

Read Through the Old Testament

Daily Bible Reading Guide with Devotional Thoughts-and Prayer Starters © Pastor Frank Eckert

GET INTO IT ANYWAY YOU CAN!

NOVEMBER, YEAR B

(Recommended: READ summary BEFORE reading the Bible verses!)

☐ November 1 Zechariah 1: 1-21

Reflect: Zechariah affirms that the Temple is the place from which the Lord will act for the salvation of all. To the remnant returning from the Babylonian exile, the prophet renews his prophetic cry, Repent! The word of the Lord came to him in eight visions, comprising dialogues between God, the prophet and an angel. In the first vision, divine horsemen patrol the earth. In the second, the four horns symbolise the powerful nations of the world which the four smiths, the Lord's agents of destruction, will scatter. Do we allow not only God's wrath, but also His words of grace to move us to daily repentance?

Prayer: Father, when our sin and guilt accuse us anew, let the sweet message of Your grace draw us to You. Amen.

☐ November 2 Zechariah 2: 1-13

Reflect: In the third vision, we see a man going to measure Jerusalem. The new city will have no walls, though walls were indispensable for security of an ancient city. The Lord Himself will be a wall of fire to defend the New Jerusalem from all harm. Do we, with our human frailty, stand in awe before the God who is on the move to fulfil His purposes?

Prayer: God, we praise You for the promises of Your infinite grace reaching out to us and to all sinners, unfolding upon us now. Amen.

☐ November 3 Zechariah 3: 1-10

Reflect: The fourth vision is about the High Priest of the New Age. What man dare serve as priest before the Holy God as a representative of a sinful people. Only the Lord Himself can silence Satan's accusation of guilt. He can clothe His new high priest in pure garments and make him a faithful priest. Can we see the Messianic Age beginning to dawn, with God's Servant, the Branch, coming to remove our guilt and give us peace?

Prayer: Thank You, Lord Jesus for Your work as our great High Priest, bridging the gulf between us and God and giving us direct access to Your Father, through the forgiveness of our sins. Amen.

☐ November 4 Zechariah 4: 1-10

Reflect: In Zechariah's fifth vision, we see that the king performs his task in the power of the Spirit of the Lord. He is not just a political figure but a religious figure, closely associated with the priest. Together, they stand with the Lord of the whole earth. The golden lampstand with its seven lamps and forty nine flames and the two olive trees beside it, indicate that under God's watchful eye, these two empowered leaders are God's special instruments. Through them God's grace is supplied to God's people. Do we truly rejoice over the amazing grace of God poured out upon us through God's Word and Christ's Sacraments?

Prayer: Gracious Lord, help us always to look to the Holy Spirit and not to human might and power to build Your Church. Amen.

☐ November 5 Zechariah 5: 1-11

Reflect: In the sixth vision, the thief and the perjurer are struck by the curse of God's Law pictured as a huge scroll. We can imagine many disputes occurring when the exiles returned and tried to claim their ancestral possessions from those who had remained behind. In the seventh vision, Jerusalem is delivered from all evil. Iniquity is symbolised by a woman seated in a vessel shaped like an ephah, that is, a grain measure. In it, she is transported to Shinar, an ancient name for Babylon. There, she has a place of honour where evil is not only tolerated but worshipped. Do we allow the hammer of God's Law to strike us and to humble us to repentance, that we may be cleansed by God's grace?

Prayer: Loving Father, thank You for the purifying power of Your transforming Holy Spirit, who daily casts out our sin and guilt, and enthrones Jesus in our hearts. Amen.

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☐ November 6 Zechariah 6: 1-15

Reflect: The eighth vision, with its four chariots, probably refers to the inauguration of the Messianic Age, with its judgement upon all the earth. The new age will see the return of the exiles, the conversion of the Gentiles and the completion of the Temple. This prophecy found its final fulfilment in our Lord Jesus, the Messiah. Do we observe in this vision of hope a reminder of God's promises about the Messiah directed personally to us?

Prayer: Sovereign Lord, stir us by Your Spirit to respond to God's great promises with a life of joyful and diligent obedience. Amen

November 7 Zechariah 7: 1-14

Reflect: Now that the Temple was being rebuilt should the people commemorate the burning of the Temple some 70 years ago? God's answer through the prophet was that fasting and mourning had become an empty, self-centred routine. Fasting was meant to be an expression of sincere sorrow to God for sin and of urgency in prayer. But it now lacked sincerity and integrity. Are we letting God's Word received in our worship services empower us to overcome our self-centredness, and to treat others with fairness?

Prayer: Enable us, O Holy Spirit to walk humbly with God and to serve one another with self-sacrificing love. Amen.

☐ November 8 Zechariah 8: 1-23

Reflect: How can fasting become a time of joy and gladness? The prophet pours out a flood of gracious and comforting words to depict God's restoring mercy. The renewed temple, and Israel's acceptable worship, and a whole life lived in love for one another, are to be Israel's response to the Lord's faithful covenant love. The light of God's love would shine through them and draw people of all nations to Him. How well are we letting the light of God's creative mercy shine through us so that others are drawn to Christ?

Prayer: Holy Spirit, thank You for Your miracles of grace, which through our witness can draw others into Your eternal Kingdom. Amen.

☐ November 9 Zechariah 9: 1-17

Reflect: The shattering of Israel's enemies foreshadows the Messianic era. Here may be a reflection of Alexander the Great's conquest of their enemies after 333BC. The Messiah, the Prince of Peace, the Triumphant King comes as a peaceful Monarch, humbly riding on an ass. Are we sharing God's Word with others so that God's royal reign might speak peace to the world?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, come into our hearts and rule over us daily, freeing us from Satan's captivity to be Your prisoners of hope, assured of final victory. Amen.

☐ November 10 Zechariah 10: 1-12

Reflect: The Lord alone controls nature and gives rain. He is the Giver of daily bread. The Lord alone controls history and will gather in His redeemed. Both Israel and Judah will be saved. The people who will not look to the Good Shepherd are doomed to be a leaderless and afflicted flock. Are we reminding ourselves often to trust fully in Jesus our Leader, for only then can we know the joy of victory?

Prayer: Thank You, Lord Jesus, that You are our Leader and our Cornerstone for life. We look to You for stability and protection. Amen.

☐ November 11 Zechariah 11: 1-17

Reflect: Cedars trees, shepherds and lions refer to the rulers, their foreign overlords. Lebanon's cedars were symbols of strength. But the tyrants will fall. Because they have despised Him, God allows the Israelites to be abused by their rulers. The prophet portrays a good shepherd rejected by his sheep, as well as a worthless shepherd who exploits the sheep. This prophecy was fulfilled also when Judas betrayed the good shepherd and cast the thirty pieces of silver into the temple treasury. Do we sometimes betray our Good Shepherd by our ingratitude?

Prayer: Jesus, our Good Shepherd, we thank You for the staff of Your grace, Your covenant of mercy as well as the bond of fellowship You give us with our fellow-believers. Amen.

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☐ November 12 Zechariah 12: 1-14

Reflect: Only the God who created the heavens, the earth and the human spirit will give His people strength and victory, in spite of the worthless shepherd who rules over them. But God's kindness leads them to repentance. Moved by the Spirit, who assures them of God's compassion and inspires their supplication, the people repent of the deadly wrongs that they have done against the Lord. Are we daily listening to the call of God's Law and of His generous goodness to turn to Him in repentance?

Prayer: O Jesus, the suffering Servant of God, thank You for Your loving sacrifice when You suffered and died for our sins. Turn us daily to You in faith and love. Amen.

☐ November 13 Zechariah 13: 1-9

Reflect: The effectual cleansing of God will produce people pure in heart, a people upon whom idols have no hold, upon whom false prophets have no power, and whom no false prophet can deceive. The opening of the fountain is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. False prophets will be dishonoured and rejected. Jesus applied Zechariah's word concerning the stricken shepherd and the scattered sheep to Himself and His disciples. He is God's Good Shepherd, God's gift to His people. He is the pierced One for whom the people will one day mourn, when the Spirit works repentance in them. Are we truly thankful that God's Holy Spirit through Holy Baptism has created a covenant relationship between God and us?

Prayer: Father God, we rejoice that You are our God and we are Your people. Keep us ever faithful to You. Amen.

☐ November 14 Zechariah 14: 1-21

Reflect: This final chapter of Zechariah sums up the whole book, namely, the coming of the Day of the Lord when the Lord Himself comes to establish His Kingdom. He will deliver His Holy City from the final attack on the nation. He will transfigure the whole earth under His reign. He will smite the earth with a fearful plague. He will unite the survivors of all nations in a common worship. Does not the prospect of God's total ingathering of all nations at the end of days thrill us and stir us on to share in that great day?

Prayer: O Father, thank You for Your promise that You will bring us home to Yourself in heaven, where we will serve Your glory and praise forever. Amen.

☐ November 15 Malachi 1: 1-14

Reflect: One central theme dominates Malachi's thought: fidelity to the Lord's covenant and His teachings. God's love for Israel is a personal love, the love of a father who looks for a response of love in His son. Sacrifice which is not a genuine expression of a son's love and a servant's devotion is an abomination to God. Malachi is concerned by the poor quality of animals offered to God for sacrifice. Mere ritual correctness is not so much his concern as is the people's response to God's love in their lives. Do we realise that if pastors and people become slack and careless and hypocritical in their worship, they dishonour the name of the great living God?

Prayer: Gracious God, great is your name! Your love and mercy to us are undeserved and awesome and wonderful. Amen.

☐ November 16 Malachi 2: 1-17

Reflect: God's luminous picture of a true priest constitutes a stark contrast to the picture of the corrupt priests in Israel at this time. The God who loves Israel is the Father who called into being a nation whose members were to be a family living together in love, love for God and love for brother in unbroken unity. Mixed marriages were contrary to God's will because they helped to bring into Israel false gods from foreign countries. The prophet gives us a warm and tender picture of marriage undergirded by a selfless commitment of love. Can we see how God blesses such marriages with the fervour of wedded love, with enduring, companionable affection into the later years of life, along with godly offspring?

Prayer: Lord our God, we praise You for Your steadfast patience and Your long-suffering toward us, granting us Your mercy and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Amen.

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☐ November 17 Malachi 3: 1-18

Reflect: Some were withholding their offerings of tithes from the Lord. But if the people return to God with a full measure of devotion, He will bless them. When the day of judgement comes the true worshippers will be spared. Do we humbly praise God for the special honour He graces us with by writing our names in His book of remembrance to be among the redeemed of God in heaven?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we glorify You for Your unmerited love in regarding us like precious jewels to be treasured by You forever. Amen.

☐ November 18 Malachi 4: 1-6

Reflect: On the day when the Lord returns in judgement He will punish evildoers. But for the believers, God, like the health-bringing rays of the sun will bring healing and wholeness to them. Do you see that God still sends His servants to us calling us to immerse ourselves in the Scriptures and to be diligent in prayer, ready for His coming, either at the end of our lives or at the end of the world?

Prayer: Merciful God, we magnify You for fulfilling Your promise of hope in sending Your Son to fulfil all righteousness and to be the bright Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings. Amen.

CONGRATULATIONS! IF YOU HAVEN'T YET READ IT THROUGH, HOW ABOUT READING THE NEW TESTAMENT? PEACE AND BLESSING BE YOURS!

REMEMBER : WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT THE SCRIPTURES:

John 5: 24---He who hears my Word and believes Him who sent me, has eternal life.

John 5: 39---Search the Scriptures because you know that in them you have eternal life; for it is they that bear witness to me.

John 8:32---If you continue in my Word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY!