

DAILY BIBLE READINGS - Week of January 2, 2021

THEME: "The New Age"

THE CHURCH AGE

Sunday **Read Matthew 16:13-20**

"Jesus said, I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The followers of Jesus were eagerly looking forward to His taking the throne of David to bring Israel back to worldwide dominance. They were correct in their anticipation, but they were off in their timing. The announcement that Jesus made in our Bible reading today introduced a new concept on God's calendar: the building of His Church. Heretofore God had worked in and through his chosen nation of Israel. The Israeli kingdom under the leadership of Christ as King is on the calendar, but Bible prophecy in Daniel 9 reveals that there will be an interim between the crucifixion of the Messiah and His kingship. Having the luxury of looking back, we now know that gap is the Church Age. God's calendar is the calendar that dictates world history. The thousand year kingdom of our Lord will follow the seven year tribulation which begins at the end of the Church Age. We will know when the Church Age is over by the departure of the Holy Spirit that happens when the bodies of believers are called to heaven when Jesus appears in the air in the event detailed in I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

THE TRUE CHURCH

Monday **Read Ephesians 1:22-23**

"And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." There is a difference between the true church and the professing church. This is an important distinction because those in the professing church in II Corinthians 11:13-14 are called false apostles who are actually followers of Satan: *"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."* Attending a church that calls itself Christian, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, does not automatically make it a part of the true Church over which Jesus is the Head. For a local church to be part of the True Church of which the Bible speaks, it must be a church of pure Biblical teaching and practice. Any church that has manmade doctrine and tradition is one of those churches exposed by the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 15:3-9: *"Why do you also transgress the commandments of God by your tradition...In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men."* The true Church is Biblically solid!

THE ARMY OF CHRIST

Tuesday **Read II Timothy 2:1-3**

"Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." This instruction demonstrates that true followers of Christ are engaged in spiritual war. It is a battle against the forces of evil so active in this world. Christians must be equipped for spiritual warfare. That armor is detailed in Ephesians 6:11-12: *"Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."* That call to battle is followed by a list of the armor equipping Christians for spiritual war: Girdle of Truth, Breastplate of Righteousness, Boots of Peace. Shield of Faith, Helmet of Salvation, Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Equipped with that spiritual armor, the Christian is prepared to heed the call to battle given in I Timothy 6:12: *"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life whereunto thou art called, and hath professed a good profession before many witnesses."* Prayer is the power! By engaging in fervent prayer, the believer is kept in touch with headquarters for direction.

THE FRIENDS OF CHRIST

WednesdayRead John 15:14-15

"You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I have commanded you. Henceforth I call not servants: for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard from the Father, I have made known unto you." To be called a servant of the Lord is highly complimentary, but to be called a friend of Jesus is beyond description. But that is what Jesus is telling us in today's reading from the Bible. We all have friends, and they add so much to our lives! Think of the joy you experience when you get a letter, or a text, or an E-mail from a friend! Well, how about a text from Jesus, the Savior of the world and the coming King of kings! What could be better than our friend Jesus telling us He would like to help us out in whatever we are doing, or simply drop in to enjoy a visit! Can you imagine? It is a joy to serve our Savior, but the Christian life is so much more. We have our Friend at all times, to work together, or simply to spend time together enjoying life. What a Friend we have in Jesus! We get messages from heaven every day!

GOD'S HOLY NATION

Thursday Read I Peter 2:6-9

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a special people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of the darkness into His marvelous light." Spiritually speaking, there are two nations in the world today: the holy nation of God and the corrupt nation of Satan. We all enter into this world as natural-born citizens of the kingdom of darkness. When we received Jesus personally by asking Him into our hearts to be our Savior, we became citizens of heaven. We lost our citizenship in the kingdom of darkness to become citizens of God's kingdom and now live in the light of the gospel to be ambassadors in this dark world. As citizens of God's kingdom, we have a permanent residence in heaven for all eternity. Unfortunately, those who never open their hearts to Christ are permanent residents of hell unless they make that vital decision to receive Jesus as Savior. Praise God for eternal citizenship in heaven, and the high privilege of being God's light. When our term of service is over, we have that home in heaven!

THE LOCAL CHURCH

Friday Read I Corinthians 12:12-18

"But God hath set the members of the body as it hath pleased Him." God has distributed His people into one of many local churches around the world. The early church in Jerusalem quickly spread to other places as a result of the persecution that started. God used that very difficult situation to accomplish His eternal purpose of spreading the gospel of Christ around the globe. Very quickly, local churches sprang up in such places as Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, and Philippi. Eventually, the church spread to other continents including America that became an independent nation. As time went on and other communities organized, the Holy Spirit brought believers together to form local churches into which He places all believers to be an important part of that body. Eventually, in 1996, it pleased God to form a local church in Gilbertsville, Pennsylvania. Since that time, it has pleased God to place others into this body of believers to work together for the glory of God. What a joy it is to welcome those whom God has sent to become one of us for worship and fellowship!

END OF THE CHURCH AGE

SaturdayRead II Thessalonians 2:3-8

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only He who now letteth will let, until He be taken out of the way. And then shall the wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." When the Church Christ is building is complete with the decision of that final one to receive Jesus, Jesus will appear in the air to take His followers to heaven. The sign of His appearing is lawlessness will prevail on earth. Circumstances today ought to catch our attention! Who would have ever thought that the chief law enforcement officer in our nation would openly encourage immigrants to enter our country illegally? But that is happening? Are we at the end of the Church Age? Be ready for the sound of the trumpet and the call to "Come up!"