

December 31st Readings

[2 CHRONICLES 32:1-33:13](#)

[ROMANS 15:23-16:9](#)

[PSALM 25:16-22](#)

[PROVERBS 20:16-18](#)

Sennacherib king of Assyria is like so much of the world today. He looked at the gods of the people of his day and saw those gods were ineffective against his armies. He used that in his argument to get Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem to concede defeat and allow Assyria to rule all of Judah. They heard the argument, and knew it to be true of other gods, but not true about the God of Abraham and David. The God of Abraham *does* defeat enemies. The worship may seem similar to an outsider, but to the God of Isaac it is very different.

We must be like Hezekiah and the land of Judah. We must not allow others to group us with the false religions of the world, even when those religions appear to have much in common with God's church. We must stand faithful to God. He has already defeated the enemy.

Surely, we want to have the benefit of that victory and not suffer the same fate as the enemy.

January 1st Readings

[2 CHRONICLES 33:14-34:33](#)

[ROMANS 16:10-27](#)

[PSALM 26:1-12](#)

[PROVERBS 20:19](#)

Josiah was only eight when he began to rule Judah. God says, when Josiah was about 16, he began to seek the God of David and went out to tear down all the places of idol worship throughout the land. When he was about 26, he started repairing the temple. A book of Moses was found. When he heard the words, Josiah tore his clothes and humbled himself because he saw they had not been following the laws of God. He had tried to follow the laws of God, and probably felt pretty good about himself for all that he had done. But when faced with "all that is written in this book", he knew he fell short.

Josiah sent men to find out what God would do. A prophetess of God was consulted. She declared the words of God: God would punish the people for not following Him, for worshiping idols. But to Josiah, she said: God saw that when you heard the words of the book, you tore

your clothes and humbled yourself before God. Therefore, you will have peace. You will go to your grave without feeling the wrath that God will bring upon the people of Judah.

So, I must follow God's words. I cannot look solely at what those who came before me did. I cannot compare my efforts against theirs. I must compare my efforts against the word of God. Do I fulfill "all that is written in this book"?

January 2nd Readings

[2 CHRONICLES 35:1-36:23](#)

[1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-17](#)

[PSALM 27:1-6](#)

[PROVERBS 20:20-21](#)

"I'm no saint."

It bothers me when I hear someone say this. They don't have a clue what the Bible has to say about saints. Here, in 1 Corinthians 1:2, God makes it pretty clear that a saint is a person who calls upon Jesus. Of course, that 'calling upon' is a bit more involved than simply uttering a few words. It involves submission to God's will. When Paul called upon Caesar in Acts 25, he was submitting to Caesar's authority. In Acts 22, Ananias told Paul to "Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on (Jesus') name."

Everyone who calls upon Jesus by submitting to God's will is a saint. So, the next time you here someone say, "I'm no saint", at least think about what it means to be a saint. Maybe you can even educate the poor soul.

January 3rd Readings

[EZRA 1:1-2:70](#)

[1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-2:5](#)

[PSALM 27:7-14](#)

[PROVERBS 20:22-23](#)

Cyrus of the Persian Empire

Nebudchanezzar had sacked and burned Jerusalem, carrying the people to Babylon as

slaves. This Nebudchanezzar saw an angel in the fiery furnace along with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Later, Nebudchanezzar got to roam the fields eating grass like a cow for awhile. Later, Darius throws Daniel in the den of lions. Then comes Cyrus. Is it strange that a Persian king hears the word of the Lord? Is it strange that he actually listens?

Cyrus returns the captives to Judah, along with the means to restore the house of the Lord.

We hear and read the stories of sin and sinful people, of these Babylonian and Persian kings, of the death of a Jewish carpenter on a cross.

Paul wrote, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." 1 Corinthians 1:18

Will I hear God when he talks? Will I actually listen?

January 4th Readings

[EZRA 3:1-4:23](#)

[1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-3:4](#)

[PSALM 28:1-9](#)

[PROVERBS 20:24-25](#)

What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him.

1 Corinthians 1:9

God is telling us here that we cannot understand Him from our perspective. We need His Spirit, who has plumbed God's depth, to understand the things God says. Yet, God described heaven. It has many rooms (John 14:2), streets of gold, gates of pearl (Revelation 21:21). My point is: even when I think of many rooms, streets of gold and pearls for gates, I still can't imagine the truth behind these words. What God has prepared for us is far beyond our ability to even imagine.

January 5th Readings

[EZRA 4:24-6:22](#)

[1 CORINTHIANS 3:5-23](#)

[PSALM 29:1-11](#)

[PROVERBS 20:26-27](#)

When I was a new Christian, I took encouragement from Paul's words here in verse 6: I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. It was comforting to know that God did not expect me to do everything – reach out to prospective Christians, guide them through Bible study, help them to grow into mature Christians. As I progressed through life, I found that God required me to do each of these from time to time, but rarely was I involved in all aspects with a single person. I had to be content to be a part of the process, sometimes a very small part. Often, I was not around to see the fruition of the process. Occasionally, I was the one needing the watering and the increase.

Part of Paul's point in this passage is to not elevate ourselves or others to positions of honor in place of God. I cannot always do everything required in every situation, but I can often do something. Someone else can pick up the slack. Individually, we fail to meet the entire task, but together the job is complete.

[January 6th Readings](#)

[EZRA 7:1-8:20](#)

[1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-21](#)

[PSALM 30:1-12](#)

[PROVERBS 20:28-30](#)

Steadfast love and faithfulness preserve the king,
and by steadfast love his throne is upheld.

Proverbs 20:28

These words seem strange to our ears. We tend to think of kings as powerful, in control, punitive when their will is not met. Yet, God says steadfast love and faithfulness preserve the king. I wish our president, or our next president, could abide by these words. But, they probably won't. They wouldn't want to appear weak. I am sure I will never be president or king, but I am a father and a husband. Maybe, I should try this steadfast love and faithfulness in those roles. Would that work?