

GPS

God's Plan of Salvation

Bible Reading Plan September 2020

It seems like a long time since we read of a world entirely good (Genesis 1-2) that was corrupted by sin and rebellion to God in Genesis 3. It has been hundreds of years, and we have seen God moving through nations, covenants, prophecies, promises and human history to bring about His solution to humanity's sin problem. This month we will visit a rocky hill outside of Jerusalem and witness the long-promised Messiah give His life for the sins of the world. An empty tomb three days will complete God's victory over sin and give the world hope. We will spend two weeks reading about the events of the crucifixion, both from Matthew and John, to give us a complete picture. Perhaps best of all as the month draws to a close we will begin reading in Acts, as we watch the work of Jesus begun in the Gospels continue in His church.

Week 1 - John 12 Matthew 24 25 John 13 14



John 12 gives us John's run up to the last week of Jesus' life. Jesus is anointed by Mary (verses 1-8), and then makes the Triumphal Entry (verses 12-19). The rest of the chapter contains unique insights into Jesus' last week, with an emphasis on Jesus' feelings about what is about to happen to Him (verses 23-32). **Matthew 24** is not hard to understand. Clearly it speaks of a coming massive judgment. The difficulty is the application of the text - when and where will this happen? See the Under Construction notes below for more. **Matthew 25** furthers the theme of being ready for judgment with two parables and a vivid description of final judgment. **John 13** takes us to the Passover celebration, where Jesus washes the disciples' feet. It is His last night before the cross. After the foot washing, Jesus gives His disciples some key last words and teachings, beginning in **John 14**. As we read this final discourse watch for the emphasis on the coming of the Holy Spirit (verse 16, 26).



Matthew 24 is a notoriously difficult chapter. Many see the Christ's Second Coming being foretold here (some Bibles even have subtitles to that effect) but that

isn't anywhere in the context. In verse 2 Jesus says the Temple will be utterly destroyed, leading to their question about *when the Temple will be destroyed*. Remember: for Jews the destruction of the temple would be a cataclysmic event that could only be likened to the end of the world. Noting that in verse 34 Jesus promises the events described would happen in that generation's lifetime seals it: this can not be about the Second Coming (lest Jesus be a liar) but is instead about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The talk of the "coming of the Son of Man" (verse 30) is just the language of Old Testament prophecy speaking of a coming in judgment (note for example, similar language in Isaiah 19:1). It is not *the* Second Coming *but a coming in judgment*. As you read, watch how many times Jesus tells the apostles what to watch for and what to do because these signs and events would occur in their lifetime and they needed to act. There are no signs of the Second Coming (1 Thess 5:2).



The example of Jesus in washing the disciples' feet in **John 13** bears more thought. This was not clean or neat work, by any means. None of the apostles had even thought of serving the others. Re-read verses 14-17 and note the emphasis on doing. How are you serving others? Why is it so easy to fall prey to the thinking "Someone else will do it" or "I shouldn't have to do that kind of job?"



Jesus emphasizes preparedness and being ready in this week's readings. You will have to explain why the foolish girls couldn't be admitted to the party late, because today most people would simply say "better late than never." In that culture night time was dark and frightening. It was the time of robbers and brigands. Once the heavy door was locked and bolted, the homeowner would be very wary about being tricked and opening it again. Further, the girls have insulted the bridegroom tremendously by being late. Talk about the concept of being too late. Children need to see that Jesus is very patient, but He is not infinitely patient.

Week 2 - □ John 15 □ 16 □ 17 □ 18 □ Matthew 26



This week features four straight chapters in John as we continue John's powerful account of the Last Supper and the teaching Jesus delivered there. **John 15** picks up an Old Testament metaphor: Israel as God's vine (see Isaiah 5). Yet now Jesus is the true vine (verse 1). Note the emphasis on abiding in Jesus. **John 16** advances what Jesus has been saying about the Helper by describing the work of the Holy Spirit (verses 7-13). **John 17** is called the High Priestly prayer, as Jesus prays for Himself (verses 1-5), His

disciples (verses 6-19), and then all believers (verses 20-26). In **John 18** the action resumes, as Jesus is arrested and tried. Note the otherworldly nature of Jesus' kingdom (verse 36). **Matthew 26** gives us another perspective on Jesus' last night. John doesn't discuss the institution of the Lord's Supper, given to us here (verses 26-29) or Gethsemane (verses 45-56). Note Matthew's constant drumbeat of "this was done to fulfill the Scriptures (verses 54, 56). What the Bible has been pointing to for centuries is coming to pass before our very eyes!



John 15 may be some of the most important teachings on prayer contained in scripture. Re-read verse 7. Jesus says if His words abide in us, we will be granted whatever we ask in prayer. Clearly letting the Word dwell within us and control us will change what we pray for and how we pray. We will pray in God's will instead of asking for our own! Think carefully about abiding in Jesus and what that means for your prayer life.



Talk with your children about how hard it must have been for Jesus to be betrayed by His friends. No one stood by Him. He went through fake trials and was slandered and lied about. Ask your kids what they think would be the worst part of being Jesus in this situation. Give special attention to Jesus' mental anguish as He prays and prepares. It is crucially important that we not ignore how difficult this must have been on our Lord.

Week 3 - ☐ Matthew 27 ☐ 28 ☐ John 20 ☐ 21 ☐ Luke 24



Matthew 27 records history's darkest day. The Son of God dies for the sins of the world. The prophecy of Genesis 3:15 comes to pass! Note the emphasis on making sure Jesus was dead and securing the tomb. There is no room for "the apostles stole Him" or Jesus revived" stories, is there? **Matthew 28** completes Matthew's gospel with the great news of the resurrection, and Jesus' final words to the apostles. **John 20** fills in more details of these resurrection appearances including the appearance to Thomas (verses 24-29). In **John 21** there are more appearances, and the reinstatement of Peter (verses 15-19). The Gospels close in **Luke 24**. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus provide the perfect conclusion to all we have read so far. Jesus forcefully calls attention to how the Old Testament has pointed to Him (verses 25-27). They are amazed at how the Scriptures finally "come together" (verse 32). If any reader missed the point, it is repeated in verses 44-49. All that is happening is the express will of God, carefully orchestrated and written about in the pages of Scripture.



There is nothing to be made of the different terms for “love” used by Peter and Jesus in **John 21:15-19**. The Father is said to love the Son with both phileo and agape love (3:35; 5:20). What is important is Jesus asking Peter three times if He loves Him, probably to parallel Peter’s three denials.



The Crucifixion of Christ is the single most important event in all of human history. It is also the most stunning. God came here and died for us? That is beyond imagining. How many cultures have some kind of human sacrifice story where a person dies to please the gods? Only in the Gospels does God die for us! Everything about Jesus has been unexpected and different than we would have imagined. Take some time to read through the crucifixion accounts and note more of these unexpected sayings and events. They can become so familiar that our eyes don’t see the wonder of what happened on that old rugged cross.



The cross is the centerpiece of Christianity. Don’t shy away from making it real for your children or doing all you can to help them understand its significance. You may choose to use a story of a child about to be punished and an innocent child steps up to take the guilty one’s punishment. It is vital that children see that Jesus died for others, and not for Himself. It is also vital that they see that He died willingly. God’s Son could have called ten thousand angels, but He did not!

Week 4 - Acts 1 2 3 4 5



In the Old Testament it is almost impossible to skip chapters in Genesis because it sets the stage for the rest of the Bible. Acts is the New Testament’s equivalent to Genesis. It is impossible to omit any of it because it is the book that glues Jesus and His church together. The New Testament starts with four books about Jesus and then has twenty-two epistles to Christians and churches. Acts is the bridge, the connection, between the two. Acts explains what Christians are, how you become one, what the church is and what it does. It is the constitution and pattern for the New Testament Christian. Its major purpose is to show that what Jesus began in the Gospels (God’s work of saving men and women from sin) now continues in His church. **Acts 1** develops this theme by referencing the Spirit’s work (verses 5 and 8) and tying everything back to the Old Testament again (verse 20). **Acts 2** may be the most important chapter in the Bible. The Kingdom begins, and as we would expect, everything is tied to the Old Testament and the passages that spoke of this great day. Peter’s sermon is simple: Joel foretold a day of utter

calamity and destruction (verses 14-20). The only way to be saved from this is to “call on the Lord” (verse 20), so Peter tells them who the Lord is (verse 22–36) and how to call upon Him (verse 38). His sermon is heavy with references to the Davidic dynasty from Psalm 110 (note verse 34). **Acts 3** looks just like many of Jesus’ healing stories, only this time it is Jesus’ representatives doing the miracle. The miracle provides a chance to preach (verses 11-26), and it is virtually the same sermon as in Acts 2. **Acts 4** finds opposition, and courage. Note again the Old Testament connection to David in verses 25-26. Christianity isn’t something new - it’s what God has been working for all along! In **Acts 5** the church encounters more problems. This time it is the problem of hypocrisy (verses 1-11). Then there is arrest and prison (verses 17-42), but nothing can stop God’s work and the church moves forward (verses 11, 42).



As we read these chapters in Acts, the courage of the apostles and first Christians stands out. They are very bold (4:31) and God’s word goes everywhere as a result. How courageous are we today? How can we be more like the New Testament church?



Acts is easy to read with kids because it is a story and often it is a very exciting story. Luke uses a peril-and-escape method in his writing that can be fun to trace out. Nearly every chapter poses some kind of threat or peril to the church, and then it escapes with God’s help. That makes Acts like riding a roller coaster: up, then down, and then back up! Have your children watch for this and ride the roller coaster of Acts!