

BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

5 Day Chronological Bible Reading Program WWW.FIVEDAYBIBLEREADING.COM

Week Forty Nine: *December 1-7*

- Day 1: Esther 7-10; Revelation 3
- Day 2: Ezra 7-10; Psalm 97; Revelation 4
- Day 3: Nehemiah 1-3; Revelation 5
- Day 4: Nehemiah 4-6; Psalm 98; Revelation 6
- Day 5: Nehemiah 7-9; Psalm 140; Revelation 7

Week Fifty: *December 8-14*

- Day 1: Nehemiah 10-13; Revelation 8
- Day 2: Malachi; Psalm 2; Revelation 9
- Day 3: Job 1-3; Psalm 29; Revelation 10
- Day 4: Job 4-7; Psalm 99; Revelation 11
- Day 5: Job 8-11; Revelation 12

Week Fifty One: *December 15-21*

- Day 1: Job 12-14; Psalm 100; Revelation 13
- Day 2: Job 15-17; Revelation 14
- Day 3: Job 18-20; Psalm 141; Revelation 15
- Day 4: Job 21-23; Psalm 101; Revelation 16
- Day 5: Job 24-27; Revelation 17

Week Fifty Two: *December 22-28*

- Day 1: Job 28-30; Revelation 18
- Day 2: Job 31-33; Psalm 102; Revelation 19
- Day 3: Job 34-36; Revelation 20
- Day 4: Job 37-39; Psalm 103; Revelation 21
- Day 5: Job 40-42; Psalm 150; Revelation 22

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The men who wrote the biblical books were not inventing things. Neither were they automatons. They were real people in real historical times with real DNA writing according to their historical settings and their personalities. But the authorship of Scripture was dual. It was, for instance, both Jeremiah and God, because Jeremiah was picked up and carried along. Indeed, in Jeremiah's case, God said, "*Behold, I have put my words in your mouth*" (Jer. 1:9). He did so without violating Jeremiah's distinct personality, and he then wrote the very Word of God. This is why we study the Bible—because this is a book that exists as a result of the out-breathing of the Holy Spirit.

Concerning the identity of the Helper, we could go on *ad infinitum*, but we must be selective rather than exhaustive. His identity is as "another Helper." The word translated as "another" here is *allos*, not *heteros*. Jesus promised a Helper of the same kind rather than of a different kind. The Spirit is the *parakletos*, the one who comes alongside. Jesus said He would "*be with you forever . . . he dwells with you and will be in you*" (John 14:16-17). In other words, His ministry is both permanent and personal.

This article is part of the 5 Things You Should Know collection.

This article was written by Alistair Begg and originally published January 29th, 2021 on Ligonier.com and in Holy, Holy, Holy: Proclaiming the Perfections of God. By Various Authors.

50th Anniversary Celebration

FOR

BILL & BECKY BELL

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THE BROADCASTER

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF FIRST BAPTIST MENA

I have made it no secret that winter is not my favorite time of year. I've just never been a fan of cold and wet. It is the season that Jesus warned about (Matthew 24:20; Mark 13:18). Seriously, it is a personal thing, but I definitely lean towards the warmer months and find greater comfort in them. However, my disdain for cooler months does not prevent them and I have learned to appreciate winter for a number of reasons. Winter is a key indicator of God's handiwork in His creation. This wonderful planet that God has given us is designed just right for life. Its distance from the sun gives us temperatures that are not too hot or too cold. The earth's magnetic field protects us from the harmful rays from our sun. Its size is precise to maintain our need for gravity. All this gives us liquid water that is required for life. Finally, its tilt that gives us our seasons, including winter,

is ideal for providing what is needed without bringing extremes. This is a complicated process regarding the earth's spin and gravitational pull from the sun and moon along with several other factors. This means that even winter testifies to God's goodness in His creation. Another factor that is special about winter is the need plants have for a chilling period. During the late days of summer, plants begin to prepare for winter dormancy. It is their way of getting ready for the harshness of the cold months. We often think of the growing months as the key to determine which plants will grow in an area, but the winter is just as important. Without the cold, many plants would not get their necessary chilling period that makes them resume growing in the spring. Different plants require different lengths of time between 32 and 45 degrees to resume growing and flowering when the warm weather returns. This, too, is all part of God's magnificent design.

The last point I want to make regarding winter is one about spiritual winter. We can face times of bitter cold in our spiritual walks. Times when life has given us hardship and trials that we are forced to walk through. These can be described as a winter of a spiritual sense that seems to bring a dormancy to our lives. We have all faced these times of feeling that we are out in the cold and our hope seems to be darkened like a winter sky. Just as with all things, these seasons have a purpose in our lives. There are questions we want answers to about what God is doing and why it is happening to me, but there is more we must understand. Just as plants and our earth needs the times of winter, our lives need them too. We must bear in mind that God is always doing something even when the days seem bleak.

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5 Things You Should Know about the Holy Spirit

Jesus said: *“I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you”* (John 16:7). Now, I don’t want to bring cold coals to Newcastle by giving you information with which you are already familiar, so let me just briefly give some background on this verse. You know that the Greek word translated here as “Helper” is *parakletos*. In its technical form, it has a legal dimension; it refers to one who would be an advocate. In its wider context, it speaks of comfort, of protection, of counsel, and of guidance. Jesus also spoke of the Spirit as the Helper in John 14 and introduced Him as *“the Spirit of truth”* (John 14:17; 16:13). I think it best for me to simply say a number of things concerning the identity of this Helper with little embellishment.

1. The Holy Spirit is a unique person.
First, we need to notice that the Holy Spirit is a unique person and not simply a power or an influence. He is spoken of as “He,” not as “it.” This is a matter of import because if you listen carefully to people speaking, even within your own congregations you may hear the Holy Spirit referenced in terms of the neuter. You may even catch yourself doing it. If you do, I hope you will bite your tongue immediately. We have to understand that the Spirit of God, the third person of the Trinity, is personal. As a person, He may be grieved (Eph. 4:30), He may be quenched in terms of the exercise of His will (1 Thess. 5:19), and He may be resisted (Acts 7:51).

2. The Holy Spirit is one both with the Father and with the Son.
Second, the Holy Spirit is one both with the Father and with the Son. In theological terms, we say that He is both co-equal and co-eternal. When we read the whole Upper Room Discourse, we discover that it was both the Father and the Son who would send the Spirit (John 14:16; 16:7), and the Spirit came and acted, as it were, for both of Them.

So the activity of the Spirit is never given to us in Scripture in isolation from the person and work of Christ or in isolation from the eternal will of the Father. Any endeavor to think of the Spirit in terms that are entirely mystical and divorced from Scripture will take us down all kinds of side streets and eventually to dead ends.

3. The Holy Spirit was the agent of creation.
Third, the Holy Spirit was the agent of creation. In the account of creation at the very beginning of the Bible, we are told: *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters”* (Gen. 1:1–2). The Hebrew word translated as “Spirit” here is *ruach*, which also can mean “breath.” The *ruach elohim*, “the Breath of the Almighty,” is the agent in creation. It is not the immateriality of the Spirit that is in view here, but rather His power and energy; the picture is of God’s energy breathing out creation, as it were, speaking the worlds into existence, putting the stars into space. Thus, when we read Isaiah 40:26 and the question is asked, *“Who created these?”* we have the answer in Genesis 1:2—the Spirit is the irresistible power by which God accomplishes His purpose. Tangentially, one of the questions of Old Testament scholarship concerns the extent to which we are able to discover the distinct personhood of God the Holy Spirit from the Old Testament. In other words, can we understand the nature of His hypostasis in the Old Testament alone? When we read Genesis 1, it is not difficult to see that we have in the second verse, certainly in light of all that has subsequently been revealed, a clear and distinct reference to the third person of the Trinity. In his book *The Holy Spirit*, Sinclair B. Ferguson notes that if we recognize the divine Spirit in Genesis 1:2, that provides what some refer to as the missing link in Genesis 1:26, where God said, *“Let us make man in our image.”*

Ferguson observes that this is a clear antecedent reference to the Spirit of God who is at work in Genesis 1:1–2. This issue reminds us, incidentally, that it is helpful to read our Bibles backward. As we read from the back to the front, we discover the truth of the classic interpretive principle attributed to Augustine: “The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed, and the Old is in the New revealed.” In other words, we discover the implications of those teachings and events that come earlier in the Scriptures.

4. The Holy Spirit is the author of the new birth.
Fourth, the Holy Spirit is the agent not only of creation, but also of God’s new creation in Christ. He is the author of the new birth. We see this in John 3, in the classic encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus, where Jesus said, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”* (John 3:5). This truth, of course, is worked out in the rest of the Scriptures.

5. The Spirit is the author of the Scriptures.
Fifth, the Spirit is the author of the Scriptures. Second Timothy 3:16 tells us, *“All Scripture is breathed out by God.”* The Greek word behind this phrase is *theopneustos*, which means “God-breathed.” In creation, we have the Spirit breathing His energy, releasing the power of God in the act of creation. We have the same thing in the act of redemption, and we see it again in the divine act of giving to us the record in the Scriptures themselves. The doctrine of inspiration is entirely related to the work of God the Holy Spirit. Peter affirms this view, writing, *“No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”* (2 Peter 1:21).

Continued on back

Continued from Pastor’s Desk

There are some things to consider when you face times of cold spiritual days:
First, don’t spend your time and energy wishing for another season. God uses winters to grow us into who He wants us to be. Jesus makes this clear in John 15:1-2;
“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”
As with real plants, God uses winter to prune us to bear even more fruit. I realize keeping a positive attitude during times of winter is not easy, but know God is at work and we should desire greater fruit.
Second, during the winters, be diligent in your walk.
Bury yourself in God’s Word, in prayer and Christian mediation.
Finally, take time to see what God is doing in your life and what He has revealed to you because He is faithful.
“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”
1 Peter 5:10.
Remember, Jesus’ disciples suffered a horrible winter when they watched Him die on the cross after suffering terrible abuse. The one they were convinced was the messiah and had spent so much time teaching them while demonstrating who He was by such incredible miracles was gone.
Just imagine the lowly state they were in after such a tragedy. The level of depression must have been indescribable.
But Sunday brought the spring when Jesus walked out of that grave and conquered death once and for all!
We all walk through spiritual winters, but God is right there with us bringing the good.

May God bless you all,

Bro. Jim Tennerly

Music Notes

Do you ever feel that no one cares? Do you have times that you are lonely? I spoke with a lady a few days ago who has no one who seems to care about her. She is totally dependent on people she pays to come to her home to help her get up in the morning. Another person comes in the evening to help her get ready for the night. Her family is not willing to have her in their home or even nearby. She expressed how lonely she feels.
I reminded her of the passage in I Peter 5 where Peter writes, *“Cast all your anxiety upon Him (God) because He cares for you.”* (1 Peter 5:7)
When you get lonely, afraid, troubled, say to yourself, “God cares for me.”
And how do we know God cares?
“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” (John 3:16)
Jesus, the divine Son of God, came to us as a baby. The King of heaven, Creator of all things, laid aside His glorious splendor to lie as a helpless baby in a manger. And, beyond the manger, we see the cross. God demonstrated how much he loves us in this – while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).
Never forget that you have a friend! Regardless of who you are, where you’ve been, what you’ve done, how you feel, or what circumstances you find yourself in, you have a friend who cares for you. Your circumstances may not change, but you can know that you are not alone in the dark times of life. I think of Paul and Silas in a Roman dungeon, bound in chains and stocks. What a bad, depressing situation! But, Luke records in Acts 16:25, *“About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God.”*
They knew they had a friend who cared, who knew exactly where they were, and in the darkest midnight, they could sing songs of praise to God. There is a song I love that has the lyrics:
Don’t let the song go out of your heart, No matter how dark the day.
With Jesus as a friend, we can cast all our worries upon Him when we go to Him in prayer. We can talk to God about anything. Don’t let Christmas pass without knowing Jesus in personal relationship as your Savior, your friend and comforter.

Blessed to serve,
Bro. Vernon