



Daily God Walk

Life of Christ

The Kingdom

Comes

**Daily God Walk
Life of Christ
Series**

**The Kingdom
Comes**

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All Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV). All other translations used will be credited using these abbreviations:

(KJV) – King James Version

(NKJV) – New King James Version

(TLB) – The Living Bible

(TM) – The Message

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The *Daily God Walk* theme for this series is Jesus, his life and teachings, how his followers interpreted his teachings, and how his teachings have affected the world. Our goal is to present a realistic view of Jesus, the Christ of Redemption.

In this first book of the series we are beginning with a look at the background of the birth of this one who would be called Christ.

Week one will take a look at the need for a Christ of Redemption. Week two will look at the promise of a redeemer. Week three will look at the political climate he was born into. Week four will look at the religious climate he was born into. Finally, the last few days of the month we will summarize what we have seen this month.

This devotional promises to be an exciting adventure as we take this journey of discovery together.

Daily God Walk for this devotional is The Need for A Christ of Redemption

Week One: The Need of a Redeemer

Week Two: The Promise of a Redeemer

Week Three: The Political World Jesus Was Born Into

Week Four: The Religious World Jesus Was Born Into

Wrap UP: Jesus, the Christ of Redemption

The Daily God Walk is also available to be downloaded at: www.dailygodwalk.org

Day One

The Seduction of Eve

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘you must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” - Genesis 3:1

The serpent began his seduction of Eve by posing a question that contained a partial truth. God had indeed forbidden the man and the woman from eating a certain fruit, but not the fruit of all the trees. The purpose of the question was not to establish a truth but to cause the woman to question the truth.

“Inquiring minds want to know” is the by-line of a popular weekly publication. Eve was not curious until she began to listen to the voice of the seducer. In fact, she had probably never thought to question the motives of God until the serpent added doubt when he said, “God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (verse5).

Now Eve looks at the fruit from a different perspective. Perhaps she was saying in her mind, “Why doesn’t God want us to eat the fruit of wisdom? Can I become as wise as God from partaking of this fruit? Is that why God has said not to eat it?” We don’t know what Eve thought but that very well could have been it.

As she looks at the fruit with this new “enlightenment” she sees it as never before. She saw that the fruit was attractive, it was good for food, and now she knew it would make her wise. The temptation was too great; she could resist it no longer. She took the first bite of forbidden knowledge and from that point to this mankind has been on path of self destruction.

The message in this is: Carefully choose the voices you will listen to. The voice that questions the motive of God is not from God. That voice does not carry the light and it only leads to darkness and deception.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to ignore the voice of seduction that tries to break down my confidence in you. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: The purpose of the deceiver is not to establish a truth but to cause us to question the truth. Carefully choose the voices you will listen to. The voice which questions the motive of God is not from God.

Affirmation: I purpose to affirm the truth of God and his word while denying the deceiver access to my thought processes.

Reflection: The "enlightenment" gained by mankind when they partook of the forbidden truth came at great price. They surrendered their innocence for knowledge which they were ill prepared to receive.

What voices have you heard that have led you to question the truth of God and his word?

My Thoughts:

Day Two

Who Hid From Whom?

The man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. - Genesis 3:8

We have often heard that sin separates us from God and have wondered how that reconciles with the promise, “I will never leave you.” This story in Genesis of the first meeting with God after the sin gives us some insight into the problem.

An interesting result of gaining knowledge of good and evil is that we become aware of our nakedness and we feel guilty before the God we had disobeyed. The very wisdom man gained from the fruit brought condemnation upon him as he realized that he had offended God.

So, what did man do when he heard God coming? He hid among the trees. Here is an interesting analogy; God had created the trees to be the bearers of life. Their fruit was to be what sustained man, but now man was using the “blessing” to hide himself from God.

Isn't that similar to what we do today? We get involved with all the blessings of creation and use them as an excuse to escape from the presence of God. We hide ourselves in the very things God intended to be used to enhance our relationship with him.

God didn't hide from man, but man hid from God. We don't know what might have happened if man had gone looking for God and fell at his feet begging forgiveness and mercy. We do know this though; God had a plan to restore man to confidence with him.

In the foreknowledge of God he knew this time would come and he had a plan. He had created man as an object of love and he wasn't going to let the seduction

of evil rob him of the fellowship he had intended. God had a plan to restore man to right relationship with him.

Thank God! We don't have to hide anymore.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to trust your wisdom and to submit to your plan of redemption through Christ the redeemer. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: The very wisdom man gained from the fruit brought condemnation upon him as he realized that he had offended God.

Affirmation: I know my actions have offended God and that is why I approach him asking for mercy and God, in mercy and love, extends his grace.

Reflection: Does God leave us when we sin? Or do we pull away from God in guilt and fear? Give some thought to the plan of God to not only redeem us from sin itself but to save us from our own willful nature.

My Thoughts:

Day Three

Fallen From Glory

So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. - Genesis 3:23-24

We can only imagine how Adam and Eve felt as they were driven from the garden. I have seen artists rendering of how they might have looked. Head downcast, and shoulders stooped in shame, they were becoming aware of the effects of their sin.

There were many negative effects from their taste of the forbidden. The serpent was cursed. The ground was cursed. Man was sentenced to a life of hard labor just to survive. The woman was given pain in childbirth and sentenced to spend her life trying to please her husband. Their relationship with God was broken and doubt was placed on their own relationship. And finally, death fell upon all.

They were now wiser, but their wisdom simply showed them the folly of what they had done. If they had only trusted the Lord God and obeyed him they wouldn't be facing the life which lay before them. God's way is simple; here are the instructions, follow them and I will give you life; disobey those instructions and your path will lead to death.

It was the fall from grace which necessitated the birth of Jesus and the cross of redemption. Man's sin, and ultimate death, led to the death of Christ which has freed man from the curse of eternal death.

Even with that hope made plain many still hide from the truth and are seduced with the idea of becoming gods themselves, masters of their own destinies.

The consequence of the fall has been great, but the hope of God's plan of redemption gives believers an anchor.

Prayer: I give you thanks for the hope you have given me in Jesus, the Christ of Redemption. Amen.

Message: It was the fall from grace which necessitated the birth of Jesus and the cross of redemption. Man's sin, and ultimate death, led to the death of Christ which has freed man from the curse of eternal death.

Affirmation: I know my sin has been dealt with because of The work of Christ and my faith in what he has done to redeem me and reconcile me to God.

Reflection: Think about how the fall from grace has affected mankind and our relationship to God. What is God's plan to counter the effects of the fall?

My Thoughts:

Day Four

A Curse And a Hope

I will put enmity between you and woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. - Genesis 3:15

It is the common Christian belief that the serpent was actually an embodiment of the devil and that this passage is a curse upon him which speaks of his ultimate demise.

This verse also addresses the tension produced by sin, "I will put enmity between you and the woman." Mankind has felt the strain of being pulled toward self satisfaction while being called by God to walk his way. Paul addresses this in Romans 8:7, "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law nor can it."

There is also a prophecy about the end of the devil's influence. The seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent, symbolic of destroying influence and ultimate destruction. The evil one has been under this curse since that time and has existed with the certain knowledge that he would one day meet his ultimate fate.

Scholars have seen this passage as the first promise of a Messiah, or Christ, who would free mankind from the curse of sin. The offspring of the woman would be injured, but not a permanent injury; "You will strike his heel." But in return he would "crush your head."

Today we are in a daily struggle with the forces of evil. The moment we begin to listen to our human desires we become open to the influence of evil. As long as we focus on the one who called us and the gift of grace he has given us we will continue in his righteousness.

The hope in the curse is that through faith in Jesus, the Christ of Redemption, we are reconciled to God and

Satan is defeated. We who have believed upon him have been born into the eternal family of God.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to allow you to be Lord of my life. Jesus opened the door, Holy Spirit released the hope in me, and now, by your grace I live as one restored through faith in Christ. Amen.

Message: We are in a daily struggle with the forces of evil. The moment we begin to listen to our human desires we become open to the influence of evil.

Affirmation: I choose to filter my human desires and my thought processes through what I understand the Word of God to say.

Reflection: This third chapter of Genesis describes man's fall from favor with God and the consequences of his disobedience. Read the chapter carefully and see how many negative consequences that came upon mankind as a result of his sin. I have counted 11 - how many do you find?

My Thoughts:

Day Five

Man's Fall From Grace is Complete

The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth.

- Genesis 6:5-8

Man's fall from the favor of God was now complete. The more he indulged himself in human pleasures the less he was influenced by good until finally, "every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time."

Once the door to knowledge of good and evil was opened man began to indulge those things that pleased his human nature the most. Remember, one driving factor in the original sin was that man saw the opportunity to become god of his own destiny. Without the maturity to handle his new knowledge, he succumbed to his human nature.

As long as the spirit of man was alive and active in man he had only a desire for God; but once the spirit of man was subdued and the soulless man began to rule man's imagination, his focus was upon what would please his human nature.

As man followed the call of his human nature to indulge the desires of the flesh he became totally corrupt. People today are not much different than in the times of Noah. They reject the truth of God to follow the path of human enlightenment and find themselves enamored with pleasure. All of man's attempt to reach a new level of enlightenment have left him still seeking the oneness with God he enjoyed before the fall.

Then, there was Noah. Among all the evil of the world there was a man who stood out from the rest.

Verse 11 of Genesis 6 reads, “Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time.”

What made Noah blameless? “He walked with God” (verse 11). Noah found favor with God because he chose to walk with God. When we choose Christ and walk in his way we have favor with God.

Prayer: God, grant me grace to follow the way of Christ. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: As long as the spirit man was alive and active in man he had only a desire for God; but once the spirit man was subdued and the soulish man began to rule man’s imagination, his focus was upon what would please his human nature.

Affirmation: I have chosen to live after the spirit man within me rather than my soulish man.

Reflection: Once the door of knowledge of the good, the bad, and the ugly (corny I know) was opened there was no stopping man and his fall from grace had become complete by Genesis 6, our passage for today. Give some thought to how the fallen state of man has affected you personally.

My Thoughts:

Day Six

A World In Chaos

The Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel – because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

- Genesis 11:8-9

After the flood of Noah's time, his sons began to repopulate the earth, but as is often the case, his sons didn't carry on their father's walk with God. As generations were born these people of the new world were centered in one place.

The people of the new generation had a great idea. They would build a tower that reached up to heaven. What was implied by their attempt was that if they could reach up to heaven then they could rule, not only their own destiny, but they would also rule the heavens.

When God saw what was in their heart he knew that if he didn't intervene they indeed would continue their efforts until they were so full of themselves that they would never turn back to him.

The people were all of one language and God said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other. So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth and they stopped building the city" (verses 6-8).

Here is an interesting tidbit. In Genesis 11 God brought confusion that led to scattering people around the earth by giving them differing languages. Acts 2 records God restoring order to those who would follow him by giving them a new language. The power released

at Pentecost through this new, heavenly language, literally changed the world.

God knew that without a Christ of redemption man would never be restored to peace and could never be reconciled to oneness with Him. He sent Jesus to be the Christ of Redemption.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for allowing me to be reconciled to you and renewed by your Spirit. Complete the work of restoration. I pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

Message: In Genesis 11 God brought confusion that led to scattering people around the earth by giving them differing languages. Acts 2 records God restoring order to those who would follow him by giving them a new language.

Affirmation: I have been moved by Holy Spirit to speak his language - the language of peace and unity.

Reflection: Think about verses 6-8 of this chapter and its significance today. God sent chaos to spread mankind around the world, but today man is using knowledge to unite the world with goal of having one united people on the earth. What do you think about that?

My Thoughts:

Day Seven

Hope For the Nations Through Abraham

I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. - Genesis 12:2-3

It had been a long time between Adam and Abraham. For thousands of years mankind had struggled with just a memory and occasional glimpses of a relationship with God.

Then God began to reveal his plan. First he calls Abram to leave his home and follow him. Then he slowly reveals his purposes to Abram, who later became Abraham. God was calling Abram to be the father of many nations.

What was interesting is that Abram, which means, “high father” was childless. He was perhaps a leader, or a “father” in his community and that may have been the background for his name. This childless man was given hope of a progeny in our passage for today, but even he had no idea what it all meant.

In chapter 17 God makes covenant with Abram and changes his name to Abraham. He wouldn't just be a father but he would be the father of many nations. This story is made even more interesting because Abraham was about 75 and Sarah was near the same, yet, the promise of God gave them hope of being the forebears of nations.

Abraham may not have known the extent to which his progeny would bless the world, but he lived in hope of the promise he had been given. God, by his own sovereign will, had chosen a people through whom he would reveal himself and provide a plan whereby man

could be reconciled to himself, renewed in spirit and restored in hope.

We who live with faith in Jesus, the Christ of Redemption, have been reconciled to God and have been renewed in spirit by the Holy Spirit. We are now in the process of being restored to the person God ordained that we become.

Prayer: Lord, give me the faith of Abraham so that even when it seems the promise cannot possibly come to pass, I will trust you. Amen.

Message: God told Abram, "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Affirmation: I have received this promise to Abram as a prophecy of the Messiah who was to come, the one we call Jesus, the Christ.

Reflection: God is the master of long range planning. He told Abram, nearly 2000 years before Jesus was born, that through his progeny all people groups would be blessed. It has now been 2000 years since his birth and still, all the people groups of the world are being blessed.

My Thoughts:

Day Eight

Nations Blessed Through Abraham

I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore... and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.

- Genesis 22:17-18

People who lived in the Chaldean region of Ur, which was the home of Abraham before God called him, believed in many gods. They had gods for various causes and it was important to them that they give homage to each.

We don't know to what extent Abraham was influenced by the culture in which he was raised, and we don't know just how Almighty God revealed himself to Abraham. All we know is that the Lord spoke to Abraham and told him to go to a land that had been prepared for him.

The purpose for the call of Abraham was to begin setting the stage for a redeemer. Since man fell from grace he had struggled with the consequence of the sins of his fathers. For the most part mankind was in darkness and religions were based upon superstitious beliefs.

Mankind needed a light and a redeemer to rescue them from the darkness they had fallen into. It would be the family of Abraham that would eventually birth that light of redemption.

God had a plan that he was executing, but his plan depended upon the faithfulness of those to whom he had entrusted the plan. Notice what he says to Abraham, "through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." Did you get that? The nations would be blessed because Abraham obeyed God.

Just as with Abraham, God is working out his plan through us today. He may not give us full understanding of what he is doing, but he does give us enough information to know what we are supposed to do today. As we are faithful to live out God's plan for us today he will use our faithfulness to bring greater light to the world.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to obey you and follow the plan you have designed for my life. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Since man fell from grace he had struggled with the consequence of the sins of his fathers. For the most part mankind was in darkness and religions were based upon superstitious beliefs.

Affirmation: My life has been influenced by the sins of my fathers, but I am freed from that influence by faith in Jesus, the Christ of redemption.

Reflection: There are many stories in the ancient religions which have parallels to the message of Christ. Give some thought to what separates the Christian message from these other traditions?

My Thoughts:

Day Nine

Christ Would Be the Lion of Judah

You are a lion's cub. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness - who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.

- Genesis 49:8-10

There are two pictures drawn in this passage of the promised redeemer. First, there is the picture of the lion; the strong and fearsome beast that is looked to as a king among animals. Then there is the scepter, or the ruler's staff which was the sign of royal leadership.

This imagery seems to project that at some point one would be born in the lineage of Judah who would be a king who would bring people from all nations into obedience.

Because it is the nature of man to think of peace in terms of the stronger ruling over the weaker, the family to whom this prophecy was given began to look for one to come who would be as ferocious as a lion and who would subdue the nations making them obedient to him.

That was the picture of the Messiah/deliverer that the Jews had when Jesus was born. They were looking for one who would by force establish Jerusalem as the place from which the world would be brought into obedience to this lion like king.

The primary reason the leaders of the Jews did not recognize Jesus as the messiah was because he did not come according to their expectation. Christ came to bring peace, but the peace he was bringing would not be established with the sword but by love.

Jesus came to be the Christ of redemption, opening the door to man being restored in his relationship to God. Once reconciled to God through faith in Christ,

we voluntarily submit to his rule and become obedient to his purposes.

The obedience of faith is from the heart and no act of force or violence can produce that kind of obedience. Faith in Christ releases God's love and peace to believers.

Prayer: Lord, grant me grace to accept your lordship in my life and the faith to walk in obedience to you. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

Message: The primary reason the leaders of the Jews did not recognize Jesus as the messiah was because he did not come according to their expectation. Christ came to bring peace, but the peace he was bringing would not be established with the sword but by love.

Affirmation: Christ reigns supreme and those who come to him discover the power of love. The kingdom of the Christ has been established worldwide, not by the sword but by the love of God shown by believers.

Reflection: Think about the well known conquerors of the world and ask yourself how many of those kingdoms have survived 2000 years.

My Thoughts:

Day Ten

Christ Would Be A Branch From Jesse

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him...In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. - Isaiah 11:1,2,10

As is the case with many prophecies this one has at least two applications. When we read Isaiah chapter 11 in its entirety we see an obvious application to the return of Jews to Jerusalem and Judea. As we look more closely we can see that even that event does not address the whole prophecy.

A common phrase with which many prophecies begin is, "In that day..." Often the reference is to a future date when the kingdom of God is reestablished on earth.

This particular prophecy extends beyond the Jews to "the nations." We have looked at the promised redeemer being born of a woman (Genesis 3); he would be from the lineage of Abraham (Genesis 22); he would be born of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49); and in this passage as in other places, from the house of David.

Another factor that is consistent in all of the prophecies is that the blessing would be to the nations. Another common factor is that this kingdom would be one of peace, of rest and the poor would receive justice. It spoke of a time when love would rule.

The Jews missed the Christ because they were looking for one who would conquer with force. They saw the nations subdued and being ruled from Jerusalem. They missed the purposes of God entirely.

The purpose of God is that through faith in Jesus, the Christ of Redemption, all of mankind is reconciled to right relationship with him. Because of that right relationship believers have access to the Spirit of

renewal and restoration. God wants to restore man to himself completely and he made that available to us through faith in the finished work of Christ.

Prayer: Father, I am grateful for this root of Jesse, this branch from the house of David that has given me access to you. Amen.

Message: The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him...In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

Affirmation: Christ is my banner of righteousness and peace. I have surrendered to his Lordship and now I rest in his peace and grace.

Reflection: It is interesting that there are many prophecies of a redeemer who would rescue the nations and redeem them from the chaos of the world system, yet, the Jews looked for that redeemer to establish another world power. How is the kingdom of God different from that expectation?

My Thoughts:

Day Eleven

It Took A Miracle

The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. - Isaiah 7:14

God had been trying for over 1000 years to show the descendants of Abraham the way to being reconciled to himself, but they didn't have it in them to follow his way. He gave them a set of rules to follow, and they couldn't keep them. He gave them priests to offer sacrifices of atonement for them and the priests became corrupted. He gave them prophets and they were not accepted. He gave them kings and they became self-serving. Was there ever going to be an answer for them?

Even when the Jews were in failure, and in the midst of warning them of judgment to come, God always left a door open for restoration. In times of despair God would offer them hope. This passage is saying that even though they were in rebellion against his way, he would give them a sign of his intent to reconcile man to himself.

“The Lord himself will give you a sign. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” They may not have understood what God was saying, but we on this side of the birth of Christ know what he was saying.

Immanuel, God with us. God himself was to be born into the family of man from the womb of a woman who had not known a man. In a miraculous birth God would present himself the answer to the dilemmas man faced. God would become a man so that through the life, death, and resurrection of the God-man all of mankind would have access to reconciliation to God.

Through Immanuel, God with us, whom we know as Jesus, the Christ of Redemption, believers from all

nations are reconciled to God. Because we are reconciled to right relationship with God the Holy Spirit has been released to us to renew our spirit man so that we can become fully restored to the person God intended us to be.

Prayer: Thank you for the birth of Immanuel, Jesus the Christ of Redemption and for the work of reconciliation he did for us. Amen.

Message: In a miraculous birth God would present himself the answer to the dilemmas man faced. God would become a man so that through the life, death, and resurrection of the God-man all of mankind would have access to reconciliation to God.

Affirmation: I have found the Christ of Redemption and have placed my faith in him. He has reconciled me to God and now I am an heir with him of the riches of glory.

Reflection: Man failed in his attempts to fulfill God's plan so God himself became man to make a way for mankind to be restored to being the image of God reflecting his glory.

My Thoughts:

Day Twelve

A New Kind of Government

To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.

- Isaiah 9:6-7

The prophet again speaks of a child yet to be born who would bring peace. And, again, this child would be recognized as God. This child would have the government of the kingdom of God upon his shoulders. He would be the Prince of Peace, the one with the only message that will bring peace to mankind.

Jewish leaders had hoped for peace for many generations. The problem was that they could only see peace through conquering the oppressor with force. They never dreamed of a kingdom being established by offering unconditional peace, but that is what this child yet to be born would offer.

He would bring peace that had no end. This would not be a peace that lasted until another war, or another assault, this was a peace that could not be affected by any circumstances in the physical realm. The peace that he brought was peace with God and peace with our inner person. This peace is spiritual peace.

The only lasting peace is the peace that comes from within a person. As long as my peace depends upon what another does I will not have lasting peace. As long as the peace of a people depends upon the will of a human government there will not be lasting peace.

The American system of government is thought to be the best there is in the world. In fact, many countries have followed this pattern of government. Yet, we are involved in wars on foreign lands. We often negotiate

peace that is only as good as the intentions of the next leader. We are filled with inner turmoil.

What hope does the world have if the world's best government cannot produce lasting peace? Our hope is in the Prince of Peace.

Prayer: Lord, I have no confidence in the ability of this world system to give lasting peace. Bless us with your everlasting peace. Amen.

Message: The only lasting peace is the peace which comes from within a person. As long as my peace depends upon what another does I will not have lasting peace.

Affirmation: I no longer depend circumstances or other people for my inner peace. I have learned to trust the one who is called the Prince of Peace to give me peace.

Reflection: Think on the question of what people turn to today to find the inner peace that all of us crave. What is the government that Christ came to establish and how has that affected our inner peace?

My Thoughts:

Day Thirteen

Bethlehem, A Village With Promise

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come forth one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. - Micah 5:2

Jerusalem is the center of Jewish influence. That is where the palaces of kings were. Jerusalem is where the temple was built. The Christ should have been born in that place which is easily recognized as the center of Judaism. But he was born in Bethlehem.

The Christ was not only born in Bethlehem, a small, rural village, he was born in a manger. He did not have royal attendants and royal cloths to be wrapped in at his birth; rather he was born in a stable where animals were kept and was wrapped in whatever could be found to cover him.

We should not be amazed at the way he entered the world because it was in keeping with the way God has approached man. It is the way of man to choose the best and reach for status; it is the way of God to choose the least and demonstrate to the world that his work does not depend on great men, just faithful men.

Look at who God chose to lead; Moses a reclusive shepherd, David, just a boy tending his father's sheep, Esther a Jewish girl held captive in a foreign land. The list is long but over and over again God chose the weak things of this world to confound the wise.

So, Jesus the Christ of Redemption was to be born in this small and insignificant village of Bethlehem. God still dwells among the small and insignificant to demonstrate his own greatness. In our lifetime there was Billy Graham, a farm boy, Oral Roberts, a country preacher, and others we don't have space to mention.

What does this mean to you and me? God can use us too. In fact, he is looking for willing vessels, just like you and I to prove to the world that he is great and he desires to restore all men to himself.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for the Christ who was born in the humble town of Bethlehem. Amen.

Message: It is the way of man to choose the best and reach for status; it is the way of God to choose the least and demonstrate to the world that his work does not depend on great men, just faithful men.

Affirmation: I no longer look to men, great or less than great, to find fulfillment. I have found that by being faithful to God and His word God in return has been faithful to me.

Reflection: Bethlehem, a rural village and a stable among the animals became the birthplace of the Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

My Thoughts:

Day Fourteen

A Star Is Born

Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

- Matthew 2:1-2

The birth of Jesus, the Christ of Redemption, was so significant that it was marked by a star in the heavens. Wise men from other countries saw the star and determined that something so significant had taken place that the makeup of the universe had been altered.

There cannot be enough emphasis placed upon the importance of the birth of Jesus, the Christ. He was not only the hope of Israel but he was, and is, the hope of the entire world. Yes, indeed, a star was born.

We must not only realize the value of the birth of the Christ but we must also realize the value of the work he would do. His purpose was not just to be a star, but it was to enable every believer to become a star.

Peter wrote of the hope of the morning star rising in our hearts (2Peter 1:19). Paul writes in Philippians, "So that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life" (2:15-16). These men were writing of the value that God places in believers and the hope he has in them.

It is true that no one person has affected mankind the way Jesus, the Christ has. Without the Christ of Redemption there is no hope of becoming the people God originally intended us to be, but with him we become the very reflection of the heart of God.

Because of faith in Christ countless millions have been helped through the ages. Hospitals have been built in his name; orphanages have been built in his name;

universities have been established to train men and women to be Christ to the world; millions of hungry people around the world are fed in his name. A star was born in Bethlehem.

Yes, a star was born in Bethlehem, but the purpose of that star could not be realized without the millions of stars who follow him.

Prayer: Lord, I humbly accept the calling to hold out the word of life; grant me grace to be faithful to that call. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: We must not only realize the value of the birth of the Christ but we must also realize the value of the work he would do. His purpose was not just to be a star, but it was to enable every believer to become a star.

Affirmation: Because of what Christ, the Morning Star rising in my heart, I have been made a star to my generation projecting hope for those who believe.

Reflection: Consider the countless millions who have been blessed by those who have committed to the Star of Bethlehem. When we commit to Christ we become a guiding star to others in this world. Think about it.

My Thoughts:

Day Fifteen

Daniel Sees The Eternal Kingdom

In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. - Daniel 2:44

King Nebuchadnezzar had a disturbing dream that he felt needed interpretation. None of his astrologers or wise men could bring an acceptable interpretation. He had sent out the order to kill all of the wise men who couldn't interpret his dream and Daniel had heard about all of this. The entire second chapter of Daniel tells this story.

Daniel prayed and God revealed both the dream itself and the interpretation of the dream to him. The dream was of a huge statue that had a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, and legs of iron. The feet were mixed clay and iron. This was a disturbing dream indeed.

God revealed to Daniel that the statue represented four major kingdoms. The first was that of Nebuchadnezzar, the second would be his successor, who many scholars believe is the Medo-Persian empire. The bronze portion of the statue was thought to be Greece and the Iron was believed to be Rome.

The final part of the dream revealed that a rock would come rolling down and destroy these kingdoms. This rock would become a mountain that filled the entire world and the kingdom it established would be an eternal kingdom.

The message we get from this story is that Jesus, the Christ, is the rock which destroys all those forces that oppose the living God and that he has established an

eternal kingdom, one that endures through all of man's kingdoms and governments.

Jesus, the Christ of Redemption, has established his kingdom in a place that cannot be reached by enemies of the kingdom. His kingdom is in the hearts of those who will believe him.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you that you have given us Jesus, the Christ of Redemption. Grant me the grace to be steadfast in following the principles of his kingdom. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Jesus, the Christ, is the rock which destroys all those forces that oppose the living God. He has established an eternal kingdom, one that endures through all of man's kingdoms and governments.

Affirmation: Jesus has broken every barrier to eternal peace and has given access to everyone who believes to participate in the eternal kingdom of the Lord God.

Reflection: It would be good to give some thought to how the kingdom of God differs from the kingdoms of this world.

My Thoughts:

Day Sixteen

The Stage Is Set For The Christ

Although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

- Romans 1:21

Nebuchadnezzar's dream tells the story of the inability of human government to sustain lasting peace. It outlines the political ages of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. The final part of the statue he saw was the feet made of clay and iron. Many believe that was the Roman empire divided and about to crumble.

Under the rule of godless leaders, many of whom set themselves up as gods to be worshiped, the world had fallen into a terrible state of debauchery. Not only was wickedness rampant, there were whole religious societies that practiced despicable sexual depravities.

Paul, in writing to the church at Rome, was addressing the wicked state man had fallen to. Read the progression of man's fall:

V21 - Although they knew God they didn't recognize him.

V22 - Claiming wisdom they became fools.

V24 - God gave them over in the sinful desires of their heart.

V25 - They exchanged the truth of God for a lie.

V26 - God gave them over to shameful lusts.

V28 - God gave them over to a depraved mind.

This is the world that Jesus was born into. It was a world where mankind had fallen far from grace. Even the Jews, who maintained doctrinal purity, had lost the truth of their calling. Jesus called their leaders, "Whited sepulchers full of dead men's bones."

It is no wonder Jesus wept when he saw Jerusalem steeped in religion and the rest of the world ruled by their sinful desires. The stage of the world had been set for the coming of one who would be the Christ and who would reconcile mankind to God.

Jesus, the Christ of Redemption, is the answer to world peace. Men have failed to bring lasting peace - But God has offered eternal peace through Christ. His government is a government of peace.

Prayer: Grant me wisdom to seek peace through you and not through human means. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Jesus, the Christ of Redemption, is the answer to world peace. Men have failed to bring lasting peace - But God has offered eternal peace through Christ. His government is a government of peace.

Affirmation: God has saved me from the spirit of this world and has placed his lasting peace in my heart. He is my Lord and my king.

Reflection: Look at the passage in Romans 1:21-28 and reflect on how the people of the world today have taken that path beginning with not recognizing Him as God.

My Thoughts:

Day Seventeen

The Temple Herod Built

Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, “As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another, every one of them will be thrown down.”

- Luke 21:5-6

There had been three temples in Jerusalem. The first was Solomon’s and it was the most magnificent. Next was Zerubbabal’s temple that was built at the end of the Babylonian exile. That temple was desecrated and destroyed by the Greeks and the Romans. The third temple was built by Herod, often called Herod the Great.

It was the custom of Rome to encourage people they had conquered to continue practicing their religion. Roman leaders felt that if they granted religious freedom it would give them more control over the people. That strategy led Herod to rebuild the temple as a memorial to his leadership and commitment to the people.

Unfortunately, he was not as gracious as he might seem. Even though he had built the temple he was wicked and intolerant. It was this Herod who ordered all of the infants in Bethlehem killed after his visit by the wise men from the east.

Jesus was standing near the temple with his disciples and they were speaking graciously of the temple that was dedicated to God. But Jesus knew this was not the true temple of God. In fact, this temple represented all that religion is. It was the work of man to make a show of his respect for religion.

Jesus knew this temple was nothing but a gathering of stones and the true temple of God was about to be destroyed, but it would be rebuilt after three days. From

the resurrection of the Christ the temple of God has not been made with stone and mortar but his true temple is built in the heart of man.

Man's temples can be destroyed, but the temple not made with human hands is eternal; such a temple we are.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be a vessel worthy to be your temple. Amen.

Message: Man's temples can be destroyed, but the temple not made with human hands is eternal; such a temple we are.

Affirmation: I don't not have to go to a temple to worship God - I have become the temple of God through faith in Christ Jesus my Lord.

Reflection: Can you see a parallel between Herod building a temple and some of the magnificent structures around the world today that have been erected as places of worship? Can any of those place compare to the true temple of God today - the temple of the heart?

My Thoughts:

Day Eighteen

The True Christ is the Christ of Truth

Jesus answered, "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many." - Matthew 24:4-5

There were religious zealots when Jesus walked on earth just as there are today. The Jews had their share of radical zealots who claimed to be the Messiah and who had caused such a stir that Rome had to send in troops to subdue their followers. Jesus was not the first to be executed for claiming to be Christ.

Rome's tolerance for local religions was a two sided coin. On one side it helped appease the people and on the other side it inspired radical zealots to attempt overthrowing the government.

We have seen our share of those claiming to be the Christ in modern times and have seen the devastation that has caused. In this passage Jesus was warning that there would be no more deliverers to come after him. All who claimed to be who he was would be false and would be considered antichrist.

One of the reasons Jesus didn't go around claiming to be Christ, except when he was questioned, was that he wanted to show the people that he was more than just a man making claims. At one point he said, "If you don't believe me for the words sake, believe me because of the miracles you see me do."

We have been setting the stage for getting an understanding of the political times into which Jesus was born, but in truth, there was little difference between then and now. We must be just as careful today that we are not carried away by the doctrine of some religious zealot who leads people away from the simple saving message of Jesus, the Christ of Redemption.

Just as Jesus reached the people with a simple message that was confirmed by signs and wonders, so we must today influence our generation. Not with eloquence, or better arguments, but with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be aware of the false christs around and their doctrines that can lead me astray. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Just as Jesus reached the people with a simple message that was confirmed by signs and wonders, so we must today influence our generation. Not with eloquence, or better arguments, but with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Affirmation: I am believing God for miracles, signs and wonders to accompany the truth I preach.

Reflection: Jesus never made claims to be the Messiah he just did the works that Messiah would do. It is interesting that Jesus, who was indeed the Messiah, or the Christ, never taught the overthrow of government and only taught the people to respect God, government and their fellow man. How are things different today?

My Thoughts:

Day Nineteen

Who Do You Fear?

“What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” - John 11:47-48

The greatest fear that the religious leaders in Jerusalem and Judea had was that the people would believe in Jesus and see the inconsistencies in their own teaching. In Mark chapters 11 and 12 it is recorded three times that the leaders saw what Jesus was doing and heard his teachings and this caused them to fear the people.

There were many times in the gospels that it is said that the leaders were afraid, but what is interesting is that it is never said that they feared God. They feared the government that oppressed them and they feared that the people would reject them in favor of Jesus, but they didn't fear the God of heaven that they claimed to serve.

The political and religious environment in which Jesus ministered put the leaders in a very difficult position. Their dilemma was that whatever they did they would suffer irreparable consequences to their leadership. They feared losing favor with the government and losing control of the people.

This is not a dilemma that is peculiar to that people or that time. Everyone who is faced with the truth of who Jesus is must face that same dilemma and make a choice; am I going to fear God or man?

I once read the story of a 23 year old who converted from Islam to Christianity. He was sharing his faith to another young person and he was killed for his witness

about Jesus. Yes, in the 21st Century there are still martyrs for the faith.

Would you be willing to face prison, or death, for your faith? A true test of whether you could face those situations is to evaluate how willing you are to share your faith among your neighbors, your friends, or your fellow workers. Can you pass that test?

Jesus wants to use you to change your world - are you willing?

Prayer: Lord, help me that my choices will not be influenced by the fear of man but by the love of God. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: The religious leaders didn't fear God but they feared losing favor with the government and losing control of the people. Everyone who is faced with the truth of who Jesus is must face that same dilemma and make a choice; am I going to fear God or man?

Affirmation: It is my faith in God and the realization of who he is and his plan for me in his kingdom that continues to challenge me to be an outspoken disciple.

Reflection: It should be noted that it is mentioned several times in the gospels that the religious leaders feared the government and the people, but not one time is it mentioned that they feared God concerning the ministry of Jesus.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty

A Kingdom Not Like Other Kingdoms

Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

- John 18:36

What is the purpose of government? Is it not to provide an orderly environment in which citizens may pursue life, liberty and happiness? At least that is what most governments would want us to believe.

In the time of Jesus the world only knew governments which ruled by conquering and domineering their subjects. There would be peace as long as the citizens submitted to the rule of government.

Because governments ruled by force there were constantly people who felt they could exert more force than the government and a war would begin. Not much different than today.

Pilot asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?” The answer Jesus gave did not fit any government Pilot, or anyone else for that matter, had heard of. Jesus replied, “My kingdom is not of this world.” How can one be king of a kingdom that is not of this world?

Jesus explained, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world” (v37). Jesus then said, “If my kingdom was of this world my servants would fight to prevent my arrest” (v36).

How can a kingdom be established without force? There is only one way and that is by love. God so loved the world that Christ was born to establish a kingdom of peace and good will. Think about it. If we who are believers in Christ committed to love and not fight, what would happen to war?

What would happen if we truly loved our enemies and were kind to those who disrespected us? What if the person who cut us off in traffic evoked a praise and a prayer instead of an angry response? What if we brought gifts to those who slandered us instead of taking them to court?

That is the radical message of the kingdom that is not of this world. Are we ready for kingdom that is not of this world?

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to love as you love. Amen.

Message: How can a kingdom be established without force? There is only one way and that is by love. God so loved the world that Christ was born to establish a kingdom of peace and good will.

Affirmation: It is the love of God in my heart which moves me to compassion for those who would misuse or abuse me.

Reflection: One third of the world today claims to be Christian. What would happen if every Christian chose to serve their enemies rather than pick up arms to fight them?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty One

What is God's and What is Caesar's?

“Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” Jesus said, “Show me the coin used for paying the tax... whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. Then he said to them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” - Matthew 12:15-22

The Pharisees had joined with their political enemies the Herodians, in an attempt to trap Jesus. They figured that if he said it was right to pay tribute that he could get the Jews to turn against him and they figured that if he said it was not right to pay taxes the civil authorities would arrest him. They thought they had trapped him.

The answer Jesus gave is much deeper than we first realize. “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s” simply means that the kingdoms of this world are of this world and about this world. We should understand that as long as we are in this world we are subject to its governments.

The question becomes, “What is God’s and what is Caesar’s?” The answer is in the statement of Jesus, “My kingdom is not of this world.” Those things that are God’s are things that cannot be affected by Caesar. The world’s governments can put physical restraints on us, but they cannot harness our spirit.

Caesar’s inscription may be on the coin, but God has written his name, and his law, on our hearts. When we surrender our hearts to God through faith in Jesus the Christ we become his.

People have a difficult time with the radical teachings of Jesus because they view them from the perspective of the way people of this world respond. Those of us who have become believers in the kingdom Jesus taught understand that we no longer look at others the way we used to. As apostle Paul wrote in 2

Corinthians, we are a new creation and we don't look at the world as we used to (5:16). In order for his kingdom to be realized we must stop acting as if we only belong to the kingdom of this world and respond from the perspective of God's kingdom.

Prayer: Help me to remember Lord that I am in your kingdom and I must live as a subject under your authority. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Those things that are God's are things that cannot be affected by Caesar. The world's governments can put physical restraints on us, but they cannot harness our spirit.

Affirmation: When I stand in God's kingdom I am standing in love and not by force. I submit to God and to government as God's agent and I serve in love.

Reflection: As believers we have dual citizenship. We are first citizens of God's kingdom and then citizens of the earthly kingdom. We are to submit to our earthly government, but only to the extent that it does not require us to violate our conscience. Think about it.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Two

A New King and a New Kingdom

But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected but they have rejected me as their king." - 1 Samuel 8:6-7

God's best was given man in the Garden. It was a time that trust, faith and love ruled. Then the will of man raised its head and declared, "I can be like a god." God's original plan was thwarted by the will of man.

In the process of time God began to call prophets and priests to lead his people, and that worked for a while, but again, the will of man was in rebellion against God.

It is ironic that man rejects God's best for a cheap imitation then blames God for the outcome. So, when Samuel was old the people said, "Give us a king. We want to be like the other peoples of the world." God finally said, "Alright, you want a king to lead you instead of following me alone, you can have a king."

God then told Samuel to warn them what would happen when they had a king like the other nations. Samuel told them that a king would take their sons to war and would take their harvests for himself. He will tax your increase and you will be in poverty when he lives in luxury.

Again, the plan of God was rejected and supplanted by the rule of man, but God was not finished. He had yet another plan to put in force. Every kingdom up to the time of Christ depended upon the rule of man, but God's plan was to reinstitute theocratic rule. God's plan was to again be the king man would look to.

This new kingdom he had in mind was not to be kept in boundaries drawn up by men. The throne room of

this kingdom was not to be in palaces made by the hands of man. This new kingdom that God was to offer man was to be established in the hearts of all those who would believe upon the Prince of Peace who would become Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

The kingdom of God is a kingdom of the heart and spirit.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to always be sensitive to your guidance and not to seek my own way. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: This new kingdom that God was to offer man was to be established in the hearts of all those who would believe upon the Prince of Peace who would become Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

Affirmation: The kingdom of God is a kingdom of the heart and Spirit. I submit to Christ and the authority of His kingdom.

Reflection: The reason Israel felt they needed a king was that they did not have faith in God and they did not trust him, his word, or his prophets, to lead them. It was their lack of faith in God which ultimately led them into poverty while their kings lived in luxury. Was the trade worth it?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Three

Religion Without Christ is Hopeless

Paul then stood up in the meeting... and said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with the inscription: To an Unknown One. – Acts 17:22-23

Nearly since the fall man has been attempting to reach God by imagining what he is like and forming images to represent the god they had imagined. The Greeks had developed a pantheon of gods and had erected statues to each of them.

Paul began to address the Greeks in the place where they gathered to discuss philosophies of life and religion. He saw that they were not only very religious, but their religion was based on fear and superstition. He observed that after they had created images of their many gods, they created one to the god they didn't know just in case one was missed.

The word translated “religious” in this passage comes from the Greek word *deisidaimonesteros*. This word is a derivative of two other words. One means fearful and the other means of demons or super human spirits. The KJV translates this word, “superstitious.” From this we can see that Paul was actually telling them that their religion was based in fear and superstition.

Fear and superstition are at the core of all of man's religions. Most religions teach that man is to continually be striving to be better and to do better so that they will be worthy of a better life in the next world. This approach to religion holds out the goodness of man as its cornerstone tenant. Reality is that man is ruled by a heart that seeks to find self-satisfaction regardless of the cost to others.

Jeremiah the prophet wrote, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (17:9).

Man cannot reach perfection or become worthy before God through religion. In fact, religion only leads to confusion and more questions. The answer is the simple message of Christ: “Come unto me all you who are weary and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Prayer: Lord, cleanse me of the hope of human perfection and give me grace to live at peace with you through faith in Christ. Amen.

Message: Man cannot reach perfection or become worthy before God through religion. In fact, religion only leads to confusion and more questions. The answer is the simple message of Christ: “Come unto me all you who are weary and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Affirmation: I have turned away from religion and to Christ. I have realized that I could not be saved by performing religion well. It is only through Christ that I have eternal life.

Reflection: Explore the idea of man forming a god out of his own imagination. Why is it that way?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Four

Ever Searching and Never Finding

All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas. – Acts 17:21

The Greeks were philosophers and as philosophers they were constantly evaluating new ideas to see if they contained truth. At first glance this approach seems good, but upon looking a little closer the danger of this approach to truth begins to appear.

The very meaning of philosopher is, “One who pursues the truth.” By definition a philosopher is a searcher for truth. If one is always searching for truth the logical conclusion would be that one never quite feels that truth has yet been discovered and that is the weakness of philosophy.

Paul addresses this concept in his writing to Timothy. He says they are “ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7 KJV). If we do not accept the truth we have received then we are liable to be deceived by many near truths.

The current state of man is the same as it was in ancient times. When the truth of God is presented and it is not received, then God allows us to believe a deception and miss the life that he has intended for us. The whole purpose of Christ is to demonstrate the simplicity of being in right relationship with God.

It isn't a bad idea to evaluate ideas that are presented to us, but they should be evaluated in the light of revealed truth. God has revealed himself to the world in the person and work of Jesus the Christ of Redemption. Every new idea and so called truth must be looked at in relation to the truth of God in Christ.

Far too much of man's ideas about religion have infiltrated into the precious gospel of Christ. Any

teacher of religion, including those who claim to be Christian, who teaches that we can earn a right relationship with God through our efforts, is contradicting the truth of Christ.

The message of Christ is simple: "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith... it is the gift of God."

Prayer: Thank you Lord for the truth of God in Christ and salvation by grace through faith. Amen.

Message: If one is always searching for truth the logical conclusion would be that one never quite feels that truth has yet been discovered and that is the weakness of philosophy.

Affirmation: Jesus has told us that the truth would set us free, then he told us that he was the truth. I have received the truth and I have been set free.

Reflection: Give some thought to what is meant by, "God allows us to believe a deception and miss the life that he has intended for us."

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Five

The Jews Are Given the Truth

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. - Deuteronomy 6:4-5

The Jews were an anomaly to the world in ancient times. All other nations worshipped many gods and it seems they had a god for every occasion. But the Jews had only one God who had revealed himself to Abraham, and his descendants carried that on.

A test for the Jews was that their God was never to be represented by statue, icon or idol created by man. Worship of the one true God was to be by faith and not by what can be seen. Even at the beginning as God was revealing himself to Abraham he was calling for men to walk by faith.

God spoke his will to Abraham and Abraham believed God. It was just that simple. He didn't erect a totem, or form an idol; he just believed God. Paul writes of Abraham in Romans, "Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness."

When God called Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt he committed to him the faith of Abraham. The voice coming from the burning bush was the same voice of God Abraham had heard. When Moses asked the voice who should he say was sending him God said, "This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am' has sent me to you'" (Exodus 3:14).

The command of Deuteronomy 6:4 stands today as a call for all men to recognize the one true God and serve him alone. Jesus, the Christ of Redemption came to man to reiterate that message and to make a way for mankind to be reinstated in relationship with God.

God is one, and the purpose of Christ on the earth was to lead man back into unity with the one God. His

prayer just before he was arrested was that believers, and ultimately all men, would be one with him and Father God (John 17). Our hope today is that we will become one in unity; One with each other and one with God. Jesus prayed, “That they may be one as we are one” (John 17:11).

Prayer: Lord, I realize my need to be fully committed to the God of Abraham. Grant me grace to be in right relationship with you. Amen.

Message: God is one, and the purpose of Christ on the earth was to lead man back into unity with the one God. His prayer just before he was arrested was that believers, and ultimately all men, would be one with him and Father God (John 17)

Affirmation: I do not understand how Jesus, the Father, and all believers are one, but I accept that because Jesus, my Lord, has told us it is true.

Reflection: The point missed by religious leaders in the time that Jesus ministered was that the eternal kingdom could only dwell in an eternal entity. It could not dwell in buildings which crumble or governments which fail. It could only dwell in the spirit of man. Think about it.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Six

Man's Traditions Are Roadblocks to Faith

Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.” You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men. – Mark 7:6-8

When God first revealed his law to Moses it was very simple. The rules were laid out including consequences for disobeying them. There were rules regarding worship, relationships, and how to respect all of creation. Pretty basic stuff; but religious leaders complicated it so much that no one could live by it.

By the time Jesus the Christ arrived on the scene the simple law that God gave Moses had been expanded into many volumes of detailed applications that no one could live by. It was the issue of these traditions that Jesus was addressing.

God intended that his law would be the reflection of a life surrendered to him, but that would not be the case. Instead of living out God's will from a heart submitted to him the religious leaders used the law as a blanket to cover their evil heart. Jesus made this point with the analogy that washing a tomb may make it pretty, but it won't change the fact that dead men's bones are inside (Matthew 23:27).

There were glaring inconsistencies in the religious community of Jesus day. The leaders would require the people to obey the letter of the law while they violated the spirit of the Law. The law required people to make pilgrimage to the temple to offer sacrifices. The leaders enforced that law, then when the people came they were sold inferior animals for sacrifice at inflated prices.

Jesus, the Christ of Redemption, had come to upset the traditions of men and to open the door for man to be truly reconciled to God.

Because of what Christ has done we have hope in God. Christ has opened the door - have you invited him in?

Prayer: Thank you father for freeing me from the traditions of men and giving me the righteousness of Christ. Amen.

Message: Jesus, the Christ of Redemption, had come to upset the traditions of men and to open the door for man to be truly reconciled to God.

Affirmation: My faith is in Christ and his word, not in the traditions of men.

Reflection: God never intended his law to be a burden to man, but rather the law was intended to be a guide to lead people to Christ. Jewish leaders didn't understand God's purposes for the law and saw the law as a destination rather than a guide. How have traditions affected you?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Seven

Jesus Cautions About Religion

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat... They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. - Matthew 23:2-4

Religions begin in faith and hope then mature into rules that challenge to achieve and finally become laws that condemn those who cannot live by them. The tragedy of that is the same today as it was in Jesus day; religious leaders challenge people to live by a code that they themselves cannot live by.

In Matthew 23 Jesus was addressing just such a condition among the leaders of the faith of Abraham and Moses. The leaders sat in the seat of judgment over the people when they knew that they didn't have the heart to live by the spirit of the law themselves.

One of the most damaging results of leaders stuck in tradition is that once they become convinced that theirs is the right path they develop a sense of pride in preserving their traditions. They pray to be seen; they give token gifts to charity so others will herald them as charitable; they fast with long faces to impress others with their piety - then exact the last penny from the widows and orphans.

Jesus came to break tradition and establish a new style of religious leadership. He taught, "The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11-12). Jesus introduced the concept of servant leadership to his followers.

Jesus lived to do the will of the father thus setting an example for his followers. Jesus was the epitome of servant leadership. All that Jesus did was to glorify the Father and to fulfill his purposes.

We would do well today to learn from the master of submission. Just hours before he was to stand for judgment for the sins of all mankind he cried out to the Father, “If you are willing, take this cup from me;” then in full submission prays, “yet not my will but yours be done” (Luke22:42). That is true servant leadership.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to follow you and not to put burdens on others that I am not able to bear myself. In Jesus name.

Message: Jesus lived to do the will of the father thus setting an example for his followers. Jesus was the epitome of servant leadership. All that Jesus did was to glorify the Father and to fulfill his purposes.

Affirmation: I do not serve to be seen or heard; I serve to do the will of the father.

Reflection: Jesus came to break tradition and establish a new style of religious leadership. He taught, “The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23:11-12). Jesus introduced the concept of servant leadership to his followers.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Eight

Truth Speaks With Authority

Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. - Mark 1:21-22

Imagine a morning worship service that is going along quite nicely and when the guest speaker stands to address the congregation, someone stands in the back of the auditorium and cries out, "What do you want with us. Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are..." That is what happened in the synagogue while Jesus was teaching.

We don't know the particular passages Jesus was teaching from, but whatever it was those who had attended synagogue that Sabbath were amazed at the depth of wisdom and understanding of this young teacher. He didn't speak as one trying to learn, he spoke as one who knew and his knowing gave him great authority.

Jesus was just finished teaching when the power of his authority was challenged. The evil spirit in a person spoke out to him, asking why he had come. Jesus responded by ordering, "Be quiet. Come out of him!" (v25). The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek (v26).

The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching - and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee. (v27-28).

The people were learning what their religious leaders were afraid to confess: Jesus was the Holy One of God who had come to set the world free from the effects of

sin - and he was beginning in the homeland of Judea and Galilee.

That same spirit of the Christ rests in his church today. All that must happen to see that kind of authority demonstrated is for someone to believe in the fullness of the manifestation of the power of the Christ in the church today and then act upon it.

God is looking for people like you and I to be that person.

Prayer: Lord, there is no less need for authority and power today than there was in Jesus time - give us the power. Amen.

Message: The people were learning what their religious leaders were afraid to confess: Jesus was the Holy One of God who had come to set the world free from the effects of sin.

Affirmation: Evil spirits respond to his authority and he has given that authority to me as a Spirit filled believer.

Reflection: Why do you think that the very presence of Jesus caused the evil spirits to cry out? Jesus did not speak as one asking but as one who knew and had confidence in what he knew. Is that same authority and power available to believers today? If it is, why don't we see a greater manifestation of that power?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Nine

Jesus Used Parables to Reveal Truth

Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.”

- Matthew 13:34-35

A simple definition of a parable is using a truth or concept that is known to illustrate and reveal a truth that is yet to be learned. The purpose of a parable is to guide those who desire to gain insight into truth. The parables of Matthew 13 demonstrate this purpose.

Jesus knew that most of the people he was addressing were farmers. They understood about sowing and reaping. They also understood about fertile ground and waste land. When Jesus told them that the kingdom of heaven was like a man who went out to sow his seed, they knew what he was talking about.

The people probably heard more truth in this parable than if Jesus had spoken plainly. The farmers could probably grasp the concept that hard ground which wouldn't receive the seed could be those who claimed to be on the “path to God” but who were in fact too hardened in their own beliefs to truly hear the word of God.

Those farmers had probably known many well intentioned people who seemed to “get it” but they lost it just as quick as they got it and they would be seed planted on rocky soil.

So, Jesus taught spiritual truth by using the things that were common to explain those things that were not yet understood. In doing this he was introducing a new era of understanding the purposes of God. Jesus had come to invite the world, Jews and Gentiles alike, to

become members in his kingdom, but he knew that those who understood would be those whose hearts were ready to hear truth.

We need leaders today who will follow the example of Jesus and use the common to explain the extraordinary.

Prayer: Lord, give me a heart that is ready to receive your truth, even if the truth goes against my traditions. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Hard ground which will not receive the seed could be those who claim to be on the “path to God” but who are in fact too hardened in their own beliefs to truly hear the word of God.

Affirmation: I desire to be good seed, planted in good soil and willing to die that I might be given his life and produce much fruit for the kingdom of God.

Reflection: Parables are a good way to demonstrate truth and Jesus used that technique very well. Give some thought to how you can use the common to explain the extraordinary.

My Thoughts:

Day Thirty

Pray for Laborers in the Kingdom Harvest.

He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” - Matthew 9:36-38

The Jews were looking for a redeemer who would deliver them from oppression and rule the world from Jerusalem. The world was in need of a redeemer to rescue them from the tyranny of the government of man. Neither the Jews nor the rest of the world were prepared for a redeemer like Jesus the Christ of Redemption.

Jesus did not conspire with others to overthrow the government and he didn't form an army to conquer. He simply came to heal the hurts of the people, restore their hope and give them the ability to fulfill their dreams. He came to establish the kingdom of God.

The people of his time were harassed by the circumstances of life. The corrupt religious system and the oppressive government had made them helpless to overcome their situation in life. They had looked to men to lead them but they had been deserted and left as sheep wandering without a shepherd to guide them to a safe place. They needed a shepherd.

Jesus was moved by compassion for this people because he saw their plight, and he knew his mission. He knew there was a kingdom to establish and there was a harvest to be garnered for this kingdom, yet there were not enough people who understood the need who could go the fields and reap a harvest for the kingdom.

In frustration he looked to his followers and said, “Pray that the Lord of the harvest would send out laborers into the fields.” We know that he was not just speaking rhetorically because the very next verse reads,

“He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness” (10:1).

Have you prayed for the Lord to send harvesters to the field? Are you willing to be a laborer in the harvest?

Prayer: Lord, I pray, send laborers into the harvest, and help me to be willing to be one of those laborers. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Jesus knew there was a kingdom to establish and there was a harvest to be garnered for this kingdom, yet there were not enough people who understood the need who could go the fields and reap a harvest for the kingdom.

Affirmation: I have prayed for the harvest and the Lord has called me to serve in that harvest.

Reflection: Jesus faced two frustrations. First, he was frustrated that the religious leaders had not done their job. The people felt harassed, helpless and without spiritual guidance. His second frustration was that there were not enough laborers to work in this harvest field. What can you do to relieve his frustration?

My Thoughts:

Day Thirty One

Jesus Established a Kingdom of Hope

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

- Matthew 6:33-34

There has always been a struggle to survive, particularly in an agrarian society like that of Jesus day. There was always a concern for enough food, good shelter and adequate clothing. Then when they had enough there seemed to always be an oppressive government that was taking it away.

Jesus spoke to people who were experiencing the helplessness and hopelessness that the constant struggle for survival produced. He could see in their faces a desperate reaching out for something that could give them a hope for a future.

He offered them something more effective than a sword; he offered them hope. In his kind and compassionate way he simply called them to trust the Father. He reminded them that their heavenly Father knew that they had need of food, shelter and clothing (v25-32) and he reminded them of the love of the Father.

In the hustle and bustle of life it is easy to forget that the Father really does love us and he is concerned about our well being. Just as the people of Jesus day we must come to the place where we realize that God is going to take care of us and all he asks us to do is to seek his kingdom first.

The challenge Jesus faced in his day is the same challenge God faces today; getting people to truly trust him and to seek his kingdom first. All that Jesus taught in the days he ministered on earth was trust God,

commit our ways to him, seek him and his kingdom first, and all that we need will be made available to us.

The world doesn't need another world power, or more conquering heroes. That's why Jesus came to establish a kingdom that no man could conquer because there was no land, or buildings, or government. It was a kingdom of the heart and hope in God.

Prayer: Lord, It is easy for me to become worried and slip back into trusting myself for security. Grant me grace to seek you first. Amen.

Message: All that Jesus taught in the days he ministered on earth was trust God, commit our ways to him, seek him and his kingdom first, and all that we need will be made available to us.

Affirmation: I am learning not to be fearful of the circumstances of life and to trust God for all that I need. I have found that when I trust him he takes care of me.

Reflection: The core of the message Jesus taught was the hope of his kingdom. He encouraged people to not hope in the governments of this world but to trust the King of the kingdom of heaven.

My Thoughts:

THE LORD'S PRAYER

DIRECTIVE

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." - Luke 11:1

Jesus answered that request by giving what has become known as "The Lord's Prayer," and in some traditions it is called the "Our Father." We often pray this prayer in worship services and in our private prayer time. It is often used as the closing prayer in a meeting.

Did Jesus really intend for his followers to pray these words when they prayed, or did he intend for this prayer to be used as a pattern for prayer? I don't think his is an "either or," but I do believe Jesus meant for this to primarily be a pattern for prayer.

That is why we call it the Lord's prayer directive. He was answering the request of the disciples to teach them to pray. This small book is written with that idea in mind.

Every phrase in the prayer is broken down and an explanation is given as to what is being addressed and a sample prayer is given for that phrase. It is not

intended for the sample prayer to be "the prayer" for that phrase, but it is just a guide for praying that phrase.

"This Then Is How You Should Pray"

Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as
it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our
debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us
from the evil one.

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the
glory forever. Amen.

- **Matthew 6:9-13**

A closer look at The Lord's Prayer Directive:

"Our Father in Heaven..."

Father brings to our mind two things; loving care
and authority. In our prayer we need to recognize
that God is truly our father. In fact, it is good to
begin your prayer with, "Our Father."

It is good at the beginning of your prayer to meditate upon the idea that God is Father, and what that means to you.

Our prayer should be: “Father God, I thank you for caring for me more than an earthly father could. Help me to appreciate your love and yield to your authority.”

“Hallowed be your name...”

In every prayer we should take a little time to honor the awesomeness of God. Think of what he achieved in creation. How he rules the universe, yet how he considers each one of us and knows everything about us.

We are given hundreds of names and titles of God in the Bible, and each one of them gives us insight into who he is. Here are some of his basic names:

“Elohim” – This is a unique reference to the Lord God and projects the idea of the majesty of God.

“El Shaddai” – This is the term translated “Almighty God.” This name projects God as the all sufficient one.

“Jehovah” – Here God is shown to be the eternally self existent one. He exists without the limits of time, and without dependence upon any other force. He is the only totally self existent one in the universe.

By taking a moment to reflect upon one or more of these names of God in our prayer we can begin to develop a sense of awesomeness about him.

“Your kingdom come...”

God’s kingdom will come, the question is will we participate in it? This is not a request but a statement, “Your kingdom [will] come.” We must accept that there is a higher force at work in the world, and that he has a plan.

Our prayer concerning the kingdom of God should be that our spiritual eyes are opened to see God working in his kingdom and seek him to know what he would have us do for him.

We should pray: “Lord, help me to see how that you are bringing your kingdom to men and show me what my part is in the kingdom.”

“Your will be done...”

It is easy to say, “God’s will be done,” but it is not always easy to accept God’s will. Even Jesus had to spend a lot of time praying the night of his capture and trial. Finally, after the sweat of his labor of prayer became as drops of blood, he was able to say, “Nevertheless Father, not my will but yours be done.” We don’t have to go to a literal cross like

Jesus did, but we must come to the place that we are willing to do the will of God whatever it might be.

Our prayer here should be: “Help me to be willing to be yielded to your will Lord. Whatever you have for me to do I will do it. I will use whatever talent you have given me to do your will.”

“Give us today our daily bread...”

Whether we are employed or unemployed we still need to ask God for our daily provision. Our security should never be in our ability to earn money, but in God’s bountiful supply. Usually his provision comes through our labor, but it is still his provision.

This phrase is dealing with a mindset. Are we truly trusting him to guide us through the day or will we revert back to trusting our own instincts?

Our prayer here should be: “Lord, I need your provision today. Just as you gave daily manna to Israel in the wilderness I need your daily provision now. Open my heart and spirit to receive your blessing today.”

“Forgive us our debts...”

We have sinned, and if we say we haven’t we are lying. Before you become upset with me for saying that, take note; it wasn’t me who said it. 1 John 1:8 says that very thing. But verse 9 of that same chapter says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just

and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

God has made provision in Jesus Christ to forgive all our sins, but we have to ask him. In fact, every day when we pray through this prayer we should spend some time thinking through the previous day and ask God to bring to our mind anything we did, or thought about doing that we need to be cleansed of.

Then we should ask God to forgive us of those things. And he will because, “He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins.”

Our prayer should be: “I know I have sinned, and I need your forgiveness. Grant me repentance for all my sins and wash me clean of every wrong desire.”

“As we also have forgiven our debtors...”

It is a lot easier to ask God to forgive us of what we have done wrong than it is to forgive others of what they have done against us, but Jesus said, “If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14-15).

We should pray: “Father God, grant me the grace to forgive those who have done things against me. Help me to have a forgiving attitude toward others.”

“But deliver us from the evil one...”

God will protect us from the tempter as we continue to trust him. This prayer is as much a statement as it is a request. We are saying that we will trust and depend upon him to protect us and our family from the evil one.

Our prayer should be: “I know the devil is always after me and my family but I also know you want to protect us. I ask now that you send angels to watch over us and protect us from the evil one.”

“For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”

Now it is time to give him the honor and glory he deserves. Think about it. He is the only one who can do what you have just asked him to do, and he wants to do it.

Sometimes we are so focused on our needs and desires that we forget to spend a period of time in praise and worship as we are ending our prayer.

The psalmist tells us that God inhabits the praises of his people (Psalm 22:3). We are told by Apostle Paul to submit our needs before God with thanksgiving and God will respond with giving us peace which is greater than any man can give (Philippians 4:4-7).

Let us conclude our prayer with praise and adoration.

Our prayer should be: “Father God, you alone are worthy of our praise and worship. I thank you for being who you are, and for doing what you promised. I commit all things to you now in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.”

Tips On Leading A Small Group

We publish the Daily God Walk Study Guide Edition for those who want to use this devotional as a tool for leading small groups.

In the study guide edition there are four additional sections at the end of each devotion: Principle, Affirmation, Reflection, and My Thoughts. below is an explanation of how to use each of them in a small group discussion.

Message: This is a principle pulled out of the devotion for the day. Ask the group to express how they can see this principle in the devotion then use that to kick off the discussion.

Affirmation: The affirmation is an example of how we can begin to internalize the principle of the devotion. We can repeat the affirmation in a prayer making it personal. We can also just repeat it throughout the day while giving thought to the principle.

Reflection: These statements and questions are designed to help guide discussion and make application of the devotion in the daily life of the participant.

My Thoughts: This section is just blank lines. Encourage your group to "Journal" their thoughts on the devotion each day. By writing out the thoughts that come from the devotion and the discussion on the devotion the individuals will find that their walk of faith is enhanced.

My experience is that we usually only make it through one or two of the daily devotions at one group setting, but it is good to encourage the group to work through the principle, affirmation, reflection and my thoughts section for each daily devotion at home.

For more information on using the Daily God Walk for small groups, go online at:

www.dailygodwalk.org/small-goups

We value your comments on the Daily God Walk. It would be a blessing if you sent us an email with your comments about our program. Email us at: paul@nhmresources.org