow him only as he follows the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. These were Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 11:1. Our ministers establish us in the faith and help us become mature and unified with others in the faith, and we should show them love and respect because of that.

LIVING IT: *True unity comes only in the acceptance of the faith and knowledge of Christ.*

Mary McCalister

The Prophecy Against Jeroboam's False Altar in Beth-el

KEY VERSE: “The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD,” 1 Kings 13:5.

Most of us hope to leave a positive legacy behind when we die, desiring that people will have good things to say about us and be inspired to live better because of something we have said or done. Jeroboam, however, did not leave such a legacy. God told the prophet Ahijah that Jeroboam, “did sin, and . . . made Israel to sin” (1 Kings 14:16). Ahijah was the same priest who, earlier, told Jeroboam that God would give him ten tribes of Israel to rule over (1 Kings 11:31).

Jeroboam did not start out to be evil. Solomon was so impressed with him that he made him a ruler in his kingdom because “Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour” (1 Kings 11:28). Where did he go wrong? He decided he could not let his people go to Jerusalem to worship because they would want to return to Rehoboam. So he set up two golden calves and told the people these were their gods, and they should worship them. He abandoned the worship of God.

Is there a time in our lives when we choose between what is right and what is expedient? Oftentimes our choices are made because of attractive job offers or the chance for better living conditions. Our choices should be based on how we can best serve the Lord. We need to be careful to make the right choices.

LIVING IT: *It is not enough to start right. We must keep on the right track if we are to leave a fitting legacy.*

Mary McCalister

Do Not Even Believe an Angel with a False Message

KEY VERSE: “He said unto him, I *am* a prophet also as thou *art*; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. *But* he lied unto him,” 1 Kings 13:18.

This is an interesting account of an unnamed prophet who listened to the wrong story. His problem was the person who enticed him “lied unto him” (1 Kings 13:18). This prophet who claimed he was a prophet of God told the unnamed prophet that God had told him certain things. Because the unnamed prophet believed the lying prophet, judgment came upon him, and he lost his life.

There has never been a time in history when there were more false prophets giving fake messages than there is today. Not only did Paul give us the warning in Galatians 1:9, but he also said, speaking about Satan and his ministers, “Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:15).

How, then can we protect ourselves from these diabolical ministers? We must be like the disciples at Berea who “received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). It has never been more important for God’s people to be grounded in His Word. Attendance in many of our churches lags because people do not think it is important to be taught God’s Word in His churches.

LIVING IT: *Do you attend Sunday School and Bible study at your church? You should.*

Mary McCalister

Prophecy About Jeroboam's House

KEY VERSE: "Moreover the LORD shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day: but what? even now," 1 Kings 14:14.

You have to wonder about Jeroboam's true character when you read the account given in this devotional. Imagine! He was sending his wife in disguise to the prophet Ahijah to get help healing his son who was ill. Ahijah was old and blind, so Jeroboam thought he could deceive him. If he knew Ahijah was God's prophet, did he not know God would reveal the trick to him? Of course, his subterfuge failed, and Ahijah pronounced the judgment which would come upon Jeroboam, a judgment which began with the death of his son.

The old adage, You Can't Do Wrong And Get By, certainly fits these circumstances. God gave Jeroboam a good start, but he failed completely to live up to what God wanted him to be. His idolatrous actions would have a profound effect on the nation of Israel for a long time.

There has never been a greater lesson than this to help us find out what God wants us to do, and, then, to be faithful and diligent in doing it. Jeroboam wasted all the advantages God had given him.

Are you wasting your opportunities for faithful service? Do you value all the blessings God has given you—a Bible-believing New Testament church which faithfully teaches His Word and a job which gives you time to serve God? Do not waste these blessings!

LIVING IT: *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).*

Mary McCalister

Judah's Backsliding Under Rehoboam

KEY VERSE: "And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD," 2 Chronicles 12:14.

Finding someone to blame seems to be the order of the day in our political system. As I am writing this, the big news each day is the congressional committee that is trying to find someone to blame for the events of September 11, 2001. The truth is that al-Qaida is to blame, but politics demands that we find some other scapegoat.

When you continue to read the tumultuous history of Israel and Judah, it is easy to blame Rehoboam for Israel's being divided. He was the son of Solomon, but seemed to have inherited little, if any, of his father's wisdom. When the people asked for relief from the burdens his father had placed upon them, Rehoboam taunted them, saying, "I will add to your yoke" (1 Kings 12:11).

Because of this lack of good judgment, Jeroboam was able to take ten tribes and form a new nation. We can see Rehoboam failed in three distinct ways: 1. He based his actions on false principles. 2. He followed the wrong advice. 3. He failed to give God first place because "he forsook the law of the LORD" (2 Chron. 12:1).

As we study these chapters, it will be profitable only if we can find guidance for our own lives. Perhaps we can find three modern day principles which will help us make right decisions. We should base our actions on the principles of God's Word and seek God's will, not man's.

LIVING IT: *Always ask yourself, What would Jesus do?*

Mary McCalister

Judah's Further Decline Under Abijah

KEY VERSE: “Nevertheless for David’s sake did the LORD his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem,” 1 Kings 15:4.

The main character in this devotional would hardly deserve our notice if it were not for the statement in the Key Verse that for David’s sake God gave him a lamp (perhaps a position or root) in Jerusalem, as a fulfillment of His covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:12-16). Though man often fails, God is faithful in keeping His promises.

Sad to say, the report on Abijah was not a good one. “He walked in all the sins of his father” (1 Kings 15:3). Any benefits he received came because of what his ancestor David had done and of what God had promised David. Rehoboam set the pattern for Abijah’s life, and Abijah followed in his father’s footsteps. Children learn from their parents.

Little Johnny reached to answer the ringing phone and his father said, “If it’s the guy from the office, tell him I’m not at home.” That evening, after going out for dinner, his mother noticed the waitress undercharged them. His father said, “That’s their tough luck.” On the way home the father joked about his fuzzbuster which had kept him from getting speeding tickets. Is it any wonder Johnny wondered why his father had grounded him the week before for cheating on an arithmetic test?

What kind of role model are you for your children to follow? We all want exemplary children, but not all of us want to do the right training (Prov. 22:6).

LIVING IT: *Children usually follow in their parents’ footsteps.*

Mary McCalister

The Forerunner of Ahab Follows Jeroboam's Sin

KEY VERSE: “But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all that *were* before him,” 1 Kings 16:25.

About forty-five years after the ten tribes of Israel formed their own government, a man named Omri became their king. Bible scholars say that there is no history for Omri and that he was probably an Arabian. He was an army officer and likely gained the kingship because of his skill in warfare. Does it surprise you that so soon after their nation was formed, the people of Israel would let an outsider be their leader? When we remember what we read in an earlier devotional, it should not be surprising, for in rebelling they asked, “What portion have we in David?” (1 Kings 12:16).

The application might be to choose leaders wisely. We could compare a leader to a clock in a radio station. How important is this clock? We set our watches by it. If the clock is wrong, we will not have the correct time. In the same way, our leaders set the pace for our own standards of conduct.

Who are our leaders? our pastors? our deacons? our Bible teachers? our youth leaders? All these are positions over which we have control, so we should choose them prayerfully and wisely. Peter told us Christ is our example (1 Peter 2:21) and all of us, as well as our leaders, should follow the example He set.

LIVING IT: *Follow our leaders as they follow Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).*

Mary McCalister

God Cares for His Servant

KEY VERSE: “And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook,” 1 Kings 17:6.

Elijah got into trouble with Jezebel and Ahab for offering God’s challenge to His enemies. Elijah could look only to God to help him out of his troubles.

At Cherith he learned the lesson of God’s provision. Cherith was the place of God’s provision because it was the place of God’s purpose. Elijah was in the place where God told him to be. The ravens had been commanded to feed him there, not somewhere else, not just anywhere, but there. Where God guides, He provides. He is responsible for our upkeep if we follow His directions. He is not responsible for expenses not on His schedule. He does not pay the bill when we leave His itinerary.

Sometimes God’s arrangements are most unusual. Commanding the birds to feed a prophet is a strange procedure. Sometimes God sends us to a brook when we think we should be out in the thick of things. The need is so great, the harvest is so plenteous and the laborers are so few that it looks like a waste of time to head for a brook, but God has His own pattern and plan, and He may want us by a mountain brook. He may want us to find refuge in a secret place while He prepares us for what is next in His plan.

As an athlete needs training time and rest time so he can be at his best, we also need time to wait for God to move in our lives.

LIVING IT: *Make sure you are where God wants you to be as you look for His care and guidance.*

Mary McCalister

The Widow's Son Raised to Life

KEY VERSE: “And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou *art* a man of God, *and* that the word of the LORD in thy mouth *is* truth,” 1 Kings 17:24.

We might have titled this lesson, “Why Me, Lord?” The widow of Zarephath reacted like this when her son died. She had taken in the prophet as God had led her to do. She had prepared a room for him and let him hide out in her house. With these actions she had courted the anger of the wicked king Ahab, but she was willing to take this chance and do what God wanted her to do.

Of course, she had benefited from this obedience—her barrel of meal never ran out, and her cruse of oil never failed. Should that have been enough to lead her to trust God to take care of everything in her life? We might say “Yes,” but think of the last time you asked God, “Why me, Lord?”

God did not fail the woman, even in her time of unbelief and lack of trust. He gave Elijah the power to bring her son back to life. Then she was able to say, “I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth” (verse 24).

How gracious our God is to us! He cares for us, supplies our needs, and, when our faith fails, He extends special grace to help us know of a surety the Word of the Lord is truth indeed. A life of faith makes it possible for us to say, “I know whom I have believed . . . he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him” (2 Tim. 1:12).

LIVING IT: *Live by faith, obey God and trust Him to bring about His will in your life.*

Mary McCalister

A King, a Servant and a Prophet

KEY VERSE: “So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah,” 1 Kings 18:16.

It is a common thing today to hear about summit meetings when renowned heads of state meet together to try to resolve the problems of the world. We might call the meeting described in this devotional a summit meeting. In today’s summit meetings, politicians and leaders think they have the solutions to our problems, but this summit was different.

First, there was God’s promise that it was going to rain. Then, there were the human efforts of Ahab and Obadiah to meet the need of the hour. Finally, there was God’s man, Elijah, who in the eyes of the others was the one who had caused all their troubles.

This was quite an assemblage. A wicked king who hated God and His people. A wishy-washy leader who, like Nicodemus, was almost a secret follower of God, and Elijah, who, no doubt, was hated by many because he was blamed for what God was doing to the people of Israel.

You should read the remainder of 1 Kings chapter 18 to learn the outcome of this summit meeting. Of course, the time had come when God was going to use Elijah to demonstrate His power to the people of Israel, so the outcome was certainly in God’s favor. This is always the case when God is in charge.

Take the time to look back on your life, remembering ways God has brought about His will for you.

LIVING IT: *God works in your life in ways both quiet and spectacular.*

Mary McCalister

Elijah Was Not Alone

KEY VERSE: “Yet I have left *me* seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him,” 1 Kings 19:18.

It had been a great day for Elijah. God vindicated him by sending fire to consume the water-soaked offering and altar. Then, He sent the rain as He had promised.

But the next day was a different story. Wicked Queen Jezebel sent word to Elijah that by the next day she would have his life. So what did Elijah do? Did he call upon his God to intercede for him? Did he go to bed fully trusting he was in God’s care? No. He ran for his life.

God spoke to Elijah, but not with wind, earthquake or fire. He spoke in a still, small voice. He gave Elijah His instructions. As if God was acknowledging Elijah’s complaint, “I only, am left” (verse 14), He told Elijah He had seven thousand prophets who had not bowed their knees to Baal (verse 18).

You wonder whether Elijah really felt the rebuke in God’s word to him. Elijah may have stood alone in the work God had for him to do, but God had others working for Him, too.

Are we like Elijah complaining we have been deserted and that we alone are being faithful to God in serving Him? The truth is we are never alone. God is with us, and that should be enough. We should rid our lives of the noise and clamor of daily life so we can hear God’s still, small voice when He speaks to us.

LIVING IT: *“Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth” (Psalm 46:10).*

Mary McCalister

The Folly of Looking to False Gods

KEY VERSE: “Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die,” 2 Kings 1:4.

The history of the kings of Israel would be depressing if we could not find a relationship between their activities and us. Ahaziah certainly followed the pattern set by other Israelite kings. When he fell sick, he was more comfortable praying to a false god than to the God of Israel. Of course, the false god did not answer his prayer and give him healing, and, because of his idolatry, God did not heal him; instead, He allowed him to die.

True, we do not worship false gods like Baal-zebub, but do we have false gods in our lives on which we depend for help, guidance and prosperity? Is making money our god? or owning property? or making a name for ourselves in the world? Does the desire to have things govern our lives, such as fancy cars, boats, motor homes or other things which gratify the flesh? What about recreation? Does it take up so much time in our lives we have no time for church, Bible study or witnessing for Him? Many parents place such a high priority on sports activities for their children that they do not have time for faithful church attendance.

None of these things are sin within themselves, but if they come between us and God, they become a sin. We cannot expect God to bless us if He is not first in our lives and if we are not trusting Him to supply our needs.

LIVING IT: *Not trusting God implicitly for all things is a form of idolatry.*

Mary McCalister

Elijah's Trip to Glory

KEY VERSE: “Behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven,” 2 Kings 2:11.

In many ways, Elijah's life had not been a happy one. He was an intense, lonely figure and had no charisma which drew people to him. Instead, they were mainly mystified by him. He first appeared in a leather girdle and a cloak of woven hair, deeply tanned, tough and lean from living outdoors. (Does this description sound familiar?)

Elijah made many enemies in high places when he burst on the scene to rebuke the godless and to call the people of Israel back to the worship of God. His desire was to restore the Israelites to their former position in the center of God's favor. To do this, he often rebuked the leaders and made lifelong enemies of Ahab and Jezebel.

Like David, Elijah had his flaws. He was prone to discouragement and sometimes to self-pity; yet, God planned a miraculous, divine deliverance.

A song entitled “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” is based on Elijah's last earthly experience.

We would all like to have this kind of deliverance from the cares of this world, but it was reserved only for the faithful prophet Elijah; however, God does have great things in store for us, and this is our blessed hope (Titus 2:13).

LIVING IT: *Be faithful! Our time will come when Jesus returns to take us home with Him.*

Mary McCalister

Ahab and Ben-hadad Go to War

KEY VERSE: “And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter,” 1 Kings 20:21.

Has it occurred to you what the fatal flaw was which doomed the kings of Israel to failure? It was that they rejected God’s plan and devised their own. If you had read one verse further in the devotional for March 28, you would have read these harsh words: “What portion have we in David? . . . see to thine own house, David” (1 Kings 12:16). But they were not rebelling against the house of David; they were rebelling against God. This rebellion would have serious consequences later.

Ahab, an evil man, was a worthy opponent of Ben-hadad, a man as evil. They were both liars and deceivers, conniving to get their own way no matter what they may have promised. Ahab was also weak-minded, allowing his pagan wife, Jezebel, to lead him into idolatry. Even though she married an Israelite, Jezebel hated the Israelites, especially those who remained true to God.

As you read this lesson, revealing that God gave Ahab a great victory over the Syrians, you may be asking, why would God bless such a wicked man? Perhaps you should ponder on the times when you were determined to go in your own way, and God allowed it. There may have been temporary victories, but the end result was disastrous. If you think you are getting by with your behavior, think again. Your triumph will be temporary like Ahab’s.

LIVING IT: *Accept God’s plan and live by it.*

Mary McCalister

Ahab Is Rebuked by a Son of the Prophets

KEY VERSE: “Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD *is* God of the hills, but he *is not* God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD,” 1 Kings 20:28.

The unbelieving world is always selling God short, never believing He is all-powerful and ultimately in charge of human events. The Syrians knew their gods had many limitations, so it was easy for them to believe the God of Israel must be limited as well.

Ben-hadad made a plan which he believed would work to his advantage. It involved assembling a great army which filled the country. On the other hand, Ahab sent out an army against them which was like two little flocks of goats. This seemed to be one time when he counted on God to help.

What was the outcome of this battle? One hundred twenty-seven thousand Syrians were killed. God gave proof to the Syrians that He was indeed God of the hills and God of the valleys.

What was the reason for this great victory? It was that Ahab “shall know that I am the LORD” (verse 28). Did Ahab make a change in his life? No. Instead, he made a covenant with Ben-hadad. The prophet pronounced judgment upon him, saying he would forfeit his life because of his disobedience.

We can learn a lesson from Ahab. It is important to recognize God’s power, even if we are not living the kind of life that pleases God.

LIVING IT: *Know God is indeed in charge and trust Him to bring about His will in human events.*

Mary McCalister

Jezebel's Wicked Plot Against Naboth

KEY VERSE: "So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed *them* with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that *were* in his city, dwelling with Naboth," 1 Kings 21:8.

Have you ever known of a person who was named Jezebel? I never have. If ever a name represented Satan incarnate in the body of a woman, it was Jezebel. In fact, she is referred to in Revelation 2:20 as a woman who exerted heretical and idolatrous influence on the church at Thyatira.

Jezebel's name even appears in the dictionary as a term of reproach. It came into use in England during the sixteenth century when painting the face was accepted as prima facie evidence that a woman had loose morals. Certainly no woman's name in history has become more synonymous for wickedness than Jezebel's.

The list of Jezebel's sins is daunting. In the instance related in this devotional, she was arrogant, self-willed, and covetous. She forged her husband's name to letters which caused Naboth to be brought to trial. She hired wicked men to falsely accuse Naboth of blasphemy. This resulted in Naboth's death. God Himself blamed Jezebel for stirring up the wickedness Ahab worked. There seemed to be no end to the wickedness this woman devised to get her own wish—the destruction of Israel.

Sometimes it is difficult to realize how wicked godless people can be, but we can always be assured that their time of judgment will come. Though Jezebel's judgment did not come instantly, it did come in God's good time.

LIVING IT: *Do not be led astray by wicked men or women.*

Mary McCalister

The Faithful Prophecy of Micaiah

KEY VERSE: “And Micaiah said, *As* the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak,” 1 Kings 22:14.

If you have been depressed reading about Ahab and Jezebel, think how the prophet Micaiah felt as he served God under their rule. He was determined to speak only what God told him to speak, no matter what wicked King Ahab wanted to hear.

Ahab wanted to regain control of Ramoth-gilead from his long-time enemy Ben-hadad but he knew he could not do it alone. He asked for help from Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. Jehoshaphat said he was willing to help if they inquired of God, and God approved it. Since Ahab controlled most of his prophets, he was not afraid of what they would say. Wanting to please Ahab, they said, “Go up” (verse 6). That is, all the prophets except one.

Micaiah was the lone holdout. It is easy to imagine Ahab snorting as he said, “But I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil” (verse 8). Sure enough, after Ahab heard Micaiah’s negative prophecy, he said, “Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me?” (verse 18). Ahab might have sneered at the prophet, but God had the final say.

Have the kind of courage Micaiah had to stand for God even if you have to stand alone.

LIVING IT: *It takes great courage to stand for what is right, but it is worthwhile.*

Mary McCalister

The Defeat and Death of King Ahab

KEY VERSE: “So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; . . . And *one* washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood,” 1 Kings 22:37, 38.

We are appalled when TV news programs show the Muslims celebrating and exulting over the deaths of people they consider to be infidels. You may think it unseemly to rejoice in the death of completely wicked people, but many remember the joy and relief they felt when they saw newspaper pictures of Italy’s dictator hanging upside down, as well as reports of Adolph Hitler’s death.

What we can rejoice in is that God does bring evil to judgment. Though that judgment may not come as soon as we would like, it does come, and it is sure. The Germany we know today is not the Germany of World War II, and the Italy we see today is not the Italy ruled over by Mussolini.

We see a lot of wickedness in the world today. It grieves us to see and hear of the deaths of our troops in pagan countries. Even though Saddam has been captured, there are many more who follow in his evil steps. Usama Bin Laden leads godless people to commit atrocities in the name of Islam while avoiding capture.

The death of both Jezebel and Ahab happened just as the prophet said (1 Kings 21:19; 22:38; 21:23; 2 Kings 9:30-37). This assures us that evil men will not prevail. God’s judgment is sure to come.

Ahab’s legacy is described in 1 Kings 22:39. Of that legacy God said, “I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish” (Amos 3:15).

LIVING IT: *Trust God to bring judgment upon evil.*

Mary McCalister

Jehoshaphat's Victory of Faith

KEY VERSE: “So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about,” 2 Chronicles 20:30.

What a relief to turn to the kingdom of Judah and read something pleasant for a change! How pleasant it is to read, “Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD” (2 Chron. 20:3). After all the unpleasant activities we have read about recently, we can enjoy reading of a king who feared God.

This points to the truth that, once men seek their own ways and abandon the ways of God, the path is only downhill leading to destruction. When Israel followed Jeroboam, dividing the Jewish kingdom, they chose a direction which led ultimately to the destruction of their nation.

How important it is for us to have godly leadership in our families and churches. It is nice to have it in our government as well, but our nation has become so secular this seems an impossibility. Every cry to return to moral, godly values immediately gets labeled a “right wing conspiracy.” However, we can live under ungodly governments, for our ancestors have done that and kept the light of the gospel shining in a dark world.

God gave Jehoshaphat peace, quiet and rest in his kingdom. God can give us the same peace and quiet even if we live in the midst of turmoil. Like the little bird pictured in the painting titled “Peace,” who sits on her nest oblivious of the storms raging around her, we can have peace and rest in the midst of a violent world.

LIVING IT: *Seek the Lord and serve Him with reverence and fear, and He will give you rest.*

Mary McCalister

Elisha Heals the Waters

Key Verse: “So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake,” 2 Kings 2:22.

The large metropolitan church called a new pastor. The previous pastor had led the congregation over forty years until his death. The new pastor was young and unknown. Some people wondered whether he had the ability to pastor such a large congregation. After hearing his first sermon as pastor, the widow of the previous pastor took his hand and assured him he was the right man for the church. He appreciated her assurance.

Elijah, the prophet of God, was taken to Heaven in a whirlwind. Before Elijah departed for Heaven, Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. Elisha recognized the greatness of Elijah. Elisha wanted God to use him in the same way He used Elijah.

Elisha was put on the spot immediately. The people of Jericho needed water. The ground was barren and they were suffering from the drought. Knowing he was a man of God, they asked Elisha for help. He called for a cruse of salt, and he threw it into the spring that had supplied the water. The spring revived and brought forth water again.

The people of Jericho needed God’s help and depended on God’s man to secure it. Elisha did not exhibit an insecure attitude. He displayed an attitude of confidence in God. Elisha knew that God was all-powerful and would see to the need of the people of Jericho.

JUST A THOUGHT: *Jesus is the well of water that never runs dry.*

Elisha Helps King Jehoram

Key Verse: “But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel’s servants answered and said, Here *is* Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah,” 2 Kings 3:11.

A pastor was walking down the street knocking on doors in an effort to share the gospel. The man at one house told the pastor in strong language that he had no use for preachers or religion. The pastor shook the encounter off and continued down the street. Several months later the same man who said he had no use for religion or preachers called the pastor. Because of a tragic event in his life, he was ready to listen to the gospel.

King Jehoshaphat asked King Jehoram whether there was a prophet of God whom he could ask for help in his battle against the king of Moab. Elisha was the prophet to whom King Jehoshaphat was referred. Elisha did not give his opinion, but he gave the instructions of God. By following the instructions of God, victory was achieved. The power is in the message, not the messenger. The world needs to hear the Word of God.

Victory is never achieved on the basis of one’s opinion. Victory is always achieved when the instructions of God are obeyed. God always means what He says. Any detour from the message of God means sure defeat and disaster. Personal opinions may be wrong. Thus saith the Lord is always right.

JUST A THOUGHT: *The messenger of God must preach the Word of God.*

Elisha and the Widow's Oil

Key Verse: “And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil,” 2 Kings 4:2.

The Apollo 13 spacecraft was returning home injured. It would be a difficult task to get the astronauts home safely. The three astronauts were being poisoned by their own carbon monoxide. They needed to fashion a new air filter with material on hand in the spacecraft. Engineers invented a way to fashion an air filter with plastic tubing, paper, cardboard and duct tape. The crude device worked.

The widow had a desperate need. What was she going to do? How could she pay off her creditors? Never underestimate the ability of God. He is the source of supply for every need. The power of God is greater than any power. Without Him there is no hope, but with Him there is hope. The hope of this widow was God. He is your only hope.

The widow asked Elisha what she could do to pay off her creditors since she had no visible means of support. The only thing she had to her name was some oil. Elisha told her to borrow vessels and bring them into her house. Once she had as many vessels as she could borrow, she was to pour the oil into the vessels. Through the power of God she had enough oil to fill all the vessels. She then sold the oil to pay the creditors. With the help of God, we can use what we have to meet our needs.

JUST A THOUGHT: *God uses what you have. What do you have for Him?*

Marc Shultz

Elisha and the Shunammite Woman

Key Verse: “And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this *is* an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually,” 2 Kings 4:9.

Is it possible that other people can tell that you are a Christian? Can others see Jesus in you? In the midst of doubt, do you show assurance? In the midst of despair, do you display hope? Do you give a kind word to someone who has been verbally abused? Do you exhibit calmness in the midst of anxiety?

Every Christian needs to be exemplary in his behavior. The Shunammite woman could depend upon Elisha because his testimony was true. Elisha loved God, and it showed in his person.

The Shunammite woman saw Elisha pass by her house many times. She perceived that he was a prophet of God. She prepared a chamber for Elisha to rest during his travels. Her compassion impressed Elisha. He prayed that God would bless her with a child since she had never given birth. Her blessings to the man of God brought her blessings.

The Christian should conduct himself in a way to honor God. His focus should be on fulfilling his calling. He should be worthy of the honor and blessings he receives as a servant of God. Those who honor the servant of God will be blessed.

JUST A THOUGHT: *How can you honor the faithful servant of God?*

Marc Shultz

Elisha and the Sons of the Prophets

Key Verse: “So he set *it* before them, and they did eat, and left *thereof*, according to the word of the LORD,” 2 Kings 4:44.

Philippians 4:19 states, “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” God can do anything but fail. He has never let us down. There is no disappointment in Jesus. He is always there to help us in our time of need.

Are you willing to share what God has given you? God’s children must be willing to feed the hungry and clothe the poor because the Bible teaches to love each other and to help meet the needs of each other.

As Elisha was serving the Lord in Gilgal, there was a famine in the land. The sons of the prophets were with Elisha, and they had nothing to eat. A man came from Baal-shalisha with twenty loaves of bread and ears of corn. It did not seem enough for a hundred men, but each ate their fill.

God always provides for the needs of His faithful servants. He often uses other faithful servants to meet these needs. The man who brought the bread and corn to Elisha was simply sharing the blessings God had given him. His bounty was used to feed the sons of the prophets.

God is concerned about the physical needs of His people. He meets those needs that they may continue to serve Him. Never doubt the desire or ability of God to meet the needs of His people.

JUST A THOUGHT: *God will meet our needs, not our greed.*

Marc Shultz

Elisha Heals Naaman the Syrian

Key Verse: “Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, *but he was a leper,*” 2 Kings 5:1.

Sam Walton was an American success story. He turned a small variety store into the largest chain of discount stores in the world. His success made him one of the richest men in the world. Sam Walton died with leukemia. All his riches could not heal this deadly disease.

Naaman was an advisor of the king of Syria. He held great power in the kingdom. He was also a leper. Leprosy was an incurable disease. All his power and influence in the kingdom could not heal him of this deadly disease. Elisha was asked to intercede to God on Naaman's behalf and to heal him of leprosy. Elisha told Naaman to dip seven times in the Jordan River, and he would be healed.

Naaman needed to follow God's instructions explicitly. He could have dipped himself seven times in any other river and his disease would still be there. This was Naaman's opportunity to be completely healed of this dreaded disease. It pays to obey God and surrender to His will. Nothing less will please Him.

The message of the gospel reveals God's instructions on how to be saved. It may seem foolish to the world, but it is the power of God unto salvation.

JUST A THOUGHT: *It is never foolish to obey God.*

Marc Shultz

Edom Revolts Against Judah

Key Verse: “Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah for David his servant’s sake, as he promised him to give him alway a light, *and* to his children,” 2 Kings 8:19.

When General Douglas MacArthur was ordered to leave the Philippines during World War II, he promised, “I shall return.” There was a debate among commanders about the necessity of returning to the Philippines. It was thought the islands would fall into the hands of Allied Forces by capturing islands beyond the Philippines and thereby cutting off their lines of supply. In the end General MacArthur was allowed to return to the Philippines.

Edom revolted against Judah to gain its independence. A great battle was fought between Edom and Judah. It was a fight Edom could not win. God promised David to establish his throne for all generations. God ensured Judah would not be defeated.

The difference between Edom and Judah was that God was on Judah’s side. God keeps every promise He has made. His integrity is at stake. He will never fail. God keeps His word. The question is not, Whose side is God on? The question is, Are you on God’s side? Moses asked, “Who is on the LORD’s side?” (Ex. 32:26). Being on God’s side seals the victory.

Many nations have attempted to defeat the Jews. It is a battle they cannot win because God will protect His chosen people. God will bless those who favor His chosen people and curse them who attempt to bring His people harm.

JUST A THOUGHT: *Those who defy God’s chosen people defy God.*

Marc Shultz

Wicked King Jehoram Follows Ahab's House

Key Verse: “And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab: for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought *that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD,*” 2 Chronicles 21:6

A young woman ignores the biblical admonition of being unequally yoked together and marries a man of less than godly character (2 Cor. 6:14). She knows her husband's faults but plans to change him for the better. Over the years of marriage a change is made. She does not change him, but he changes her. She takes on his negative characteristics. A negative influence often overcomes a positive influence.

There is a lot of controversy over the marriage question. The Bible is plain on the issue. Read it for yourself. Every time the people of Israel disobeyed God's commands concerning marriage, they were in trouble with Him and suffered the consequences. Remember, it is not personal opinion that counts, it is what God says that really counts.

King Jehoram married the daughter of evil King Ahab. She was not of godly character. Jehoram did not follow the godly traits of King David, a man who followed God. He did not follow in the steps of Jehoshaphat, his father who was a good king. Instead, he followed the wickedness of Ahab.

It is important godly people not follow the influence of ungodly people. A saved person should not marry an unsaved person. The child of God should not keep company with ungodly people.

JUST A THOUGHT: *The Christian influence is tarnished by evil influence.*

Marc Shultz

The Reason for Edom's Revolt

Key Verse: “Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah *thereto*,” 2 Chronicles 21:11.

There were two main causes for the American Revolution. The colonists of early America wanted freedom of religion, and they did not like taxation without representation. These causes inspired the American patriots to revolt and fight for freedom.

The Edomites revolted against Judah because they had forsaken the God of their fathers. They were not motivated by spiritual matters. They did not wish to be guided by spiritual leadership. Because their rebellion was not of God, they did not gain the upper hand against Judah.

The depraved nature wants to rebel against God. We want to do our own thing and not be limited by divine Law. We demand our rights but rarely acknowledge our accountability toward God. It is impossible to win a battle against God.

When a child of God forsakes God and biblical principles, he is in a condition of revolting against God. To say this is a dangerous thing to do is an understatement. Be careful not to revolt against the things of God.

Christians should rebel against the fleshly nature. We should rebel against evil influence that wars against the Christian spirit. We should rebel against the forces of darkness that frustrate our spiritual growth. We should rebel against Satan who seeks to prevent our faithfulness to God. These are winnable battles.

JUST A THOUGHT: *Rebellion against God results in divine judgment.*

Marc Shultz

Elijah's Prophecy Against Jehoram

Key Verse: "Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years, and departed without being desired. Howbeit they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings," 2 Chronicles 21:20.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian government wanted to do something with the body of Lennin. The body of the dictator had lain in state in the Kremlin from the time of his death. He was a hated man because he robbed the Russian people of their freedom. He is buried in an anonymous site in Russia.

Jehoram died of a disease of the bowels. The disease was divine judgment because he had forsaken God. There was no state funeral when he died. There was no outpouring of grief over his demise. No one regretted that he would no longer be king. Jehoram's eight years on the throne were a time of regret.

What will others think of you after death? Will they celebrate your life or rejoice at your passing? Will you leave a legacy of spirituality or worldliness? You are writing your obituary. What will it say about you?

The judgment of God is sure (Heb. 9:27). Saved people will also be judged (Rom. 14:10). Man must answer to Almighty God. God has committed all judgment to the Son. When one forsakes God, he can be sure that chastisement will come. Do not forsake the God of love, mercy, grace and forgiveness.

JUST A THOUGHT: *How will you be remembered when you pass into eternity?*

Marc Shultz

The Day of Vengeance

Key Verse: “And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.” Isaiah 63:6.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, an enemy general stated he was afraid they had awakened a sleeping giant. Once the United States was in World War II, the American industrial complex was put on war footing. The slogan of the day was “Remember Pearl Harbor.” In the end, the might of the American military won the war.

Edom’s rebellion against Judah brought the vengeance of God. They rebelled against God, and He treated them as an enemy. He would not overlook their rebellion. They felt the full force of God’s anger. The vengeance had come because they had forsaken God. Edom had no one to blame for their defeat but themselves.

Hebrews 10:30, 31 states, “For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Those who rebel against God and refuse to repent should expect the full force of God’s anger. He will not ignore disobedience or rebellion against His will. If repentance does not come, He has no choice but to bring judgment. He would rather forgive than judge. Divine judgment is not a pleasurable experience. Repent before judgment comes.

JUST A THOUGHT: *When divine patience runs out, judgment comes.*

The Coming Day of the Lord

Key Verse: “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape,”
1 Thessalonians 5:3.

The impending birth of a child is an exciting event. The parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends of the family anxiously await the day of the new arrival. The plans have been made, the nursery has been prepared, and the mother awaits the time of the birth. Most often the due date is not the day of the birth. It can come sooner or later. Once the mother goes into labor it is just a matter of time until the blessed event.

Down through the years, many dates have been set for the return of Christ. None have worked so far. Only God's time is the time that counts. When God gets ready, Jesus will come. There will be no stopping Him. If anything or anyone attempts to block the reality of Jesus' coming, it will come to naught.

No one knows the exact time of the Lord's return. Certain events tell us the time is near and to prepare for the return of Jesus at any moment. As with the birth of a child, Christians should anxiously anticipate the day Jesus returns for His children. Awaken each day with the knowledge that this day could be the day of the Lord's return. Now is the time to prepare for the Lord's return. The blessed event could come at any moment.

JUST A THOUGHT: *Do you believe today could be the day the Lord returns?*

Marc Shultz

Elisha Commissions an Unnamed Prophet

Key Verse: “And Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loins, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead,” 2 Kings 9:1.

It is common practice today that professional sports players not only have their number but also their name on the back of their jersey. Some teams have resisted this practice. They wish to stress teamwork instead of individual effort. These teams consider the team name on the front of the jersey more important than the individual's name on the back of the jersey.

A wise person once said, “You will be amazed at what can be accomplished if it does not matter who gets the credit.” A person does not have to be in the limelight to effectively serve the Lord. Often it is the person who quietly goes about his business without notoriety that is the most effective worker in the ministry of a local church. Elisha needed someone to perform an important task. He knew whom he could depend upon to accomplish the task. The Scripture does not tell his name. His identity was not as important as what he did.

The most important word that Jesus will say to you is “well-done.” He knows your name. You are special to Him. The best place to be in this life is in the center of God's will. That does not necessarily mean to be in the limelight. That does not necessarily mean the number one position. It may result in an obscure task.

JUST A THOUGHT: *God's “well-done” is more important than man's applause.*

Marc Shultz

Reminder of God's Promise About Jezebel

Key Verse: “And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and *there shall be none to bury her*. And he opened the door, and fled,” 2 Kings 9:10.

The reign of terror of Adolph Hitler ended in a bunker deep underground in Berlin, Germany. He committed suicide instead of being killed by Allied Forces. His body was never found. Some suggested it was burned outside the bunker. Others said he was buried in a secret grave. Whatever happened to his body, the government that he promised would last a thousand years fell when he died. The German forces soon surrendered, and war in the European theater ended.

Jezebel was an ungodly woman who ruled through her husband Ahab. Both Ahab and Jezebel were hated by those whom they oppressed. Because of their ungodliness, God sent a drought upon the land. In God's time, He put an end to their oppression. The house of Ahab perished. Jezebel was eaten by dogs. No one cared enough to bury her.

Those who oppress God's people and hinder His work will be brought under His judgment. Their glory and power will be taken away in the wrath of God. “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:19).

JUST A THOUGHT: *It will not be pleasant to receive judgment from God.*

Marc Shultz

God's Judgment on the House of Ahab

KEY VERSE: "And it came to pass, when the letter came to them, that they took the king's sons, and slew seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent him *them* to Jezreel," 2 Kings 10:7.

A survey revealed that most men who commit crimes had fathers who were criminals. Children learn behavior from their parents. The survey also revealed that children who have law-abiding parents are more likely to be good citizens.

Ahab did not set a good example for his sons. If they had ruled as their father did, it would be a rule of horror and disgust, leaving God out and finally being slain by their own kind. Ahab did not care what the representative of God said. He was obsessed with getting Naboth's vineyard.

Jehu wanted to rid the kingdom of all influence from the reign of Ahab. Ahab's sons could seek to take the throne and return to the godless rule of their father. He sent letters to the rulers of Samaria suggesting either they engage in battle or send him the heads of the sons of Ahab. They knew they could not win on the battlefield, so they slew the sons of Ahab and sent them to Jehu.

Parents should seek to set a positive role model for their children. They should exercise discipline over their children to teach them the ways of the Lord. They should teach them by example how to serve the Lord. Through family devotionals, they should teach them the importance of the Word of God.

JUST A THOUGHT: *What are your children or grandchildren learning from you?*

Elijah's Prophecy Fulfilled

Key Verse: “And when he came to Samaria, he slew all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the LORD, which he spake to Elijah,” 2 Kings 10:17.

Black mold is a fungus that can destroy the wood structure of a home. Once it infiltrates a home, there is a danger of it spreading to other homes in the neighborhood. The only way to destroy the black mold is to burn the wood it has infected.

It seems as if evil influence spreads faster than a good influence. Ahab had an influence of evil with everyone. It was Ahab's way or no way. When sin permeates and saturates an individual, he chooses his own way without regard to God or man.

The evil influence of Ahab had filtrated beyond his family and into the kingdom. There were still many people who were loyal to King Ahab and would seek to return his evil influence to the throne. King Jehu knew the only way to completely destroy the influence of King Ahab was to kill everyone who followed him. Jehu was not influenced by their pretense of peacefulness. He killed the followers of Ahab to rid the kingdom of their evil influence.

It is important not to keep company with people of evil influence. Many Christians have seen their testimony ruined by not resisting the temptation brought about by evil influence. Flee from the people and circumstances that will ruin your testimony.

JUST A THOUGHT: *“Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22).*

Jehu's Removal of Baal Worshipers

Key Verse: “And Jehu said, Proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal. And they proclaimed *it*,” 2 Kings 10:20.

A certain police department had many arrest warrants that had not been served. The department sent a false letter to each person who had outstanding warrants stating he had won a prize. Each person was to bring the letter and personal identification to a certain location to claim his prize. When they showed up to claim their prizes, they were arrested.

There were still some people in the kingdom that worshiped Baal. King Jehu stated he wanted to offer a sacrifice to Baal and invited all the worshipers of Baal to come and join in the assembly. Jehu had not lost his mind. It was not his intent to worship Baal. He pretended to offer the sacrifice to gather the worshipers of Baal together to kill them. He then burned the images of Baal and destroyed the houses of worship dedicated to Baal. “Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel” (2 Kings 10:28).

Jehu did something right. In the midst of corruption and deceit, he wanted to smash the Baal worshipers. One does not receive Christ as Savior when he gets ready, one receives Christ when God is ready for him to do so. Only saved people can worship God correctly.

They who worship God must do so in spirit and truth (John 4:24). True worshipers of God should not allow the influence of false worship to infiltrate their thoughts and beliefs. Truth has nothing in common with heresy.

JUST A THOUGHT: *Worship God in truth.*

Marc Shultz

The Death of Jehu

Key Verse: “Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, and all that he did, and all his might, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?” 2 Kings 10:34.

The battle of Gettysburg was one of the bloodiest in the Civil War. President Abraham Lincoln gave a speech at the dedication of the cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. In the speech, he stated that the world would not remember what was said during that ceremony. How wrong he was! His speech is considered one of his greatest. It was recorded in history books over one hundred forty years after the speech was delivered.

King Jehu did many good deeds in the twenty-eight years he was king. He led the nation of Israel back to God. God used him to deliver judgment upon the house of Ahab, his followers and the worshipers of Baal. While Ahab and Jezebel were not missed after they died, King Jehu was mourned after his death.

How do you wish to be remembered? Do you wish to be remembered for evil committed during your lifetime, or do you wish to be remembered for sharing Jesus with someone in your community? You preach your own funeral by the way you live your life.

Those who follow God are more fondly remembered than those who follow wickedness. The Christian's life should be remembered for following God, exercising spiritual leadership and doing good deeds that make a difference in the lives of others.

JUST A THOUGHT: *The godly person will have a greater impact than the ungodly person.*

Marc Shultz

Joash Crowned King

Key Verse: “And the captains over the hundreds did according to all *things* that Jehoiada the priest commanded: and they took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that should go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest,”
2 Kings 11:9.

In August 1974, Richard Nixon became the first man to resign the presidency of the United States. His administration had been implicated in the Watergate scandal. The night the president announced his resignation, a Senator who had defended the president stood outside the White House. There were no tanks or soldiers. Even in the midst of the most divisive scandal in American political history, there was a peaceful transfer of power.

Joash had become king. When the crown was placed on his head, soldiers watched over the house of God and the house of the king to keep peace. They had orders to kill anyone who attempted to disrupt the orderly transfer of power.

Although you may never be crowned a king in this life, remember who you are in the family of God. Remember Jesus is your Savior and God is your Heavenly Father. You are a royal priesthood and a joint-heir with Christ.

Everyone is to be subject to higher powers. There is no power higher than God. All power is ordained of God (Rom. 13:1).

JUST A THOUGHT: *Citizens must be subject to higher powers for an orderly society.*

Wicked Athaliah Executed

Key Verse: “So they laid hands on her; and when she was come to the entering of the horse gate by the king’s house, they slew her there,” 2 Chronicles 23:15.

There was an attempted overthrow of the government of the Soviet Union in the late 1980’s. The Communist government was about to end. Those attempting to overthrow the government were only pretending to want freedom. A member of the Russian legislature did not want this group to overthrow the government. Boris Yeltsin stood in front of the tanks and brought an end to the attempted coop. The Soviet government eventually fell, and Boris Yeltsin became the first president of the new Russian Federation.

Joash had become king after the death of Ahaziah. Athaliah, Joash’s grandmother, wanted to retain power and resisted the peaceful transfer of power. She accused Joash of treason when it was announced he had become king. Joash ordered her killed to prevent her from attempting to overthrow the government. She was executed outside the king’s house.

It is wrong to rebel against orderly power. Christians should obey the laws of the land and the will of God. Christians should be good citizens.

God is the highest power. Every child of God is subject to Him. We are not to question any order God gives. The most dangerous thing anyone can do is to rebel against God and usurp His authority. Remember, God knows.

JUST A THOUGHT: *It is God’s will that all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40).*

Joash Reigns and the Temple Is Repaired

Key Verse: “But they gave that to the workmen, and repaired therewith the house of the LORD,” 2 Kings 12:14.

The battleship *U.S.S. Texas* served in both world wars. It was one of the leading vessels in the battle of Normandy. After it was decommissioned, it was docked in the Houston ship channel as a museum. Over the years its condition came to a state of disrepair. School children in Texas began collecting money to repair the ship. Their nickels, dimes and quarters helped restore the once proud vessel to its former glory.

When Joash became king, the Temple was in a state of disrepair. He began to make plans to restore the Temple to its former glory. He began to collect offerings from the citizens of the kingdom to pay for repairs to the house of the Lord. They collected more than enough money to finish the job. Craftsmen were hired and the Temple was repaired. No expense was spared. The craftsmen were challenged to do their finest work because this was the house of the Lord.

The Temple was the sacred place of worship for the Jews. They considered the Temple a hallowed place. Their attitude toward the Temple was one of reverence and respect. The place of worship, the place of God’s presence, was the best facility in the land because God was deserving of the best. He still is.

A church’s buildings and grounds should reflect the love of the members for the Lord. The property should be neatly kept and well maintained. Members should take pride in the house of worship.

JUST A THOUGHT: *There is no excuse for a church’s building not to reflect the glory of God.*

Marc Shultz

Joash Forfeits the Hallowed Things

Key Verse: “And Jehoash king of Judah took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat, and Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold *that was* found in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and in the king’s house, and sent *it* to Hazael king of Syria: and he went away from Jerusalem,” 2 Kings 12:18.

It is not only important to do what is right, but it is also important to continue to do what is right. Most new Christians are filled with zeal to serve the Lord after conversion. Unfortunately, many lose their zeal with the passage of time. The faithful child of God should continue to be faithful throughout life.

Joash began his reign as king by repairing the broken-down Temple. This was an outstanding effort on his behalf. He collected the money used to buy the materials to repair the house of God. He hired the craftsmen who did the actual work. Hazael, king of Syria, sent his warriors to battle against Jerusalem. Joash lost his zeal for the Lord. Instead of fighting, he bribed Hazael by giving him the hallowed things in the Temple.

Valleys and mountaintops mark the route of the Christian life. When Joash started his reign as king, his experience was one of being lifted high (mountaintop). Later, we find him far from God, getting vessels from the Temple in an ungodly way (valley).

JUST A THOUGHT: *A lifetime of good can be undone by a moment of evil.*

Marc Shultz

Joash Forgets the Kindness of Jehoiada

Key Verse: “And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD,” 2 Chronicles 24:21.

Paul Revere mounted his horse and rode off into the night yelling at the top of his voice, “The British are coming.” It was an effort to warn the American patriots that they were about to be attacked by the enemy. His heroic actions prevented the Minutemen from being attacked without warning. It would have been a travesty of justice if Paul Revere had been arrested for disturbing the peace.

Joash began his reign as king by doing what was right in the sight of God. He aided in the repair of the house of God which had fallen into disrepair. In spite of these positive actions he committed a very grievous act.

Zechariah the prophet caused quite a stir by preaching the gospel. He proclaimed God had forsaken the people because they had forsaken God. The people did not take kindly to this message. King Joash killed Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada for preaching the truth. Jehoiada the priest had dealt kindly with Joash, but Joash had not returned the favor.

How soon one forgets the goodness of God. How soon one forgets the blessings of God. Remember the prodigal son when he came to himself. He said the servants of his father were better off than he was. Sad to say, it is not recorded that Joash came to himself.

JUST A THOUGHT: *It is an act of kindness to preach the gospel.*

Marc Shultz

The Death of Joash

Key Verse: “And his servants arose, and made a conspiracy, and slew Joash in the house of Millo, which goeth down to Silla,” 2 Kings 12:20.

Joash had forsaken the hallowed things of the Temple to bribe Hazael, king of Syria. In the end this desperate act cost him his life. His servants were so angry about what Joash had done that they killed him. He was buried in Jerusalem, but not in the sepulcher of the kings. For all the promise he showed in the beginning of his reign, he died a dishonorable man.

Proverbs 14:12 states, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Joash’s own servants had no confidence in him whatsoever. You know the story. He died in shame and disgrace. When he faces God, he will have to admit his failure.

Among the saddest indictments of any person are the words, *not living up to his potential*. Christians have the potential of greatness through the power of God. Paul told the church at Philippi, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). The full potential of the Christian is not only to begin doing the right thing, but also to continue doing the right thing. The person who forsakes the ways and will of God is not living up to his spiritual potential. Christians do not reach their full potential in their own power but through the power of Christ at work through them.

JUST A THOUGHT: *We can blame no one but ourselves by not fulfilling our potential.*

Marc Shultz

The Plague of Locusts

Key Verse: “Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat-offering and the drink-offering is withholden from the house of your God,” Joel 1:13.

Psychiatrists have long accused preachers of the gospel of concentrating too much on guilt. Psychiatrists often adhere to the philosophy that right and wrong are subjective instead of literal. A person is not responsible for any negative choices he makes because he is reacting to external circumstances. For example, the prison inmate is told he is incarcerated because society failed him and not because of his lawlessness.

There were times God brought His chosen people under judgment. Their arrogance in sin and refusal to repent led to captivity by their enemies. Only under the judgment of God would they turn back to God. God did not take delight in allowing the captivity of His people. He desired their repentance.

It does not take long for a throng of locusts to destroy everything in their path. Sin will bring a person down. It will cause one to wish that he had never gotten involved with sin. However, there is a cure for sin's plague. The cure is the blood of Christ.

Sin is not a reason to rejoice. Christians should feel shame and remorse because of sin. The Bible condemns sin. Sin is abhorrent to God. The condemnation of sin must be a part of the gospel message. Only after admitting their sinful conditions can sinners find saving grace.

JUST A THOUGHT: *Without the proclamation of guilt there is no urgency to accept Christ as Savior.*

Marc Shultz

The Day of the Lord Pictured

Key Verse: “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for *it is nigh at hand,*” Joel 2:1.

Europe lay in ruins at the end of World War II. Once beautiful cities were nothing more than a pile of rubble from bombed buildings. Fertile farm lands no longer produced crops. Disease was rampant throughout the continent. It required many years and billions of dollars to rebuild Europe.

The return of the Lord will be both a glorious and terrifying time. It will be a glorious time for the child of God. He will be taken out of this wicked world and raptured into the presence of the Lord. It will be a terrifying time for the unsaved person. The judgment of God will be poured out into the world. The return of the Lord will be a time of trembling for the lost person.

Christians should be proclaiming the imminent return of the Lord. The lost person must get a mental image of the wicked world in the aftermath of the Lord's return so that he will accept the Lord as Savior and be prepared for His return. It must be proclaimed so that the saved person will anxiously anticipate the return of Jesus.

Are you ready for that day to come? There is no question that He is coming when God gets ready. What you do with Jesus in this life will determine what He will do with you in the life to come. Listen for the shout and the voice of the archangel and the trump of God.

JUST A THOUGHT: *Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.*

Marc Shultz

God's Care for His People

Key Verse: “Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first *month*,” Joel 2:23.

A young man's father had passed away. It was tough growing up without a father. His father had left him a trust fund he could begin collecting when he turned eighteen years old to help him with college. He would only collect a set amount of money each month instead of getting it all at once.

Once the seed has been planted in the ground, the farmer needs rain for the crop to grow. If the rain came all at once, the seed would be washed out and the crop would be ruined. He needs several smaller gradual rains instead of one big downpour. He needs the former and latter rain.

God is wise in how He cares for our needs. Instead of giving blessings all at once, He grants them as they are needed. God knows that we not only have needs today but also that we will continue to have needs throughout life. God will fill each need in the way He knows best.

The hymn states, “Be not dismay'd whate'er betide, God will take care of you.” Another hymn is titled “Does Jesus Care?” The answer is “O yes, He cares, I know He cares.” Another song is entitled, “No One Ever Cared for Me Like Jesus.” When we think that no one cares, be assured that God does.

JUST A THOUGHT: *God cares for you (1 Peter 5:7).*

Marc Shultz

The Promise of the Spirit

Key Verse: “And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit,” Joel 2:29.

A young lady was giving her testimony at Bible camp. She gave thanks to God that she had accepted the Lord as her Savior. She spent the next several minutes talking about her life before conversion. She had been arrested for buying and selling illegal drugs. She dropped out of school and lived on the streets. She became pregnant and had an abortion. She had become so consumed with guilt over her life-style that she almost committed suicide. Through the witness of a friend, she accepted the Lord as Savior and changed her life-style. The young people present were greatly affected by her testimony. Many of the young people accepted the Lord as their Savior that night because of her witness.

God will pour out His Spirit. He will do it through His churches (Acts 1:8; Eph. 3:21). God helps us realize His plan is best. Children of God are filled with the Holy Spirit when they allow Him to control their lives.

Every Christian is not a God-called minister of the gospel, but we can all proclaim the good news of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ as Savior. The Holy Spirit brings conviction to the hearer when the gospel is proclaimed. Every Christian should be willing to share the good news of the gospel.

JUST A THOUGHT: *It is not necessary to have ordination papers to proclaim the gospel.*

Marc Shultz

The Judgment of the Nations

Key Verse: I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and *for* my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land,” Joel 3:2.

Modern-day Israel is under the world’s microscope. Its every action is judged by the world’s governments. The Jewish nation is not given the same latitude of self-defense as other nations. When terrorist factions detonate a bomb in Israel, few voices of condemnation are heard; yet, when Israel takes actions to defend its borders and protect its people, many voices of condemnation are heard. There seems to be a different standard for the people of Israel than the rest of the world.

The Jewish people have been scattered among all the nations, but their heart remains in the land of their heritage. Few nations have any sympathy for the plight of the Jews. The enemies of the people of Israel are championed while Israel itself is condemned. God will judge all nations that have wrongly judged the Jews. Israel will one day regain its prestige in world affairs. It is important God-fearing people not judge the people of Israel.

As we contemplate the end time and the events that surround it, let us center our thoughts on the nation of Israel. Nations must consider their attitude toward Israel. God’s blessings wait for those nations who are friendly toward Israel.

JUST A THOUGHT: *One day God will gather His chosen people to the land of their heritage.*

Marc Shultz

The Coming War of Wars

Key Verse: “Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up,” Joel 3:9.

During the Cold War there were many concerns about nuclear weapons. Many people built bomb shelters in their backyards. Schools aired civil defense films giving instructions on what to do in case of nuclear attack. Students were instructed to quickly duck under their desks. In retrospect, this was seen as foolish. A school desk would offer little protection in case of nuclear attack.

Every war fought was thought to be the war to end all wars. World War I was the first to utilize airplanes and submarines. These were such great weapons that surely no other war would be fought. World War II brought the nuclear bomb. This weapon would bring such destruction that no other war would be fought. The war to end all wars is yet to be fought. It will be the Battle of Armageddon. It will be the most devastating war ever fought. God will step in and put an end to this war to prevent the world from being completely destroyed. The judgment of God will reign, and there will be no more war.

JUST A THOUGHT: *Only God can bring true peace to the world.*

Marc Shultz

Prayer Requests

Notes