

Any woman when she realizes that she has conceived a child, is full of wonder, amazement, and trepidation. From the beginning she wants what's best for her child. She watches each day as her body, without any direction from her, grows this new life within her. There are no words to describe the joy when the child is born.

Nor are there strong enough words to describe the immediate and overwhelming love that the mother has for this child. As the child grows, each milestone is celebrated. Every joy and happiness the child experiences, the mother experiences also. And every pain the child suffers, the mother also suffers. Even though the child grows up and finally makes of life of its own, the mother's love does not diminish.

In the Bible we are only given a few cameos of Jesus' mother, Mary. In these cameos we see a woman at first frightened but then believing, not understanding but still obedient, overwhelmed with joy but also warned of pain to come. Throughout the life of Jesus that we read in the gospel narratives, we can see his mother looking on, pondering all these things in her heart.

We can only imagine Mary's amazement when Gabriel told her that she was to be the mother of the expected Messiah. Luke chapter 1 records her fears and questions but also records her response: "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said." With this response

she accepted the joy but also the challenges that would come.

After Gabriel left, Mary hurried to her cousin Elizabeth's home. Elizabeth, of all people, would begin to understand Mary's amazement. It is from Elizabeth that we have confirmation of Mary's faith: "Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!" (Luke 1:45)

As the story of Jesus birth and early years unfolds, Mary's faith and quiet obedience takes in each puzzling occurrence. The shepherds come to worship the newborn king after being serenaded by angels. In the Temple, Simeon and Anna both prophesy concerning what is to come. Jesus, at the age of 12, stays behind in Jerusalem to discourse with the teachers in the Temple. Through all these unusual, day-by-day, occurrences we're told "Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart."

When Jesus grew up, would Mary be expecting, like so many others, that he would then become king and save the Jewish people from their oppressors? Or, did Jesus explain to her what his true mission was and that it would end in crucifixion instead of political victory? While Mary watched Jesus in the days of his ministry, surely she would be pondering in her heart his message of healing, repentance, and compassion.

As the days progressed and she saw the increasing hatred of the

Jewish leaders for her son, she would remember what Simeon had prophesied: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." (Luke 2:34-35)

Mary stood at the foot of the cross and watched helplessly as her son was tortured and killed. The sword truly pierced her soul also that day. What grief she must have experienced. And her loving son, even in his pain, provided comfort for his mother: "When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, 'Dear woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' From that time on, this disciple took her into his home." (John 19:26-27)

The last image we have of Mary is in the book of Acts. She is listed with the disciples, the other women, and his brothers as joining in prayer in that upper room after Jesus had ascended to heaven. Mary's journey of faith and quiet obedience had taken her through both indescribable pain and finally unsurpassed joy as she watched her son suffer and die and then be raised to life again. All those things that she pondered in her heart would finally make sense. She would see all that her son needed to accomplish in order to complete his Father's will. She knew that her son was now with his Father at his

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The Bible is not just another book. It is unique in many ways. It is actually a collection of over 60 books written by more than 40 different authors. The writings extend from the days of Moses (1400 BC) to the days of the apostle John (100 AD). Its story goes back to the very beginning of history, the creation of the world. It also prophesies what the future holds for the earth and all mankind. It presents the Lord God of heaven and earth as the Creator of all. But more than the diversity of the writers and the time span of the writings, the Bible is unique because over and over again it claims to be the inspired word of the one and only God:

Jeremiah 1:4 "The word of the LORD came to me...."

Micah 1:1 "The word of the LORD that came to Micah..."

2 Peter 1:19-21 "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Revelation 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place.

How can we be sure that the Bible's claims are true? What test can we devise that will help us answer this question? The Bible itself gives us a test. In Deuteronomy the people of Israel are told to test the prophets to be sure that what they say is from God:

"You may say to yourselves, 'How can we know when a message has not been spoken

by the LORD?' If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him." Deuteronomy 18:21-22

So the test then is in the fulfillment of the prophecy in the Bible. If what it says comes to pass then it is from the LORD. So let us consider just two examples:

1) **Israel:** The Bible tells the history of the nation of Israel. In the very first book of Genesis we are introduced to Abraham who is the father of the nation of Israel. There are many prophecies concerning Israel in the Bible but there is one theme that runs throughout. Because of disobedience the Israelites would be dispersed and scattered throughout the world. They would retain their identity and some day would be re-gathered to their land in Israel:

Ezekiel 20:23-24: "Also with uplifted hand I swore to them in the desert that I would disperse them among the nations and scatter them through the countries, because they had not obeyed my laws but had rejected my decrees and desecrated my Sabbaths..."

Ezekiel 37:21-22 "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel."

Follow the history of the nation of Israel, that is the Jewish people, for thousands of years. You will find that thousands of years ago they were taken into captivity by the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Romans. They were dispersed to every nation under the sun and yet retained their own identity. It is within the last 150 years that there has been a return of the Jews to Israel and finally in 1948 Israel became a nation again. Has this happened to any other nation? And yet, the Bible prophesied that this would happen!

2) **The Kingdoms of the World:**

Daniel, a young Jewish boy, was taken captive into exile by the Babylonians about 600 BC. He became a servant in King Nebuchadnezzar's palace. At one point the King had a dream that no one could interpret. Finally, Daniel told him that by the power of God, Daniel could tell him the dream and interpret it. The dream was of a huge image with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of a mixture of iron and clay. In the dream the image is destroyed by one small rock cut out of a mountain without hands. Daniel then gives the interpretation:

Daniel 2:36-45 "This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has

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Portrait of a Saint *Eyes of a Mother*

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right hand. She knew the ultimate victory had been won. And knowing this she would remember the song that she had sung :

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From

now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me-holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."

(Luke 1:46-55)

Book Review *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus*

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exercises that encourage the reader to put into practice the principles of discipleship set forth in the book. A number of appendices are included, the prayers Jesus might have prayed, the Yearly Calendar and Feasts and a long list of books, videos and websites that can serve as re-

sources for further study. An excellent glossary is included to help one deal with the pronunciation and meaning of the numerous Hebrew words included in the book.

Any book about a Bible character should always be read carefully and compared to the Bible itself. The authors are only trying to fill in the interstices with their knowl-

edge of the culture and history separate from what we learn in the scripture itself. The limitations should be recognized but that should not hinder us from letting a book like *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus* move us a bit closer to the objective set forth in the subtitle *How the Jewishness of Jesus Can Transform Your Faith*.

Special Bible Talk

I Once Was Blind

One Man's Journey of Faith

By Dwight Kindred, Little Rock, Arkansas

Newport News Area

7:00PM Wednesday, August 5th, 2009

Hampton Inn and Suites

*(Across Jefferson from Patrick Henry Mall)
12251 Jefferson Ave., Newport News, VA*

Williamsburg Area

7:00PM Thursday, August 6th, 2009

Williamsburg Library

*515 Scotland Street
Williamsburg, VA 23185*

Dwight Kindred was once a minister in a mainstream Christian Church. His training for the ministry included several years of Hebrew, Greek and Chaldean. While doing word studies preparing Bible classes for his congregation he began to realize that some of his long held beliefs were skewed. Then he lost his sight due to a congenital cornea condition.

Dwight began to listen to the Bible on tape and he listened more carefully than he had read before. This led him to a better and deeper understanding of the Bible's message of hope. Come and listen to this fascinating journey of faith of a man who found the light of truth in the Bible only after becoming blind.

A free DVD of Dwight's inspiring visit to the Holy Land will be given to each attendee.

Any tour of a bookstore or library will reveal scores of books that try to present Jesus in his Jewish context. They attempt to define the cultural, religious and political background in which Jesus lived and worked out that special relationship he had with his Father and taught the essence of that relationship to his disciples. These books all try to fill in the voids that are missing from the Jesus of the gospels and present a real Jesus in a real world.

While none of these books can accomplish their task without some speculation, some books come closer to the Jesus of the Gospels than others.

This book gives us not only a good insight into the basics of first century Judaism but presents us with a good beginning in understanding how Jesus related to certain aspects of that framework. It is the kind of book that goes a long ways toward enhancing our perspective of the Jewish world in which he lived and reveals the Hebraic roots of Christianity.

God promised Abraham that the Gentiles would be blessed through his descendents and this book brings out the extent by which God's plan and purpose involved a redeemer for the world that came from his chosen and covenant people.

Looking at just a few of the concepts presented in the book, we find an interesting chapter on what are called *haverim*. The Hebrew word means friends but in the context of this book and To-

rah study it means a friend or two who will study Torah or scripture with you. The value of interchange among fellow students growing together in their appreciation and love of God's law can't be underestimated. The scripture itself talks about "iron sharpening iron" and refers to friends discussing scripture amongst themselves and growing thereby.

All of the Jewish feasts are examined quite carefully in the book. It is interesting to see the full significance of the connection between Passover and the Feast of Firstfruits. Passover is a remembrance of the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage and slavery in Egypt. Firstfruits, or *Bikkurim*, is a celebration of the beginning of the barley harvest. It is celebrated on the first day of the week after Passover. On the Sabbath after Passover, the day immediately preceding the Feast of Firstfruits, a dramatic prophecy was always read in the temple. In this reading the Lord instructed Ezekiel to declare to a valley filled with dry bones: "I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life" (Ezek 37:5).

On Passover God's people had looked for their future redeemer to come. On the following Sabbath they would have read this passage that tells how God is going to raise the dead when that future redeemer comes. The passage in Ezekiel not only tells us about the future coming to life of the nation of Israel but it is a beautiful example of the resurrection or coming to life of Jesus on

the first day of the week after Passover.

The chapter entitled Jesus and the Torah has an excellent section on Love, the Essence of Torah. In describing the delicate balance between the two commandments that Jesus reiterates as being the one abiding principle of the Torah, the author quotes from the book by Christian novelist Athol Dickson entitled *The Gospel according to Moses: What My Jewish Friends Taught Me about Jesus*:

"If I try to love God with all my heart and soul and mind to the exclusion of everything else, I exclude the love of my neighbor and risk viewing her as a distraction, a *thing* that interferes with my devotion to God. This is the mistake of pious hermits and those of us who prefer churches or synagogues to soup kitchens. But if I center all of my attention on loving my neighbor as myself and forget about loving God, I find it impossible to maintain that neighborly love because I am no longer connected to the Source of love itself. This is the mistake of secular humanists. True love must flow from God through me to everyone else ...So is "love the Lord" the greatest commandment or is "love my neighbor"? The answer is "yes." And "yes."

The book *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus* is well footnoted drawing on a wide variety of resources. Each chapter ends with

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made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not re-

main united, any more than iron mixes with clay. In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

The prophecy is then of a series of kingdoms—the kingdoms of men that started with the Babylonian Empire. Follow the history of the world empires. The Babylonian Empire was overthrown by the Medes and the Persians around 530 BC. The Grecian Empire followed and finally the Roman Empire. Since the breakup of the Ro-

man Empire there has not been one dominant world empire just as the interpretation of the dream foretold in the description of the feet being partly of clay and partly of iron. So the prophecy is being completed as the Bible foretold. Of course, there is still one part of the prophecy that has not yet been fulfilled. The “rock” has yet to break in pieces the image and destroy the kingdoms of men.

These are just two examples of prophecies given in the Bible that have come true. We can read the history books and compare the prophecies to the fulfillments. God has given us evidence to believe what He has written in the Bible for our learning and instruction.

Thoughts on the Daily Readings

"This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word."

Isaiah 66:2

During the months of July through September, the daily Bible readings include several of the Old Testament prophetic books: Isaiah, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, and Hosea. These books were written several hundred years before the time of Jesus but are quoted often by the writers of the New Testament. Isaiah is quoted more than 65 times on topics such as the ministering and suffering Messiah, the resurrection of the dead, and the coming kingdom on the earth. Here are just a few examples of quotations from Isaiah that are found in the New Testament: Jesus in Luke 4:18-19 quotes from Isaiah 61 saying that this scripture was fulfilled that day: "The Spirit of the Lord is

on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

In Acts 8 Philip the Evangelist taught the gospel message to the Ethiopian eunuch through the passage he was reading in Isaiah 53:

The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from

the earth."

The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

Paul the Apostle in Romans 15 quotes from Isaiah 11 concerning the coming kingdom on the earth:

And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him."

There are many beautiful passages in the book of Isaiah. In John 4 Jesus alludes to this verse in Isaiah 12: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."

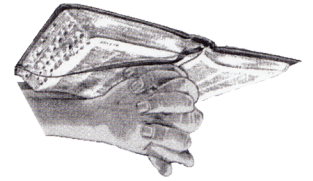
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Williamsburg Area
Thursday, August 6th

Newport News Area
Wednesday, August 5th

I Once Was Blind

Special Bible Talk:



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Your DailyBibleReader Quarterly Newsletter

Daily Bible Readings for July, August and September

Read the Entire Bible in One Year

JULY			AUGUST			SEPTEMBER		
DAY	Old Test	NewTest/Psa	DAY	Old Test	NewTest/Psa	DAY	Old Test	NewTest/Psa
1	II Sam 15, 16	II Corinth 13	1	Isaiah 49, 50	John 1	1	II King 14, 15	Psalm 97
2	II Sam 17, 18	Psalm 74	2	Isaiah 51, 52	John 2	2	II King 16, 17	I Thess 1
3	II Sam 19, 20	Galatians 1	3	Isaiah 53, 54	John 3	3	II King 18, 19	I Thess 2
4	II Sam 21, 22	Galatians 2	4	Isaiah 55, 56	John 4	4	II King 20, 21	I Thess 3
5	II Sam 23, 24	Galatians 3	5	Isaiah 57, 58	Psalm 85	5	II King 22, 23	I Thess 4
6	Song Sol 1-3	Galatians 4	6	Isaiah 59, 60	Psalm 86	6	II King 24, 25	I Thess 5
7	Song Sal 4-6	Galatians 5	7	Isaiah 61, 62	John 5	7	Jonah 1-4	Psalm 98
8	Song Sol 7, 8	Galatians 6	8	Isaiah 63, 64	John 6	8	Micah 1-3	Psalm 99
9	Isaiah 1, 2	Psalm 75	9	Isaiah 65, 66	John 7	9	Micah 4, 5	Psalm 100, 101
10	Isaiah 3, 4	Psalm 76	10	I King 1, 2	Psalm 87, 88	10	Micah 6, 7	II Thess 1
11	Isaiah 5, 6	Ephesians 1	11	I King 3, 4	John 8	11	Nahum 1-3	II Thess 2
12	Isaiah 7, 8	Ephesians 2	12	I King 5, 6	John 9	12	I Chron 1, 2	II Thess 3
13	Isaiah 9, 10	Ephesians 3	13	I King 7, 8	Psalm 89	13	I Chron 3, 4	Psalm 102
14	Isaiah 11, 12	Ephesians 4	14	I King 9, 10	John 10	14	I Chron 5, 6	Psalm 103
15	Isaiah 13, 14	Ephesians 5	15	I King 11, 12	John 11	15	I Chron 7, 8	Psalm 104
16	Isaiah 15-17	Ephesians 6	16	I King 13, 14	John 12	16	I Chron 9, 10	I Timothy 1
17	Isaiah 18-20	Psalm 77	17	I King 15, 16	Psalm 90	17	I Chron 11, 12	I Timothy 2
18	Isaiah 21, 22	Psalm 78	18	I King 17, 18	John 13	18	I Chron 13, 14	I Timothy 3
19	Isaiah 23, 24	Psalm 79	19	I King 19, 20	John 14	19	I Chron 15, 16	I Timothy 4
20	Isaiah 25, 26	Philippians 1	20	I King 21, 22	Psalm 91	20	I Chron 17, 18	I Timothy 5
21	Isaiah 27, 28	Philippians 2	21	Joel 1, 2, 3	John 15	21	I Chron 19, 20	I Timothy 6
22	Isaiah 29, 30	Philippians 3	22	Amos 1-3	John 16	22	I Chron 21, 22	Psalm 105
23	Isaiah 31, 32	Philippians 4	23	Amos 4-6	John 17	23	I Chron 23, 24	Psalm 106
24	Isaiah 33, 34	Psalm 80	24	Amos 7-9	Psalm 92	24	I Chron 25, 26	Psalm 107
25	Isaiah 35, 36	Colossians 1	25	Obad, II King 1	John 18	25	I Chron 27, 28	II Timothy 1
26	Isaiah 37, 38	Colossians 2	26	I King 2, 3	John 19	26	I Chron 29 Hos I	II Timothy 2
27	Isaiah 39, 40	Colossians 3	27	II King 4, 5	Psalm 93, 94	27	Hosea 2-4	II Timothy 3
28	Isaiah 41, 42	Colossians 4	28	II King 6, 7	John 20	28	Hosea 5, 6	II Timothy 4
29	Isaiah 43, 44	Psalm 81	29	II King 8, 9	John 21	29	Hosea 7, 8	Psalm 108
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31	Isaiah 47, 48	Psalm 84	31	II King 12, 13	Psalm 96	31		

See page 5 for some thoughts on the daily readings.

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