

DAILY BIBLE READINGS - Week of July 18, 2021

THEME: "History of the Church" CHRISTIANS

Sunday**Read Acts 11:18-26**

"And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." At the beginning of the Church Age, all the converts to be followers of Christ were Jewish people in Jerusalem. It was when Peter witnessed to the family of Cornelius, the Roman general, that the gospel spread to the Gentiles. Eventually through the ministry of Paul after his amazing conversion, the gospel message spread throughout the known world at that time, and eventually around the earth. Starting at Antioch as mentioned in today's Bible reading, believers in the gospel of Christ were called Christians. All this was the working out of what Jesus proclaimed in Matthew 16:18, where He said: *"I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."* There has always been great opposition to the Church, but God, who is omnipotent, has actually used the attempts to wipe out the Church to make it grow. Starting in Jerusalem, the persecution caused believers to go to other places. When they did, they took the gospel with them and Christians started to sprout up all over the place! That is how the Holy Spirit would fulfill the final declaration of Jesus before leaving earth, that His people should be His witnesses to *"the uttermost part of the earth."* God is the Supreme Ruler of His earth!

CHURCH AGE PROPHECY

Monday**Read Daniel 9:24-27**

"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself..." The Church Age was actually implied in this great prophetic truth written by Daniel. After God used him to give an overview of the history of the world yet to come in chapter two, God revealed the future of His chosen nation of Israel through whom the promised Messiah would come and establish His kingdom on earth. That would occur in 490 years after the Jewish people were given permission to return to their homeland and rebuild the city of Jerusalem. As we see, however, in today's Bible reading, there would be a gap of time after 483 years, because the Messiah would be *"cut off."* With the luxury of looking back, we now know that was a reference to the crucifixion of Jesus. That was the beginning of the interim that had to occur before the final 7 years. We now know that the Church Age in which we are now living was in God's plan as announced to Daniel. The Church Age will continue until Jesus appears in the air to take true Christians to heaven, an event that starts the clock ticking for the final seven years. The book of Revelation details what will occur in that span of time while the Church is enjoying the bliss of heaven.

APOSTLES

Tuesday**Read Luke 6:12-16**

"And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples, and of them He chose twelve, whom He named apostles." Jesus laid the foundation for the building of the Church by calling a group of twelve men as His chosen vessels. They would, after being filled with the Holy Spirit, share the gospel of Christ in Jerusalem to lay the foundation for the building of the Church. The religionists of the day would not take kindly to this new doctrine, and that resulted in the persecution of Christians. This attempt to terminate Christianity was used by God to begin her spread because the Christians, to escape persecution fled to other areas and took the gospel of Christ with them! So God used the apostles to raise up Christian churches all around the known world at that time! Eventually, God used what was the greatest persecutor of Christians to be

His primary agent in the spread of Christianity, the apostle Paul. His dramatic conversion resulted in His being led by the Holy Spirit to minister in many places, and God has used His letters to these local churches to be part of the Holy Scripture for the benefit of Christians throughout the entire Church Age.

ADDITIONS

Wednesday Read Acts 2:41-47

"Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." It appears that one of the things that resulted in many people to be saved was the joy exuding from the lives of believers, the praise in their hearts for God! Why were these people so happy? It is the same reason Christians today are so happy and have a desire to praise God. We have regenerated spirits and are no longer blinded by the deceptions of Satan, the enemy of God. We are living in the light of God's truth! We know where we came from, why we are here on God's earth, and where we are going! True Christians have been set free: from the penalty of sin and from the power of sin. Christians are in fellowship and communion with our Creator! Christians are in the family of God with God as our Heavenly Father in that special personal relationship. Jesus is our Friend, as He mentioned in John 15:15. It cannot get any better than that!

ADMONITIONS

Thursday Read Revelation 1:1-5

"Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein." In the book of Revelation, God reveals His truth that is the key to our having His blessing on our lives. What could be better than that? To have anyone's blessing is great, but to be blessed by God is truly an amazing offer of the abundant life; life with an eternal purpose! In chapters two and three, God details those things which will bring us His blessing and those things which will cause the loss of His blessing. They consist of letters to seven churches at that time; and, because they are included in God's Holy Word, they are messages to all churches that would appear on God's earth, to us! After advising the churches, God goes on to detail in the subsequent chapters what will occur in the seven years after He takes the Church to heaven and concludes with a look at the eternal ages to come. It is good to heed God's admonitions!

ASCENSION

Friday Read I Thessalonians 4:16-17

"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air." This is the event that brings the Church Age to a conclusion. When that last soul to receive Christ as Savior makes that decision to complete His Church body, Jesus appears in the air and calls all who have received Him to heaven! That coming call is mentioned this way in Revelation 4:1: *"Come up hither."* All bodies of believers, both dead and alive, will be transformed to be incorruptible and immortal as detailed in I Corinthians 15:53. Jesus may come at any time; it is good to be ready!

AWARDS

Saturday Read II Corinthians 5:7-10

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ: that we may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." What happens when we get to heaven? One thing is for sure: all is good, all is joy! After seeing and admiring our Savior for however long, we will have the opportunity to meet all of our loved ones who had already departed earth. We then will be able to socialize with all those people who were mentioned in the Holy Bible of whom we had read. How about talking with Noah personally about the building of the ark and the great flood! Then maybe David and his account of the battle against Goliath. And so many more. Yes, there will be what the Bible calls the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19:7. A major activity will be the judgment seat of Christ, where believers will receive rewards for faithful service to their Lord. What we do now determines those rewards. Stay busy!