

It's hard to think of Jesus as a baby, a growing child, a teenager coming of age. The Bible tells us very little about Jesus before the age of 30. It tells us very little about his physical appearance. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah gives us a glimpse of his appearance:

He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. (Isaiah 53:2 NIV)

Luke, the Gospel writer, gives us a very succinct summary of his youth:

Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Luke 2:51-52 NIV)

It is only when we see him during his three-year ministry when he had become a mature man that we can come to appreciate those 30 years of preparation. In each of his parables and his teachings it is apparent that he understood well the hard life of his people. He had grown up among the farmers and trades folk, he knew their sickness and suffering, and he knew well the power of the religious leaders and the Romans. He developed a love and compassion for his people.

What was even more important

was the learning that he received from the scriptures. The questioning of the scribes in the Temple when he was 12 was just one small incident of his ongoing intensive learning of the things of God. His extensive knowledge of the Old Testament equipped him with his knowledge of his Father, deepened his understanding and appreciation of his own mission, and prepared him for his battles with temptation and sin.

*Then I said, "Here I am, I have come —
it is written about me in the scroll.*

*I desire to do your will, O my God;
your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:7-8 NIV)*

As a man we see his love for his Father, his faith and trust in all that God had promised, his love and compassion for his people, his total meekness and humility, his complete obedience to his Father, and his total awareness of the sinful motivations of every human being. All this came not only from his understanding of and meditation on the inspired words of the Old Testament; it also came from his constant prayer and contact with his Father. Many times in the Gospel record we see Jesus in prayer—sometimes all night in prayer:

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. (Luke 5:16 NIV)

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray,

and spent the night praying to God. (Luke 6:12 NIV)

On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22:40-43 NIV)

In the Gospel records we follow the life of this extraordinary man. Yes, he is a man. He is the Son of God and the Son of Man but even after his resurrection and ascension to heaven he is still called a man by the inspired apostles in the New Testament:

"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:29-31 NIV)

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (I Timothy 2:5 NIV)

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how

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much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:17 NIV)

Yes, it was necessary for the purpose of God to be fulfilled that Jesus the Messiah be made in all ways like his brethren. So, as we follow Jesus through the streets of Galilee and Judea we see him strong in the spirit and power of his God healing the sick, teaching the word of God, and leading his disciples. We also see him as he lives day-by-day facing exhaustion, discouragement, cruelty from those around him, and constant temptation. In all of this Jesus triumphed. Every time he said "no" to sin and "yes" to his Father. In all things he humbled himself and obeyed and pleased his Father. Unlike Adam and Eve he did not think that equality with God was something to be grasped:

Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8 RSV)

We see, then, Jesus in total love and faith in his God and Father, humbling himself and obeying God even until death on the cross. Because of his total obedience to God and because in his life and in his death he conquered sin, God has exalted him and made him Lord. The letter to the Philippians continues:

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11 RSV)

That is the example that he has given us. He calls us to believe in him and become his disciples. He asks us to follow the same road of love, faith and obedience. This is the road that leads to victory and everlasting life.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the

throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3 NIV)

Jesus, after he had conquered sin and been raised from the dead, was exalted to God's right hand, to the Majesty on high. He is not staying in heaven. The promise of his return is found throughout the Old and New Testament.

"Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

'Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him.

So shall it be! Amen.'"

(Revelation 1:4-7 NIV)

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done."

(Revelation 22:12 NIV)

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These words are found in the first chapter of the book of Hebrews. It is a letter written to the Jewish people in the first century concerning Jesus the Messiah, to reach out to them to help them to understand who Jesus is. The writer begins his letter with these words: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son..." Immediately the writer makes the connection that the God who sent the prophets of old, also sent his Son Jesus to us.

From the very first pages of Genesis and throughout the rest of the Bible the message to God's people has been the same. God is working out his plan that all the earth will be filled with his glory and righteousness. Since the disobedience of the first man and woman, the earth that we live on has been a sick and dying place. That's where we are. But God is not willing that it should stay this way. Throughout the centuries he has sent his prophets and then his Son to bring the message of salvation to all who would listen.

Through the Bible we can trace this message: sin and disobedience must be overcome.

In the Old Testament God shows his people through the law what sin is:

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather,

through the law we become conscious of sin. Romans 3:20

Through the prophets he calls his people to repentance and obedience. As long as sin stands in the way, our relationship with God is broken. Sin, sickness, and death will reign.

"Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live! Ezekiel 18:30-32

"The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the LORD. Isaiah 59:20

Finally, after so many centuries of reaching out to his people through the law and the prophets, God sent his only Son. The promised redeemer came. The Bible is clear about the identity of this Son:

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, Galatians 4:3-4

"Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is

conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:20-21

Jesus was both Son of Man and Son of God. He had to be made like his brothers so that he was tempted in all things like we are, yet without sin. It was through his total obedience in pleasing the Father in all things even in the face of constant temptation that he conquered sin. He could not be our redeemer unless he himself overcame the sin that so easily besets us. The writer to the Hebrews clearly tells us this:

For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Hebrew 2:15-18

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-yet

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was without sin. Hebrews 4:14
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So Jesus was born of a woman, born under the law, tempted to disobey God in every way that we are, yet without sin. What does this then mean for us?

Jesus came healing and preaching the Kingdom of God. He told the people that the Kingdom of God had come near to them. He didn't say that the Kingdom of God had come in all its fullness and completeness. He didn't say that the Earth was now full of the glory of God. So what was it that Jesus was preaching?

Jesus was telling the people through healing the sick, forgiving their sins, and calling for their repentance and their following his example of obedience, faith and devotion to God, that he had come to conquer sin. Sin, that which causes our spiritual death and our physical death, would be overcome by the man Jesus through the power of God in which he trusted. Every time Jesus healed a person he was saying that the effects of sin and sin itself would be conquered. The Kingdom and glory of God could come near because sin was not in the way.

We must consider the importance of the work that Jesus did in completely conquering sin. Although he could easily have sinned being tempted in every way that we are, he always did what pleased his Father:

So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am [the one I claim to be] and that I do nothing on my own but speak

just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him." John 8:27-20

Because Jesus always obeyed, always pleased his Father, he brought glory to his Father:

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. John 17:2-4

How, then, does the fact that Jesus overcame sin help us? It is because God has declared that those who believe in and follow Jesus will be forgiven:

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. Romans 5:17-19

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. Ephesians 1:6-7

Jesus accomplished the work that God had given him in his first coming. He conquered sin and brought forgiveness and righteousness to those who believed and followed. But Jesus' work on earth is far from complete. He has promised to return again. God has given him the kingdoms of the world. He will rule in righteousness. Finally, the earth will be filled with the glory of God:

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. Hebrews 9:27-28

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all. I Corinthians 15:22-28

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A Visit to Israel

The editors of this newsletter recently had an opportunity to visit the Holy Land, the modern country of Israel. During an intensive eight days of touring we managed to see a number of sights that brought to mind not only events from the Bible, both old and new Testament, but events having to do with the re-establishment of the nation of Israel; the return to Israel from all over the globe, especially immigrants fleeing Europe at the time of the holocaust, the partition and the war for independence and its declaration as a modern state, the six-day war and the ongoing skirmishes that seem to be a part of its existence.

Although we didn't cover the land from Dan to Beersheba to use the Biblical expression, we did visit the ancient city of Dan and did get a chance to see some of the sights at the Dead Sea, 1385 feet below sea level. We would like to share three experiences with you, each of these experiences bringing to mind something from the Bible, but each one speaking to us in a very different manner.

As we made our way one morning from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea we passed a number of Bedouin settlements on both sides of the highway. They were not really pretty sights and they brought to mind the difficulty in eking out a living as their forefathers had done in such a barren wasteland for thousands of years before them. We turned off the highway and after a short drive over a somewhat winding road that followed the contours of the hillside area came to our destina-

tion, Genesis Land. We were greeted by Eliezer, Abraham's servant who issued us a garment, somewhat resembling a standard issue hospital robe only longer and, in contrast with typical hospital rules, we were allowed to keep our street clothes on underneath. Eliezer explained a little bit about what we were going to experience and then led us outside to help us up onto the camels we were to ride to Abraham's tent.

After a somewhat precarious start we rode down the hill, swaying with the movement of the camel until we reached Abraham's tent and dismounted. We were greeted by Abraham who welcomed us into his tent and offered us dried fruit, coffee and sweet tea and told the story of his departure from Ur of the Chaldees, his journey first to Haran and then to this promised land that we were viewing. As we sat there contemplating the view of the Judean wilderness, the lush Jordan valley with its water coming from mountain streams in the North of the land and flowing through the Sea of Galilee could be seen in the distance.

There are many things that we could write about Abraham but it is at a location just like this one where one's thoughts are directed to a manifestation of the Godly character of Abraham. There had been feuding between the servants of his nephew Lot and his own servants, enough so that Abraham realized the time had come for him and Lot to separate. Abraham could have taken the lush Jordan Valley and left Lot with the wilderness but instead he

gave Lot the choice. And of course, Lot chose the rich land which appeared to be the superior choice in the beginning but led Lot right into Sodom and Gomorrah and a very shameful incident in his life that resulted in the loss of his wife and almost everything that he had.

Abraham, on the other hand, took to his heart the same principle that would characterize the later binding of his only son Isaac, and recognized that at this time as well as later on at the binding, the Lord would provide. It was as thrilling to sit in this place at Genesis Land where Abraham might have made that very choice as it was to later stand as close as we could to the rock where Abraham bound his son and raised his hand to slay him only to have his arm stayed by an angel and a ram provided by God for the sacrifice. Abraham's whole life was one of obedience and trust in God. He is an example for us to follow and it is no small thing that the Holy Spirit records in the New Testament that "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." (Gal 3:6)

When we returned to Jerusalem, we visited the archeological park on the south and south-western portion of the temple mount. Here many things are left as they were, even a portion of the 200 foot wide steps leading up to the temple. We saw a stone roadway parallel to the western wall that had been there at the time of the second temple. Some sections of the roadway had been badly distorted as the huge ashlar from

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A Visit to Israel ((Continued from page 5)
the temple crashed down on them as the Romans fulfilled the prophecy “not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down.” However, the stones that fell had been moved from the road and one could still walk on it just as Jesus did. It was here that without a doubt one could truly say, “I walked today where Jesus walked.”

From the southwest corner we walked over to the southern steps and noticed that there were thirty steps but they were not all the same size. Every other step was designed as if it were to be a landing, wide enough to allow a group of pilgrims coming up to the temple as they did three times a year to pause and sing a psalm of praise. There were fifteen landings, one for each of the Psalms that are known as the Songs of Assent (Psalms 120-134.) We stepped up to the third landing and read Psalm 122 from the scripture. You might wish to open your Bibles and read that beautiful plea for peace in Jerusalem at this time.

But as we stood on that landing, we realized that this Psalm most likely would not have been read but would have been sung. We had with us a copy of a beautiful anthem written by Dr. Lowell Mason (1792-1872) entitled Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem. Though in English, not in ancient Hebrew, and though it re-

flected a style of anthem writing common to the 19th century, the effect of standing on the very steps where pilgrims might have stood and singing that plea for *Shalom* in *Yerushalayim* was overwhelming. Words cannot describe the emotion that passed through each of us, but we all knew that that day we had prayed in a very special place and it was a prayer with very special meaning.

The third experience deals with an artifact that was uncovered in 1961 during excavations at Herod’s port city of Caesarea. It was thought to be a dedicatory plaque inserted in the wall of a newly constructed building, perhaps even a temple that Pilate had dedicated to the emperor Tiberius. Sometime in the fourth century it was scavenged from the ruins of its original sight, was broken in two and used for repairs in a flight of steps in the theater.

Although the writings of Josephus and Philo late in the first century, as well as the Bible, have attested to the existence of Pilate as Procurator of Judea between 26 and 36CE, this is the first contemporary witness, and the only lithic inscription that bears his name and title. As archaeologists John Rousseau and Rami Arav observe: The inscription indisputably establishes Pilate’s title, which has long been debated (was he a governor, a procurator or a pre-

fect?). The prefect had administrative, financial, military, and judicial functions. As supreme penal judge in his territory – except for recourse to the emperor himself in the case of a Roman citizen – he had the power to pronounce death sentences as he did for Jesus, and to pardon as he did for Barabbas.

Too many minimalist scholars are chipping away at the truthfulness of the Bible, yet little-by-little God is revealing through the work of dedicated archaeologists that the Bible is true, that we can base our fundamental beliefs and hope on what is taught in its pages. This Pilate Stone found in Caesarea is only one of many artifacts that have been revealed to us in our time. It would take a lifetime to visit all the sights and study all the artifacts, including the Dead Sea Scrolls, that have come to life recently, but it was good on this vacation trip to just pause for a few moments and reflect on that evil combination of government and religious leaders that sent the Son of God, who honored his father by total obedience, to the cross and by that death a way was opened for eternal life in the age to come.

Thank you for allowing us to share with you a few precious memories of a faith-strengthening and hope-renewing visit to Israel.

See special offer for pamphlet on Israel on page 2

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

The Gospel written by the Apostle John is included in the DailyBibleReader schedule in August. While the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke chronicle the life of Jesus in a straightforward, factual manner, John the Apostle tells the story of Jesus differently. He re-

records events, conversations, and prayers that are not found in the other Gospels. He helps the reader to know and understand Jesus from the vantage point of someone who knew him well. He leads us to meditate and think deeply about the Messiah and who He is. One exam-

ple of the difference in writing style between John and the other Gospels is the recording of the conception and birth of Jesus. Matthew writes:

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to

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him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:20-21 NIV)

Luke writes:

Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:30-36 NKJV)

Both Matthew and Luke record the work of the Holy Spirit upon Mary so that we understand that the child conceived in her was truly the Son of God but also the Son of Man.

John's recording of the conception of Jesus harkens back to the very creation of the earth: "In the beginning..." and relates the same process that the word spoken by God that brought the creation into existence was at work in the creation of his Son:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 NKJV)

Throughout the Gospel of John, we are shown the attributes and character of the Son. Each story told brings us closer to understanding our Messiah:

In chapter 2 Jesus turned the water to wine at the wedding in Cana and we come to understand that Jesus is the wine of the New Covenant provided by God.

In chapter 4 Jesus talks with the Samaritan woman at the well and tells her of the living water that he brings.

In chapter 6 Jesus feeds the 5,000 and tells his disciples that he is the bread of life that his Father has provided.

In chapter 10 Jesus tells the people that he is both the Good Shepherd and the gate to the sheepfold.

In chapter 11 Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead and tells us that He is "the resurrection and the life".

In chapter 13 Jesus washes the feet of his disciples and tells them he is servant of all.

In chapter 15 Jesus tells us that he is the vine and only through our connection in him as the branches will we bear fruit for our Father.

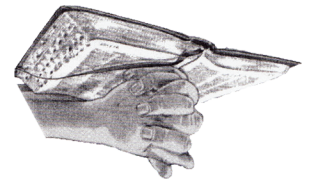
These are just a few examples of the inspired words of the Apostle John to help us to know our Lord. It is important to read and meditate on each of these chapters to begin to understand these thoughts.

One of the most beautiful chapters in the Bible is the prayer of Jesus just before his arrest, crucifixion and resurrection. The final words of that prayer are a petition that Jesus prayed to his Father for us:

"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

"Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:20-26 NKJV)

What beautiful words—what a beautiful prayer spoken by our Lord! These are the words recorded by the Apostle John to help us to understand our Lord and his love for us.



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JULY			AUGUST			SEPTEMBER		
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2	II Sam 17, 18	Psalm 74	2	Isaiah 51, 52	John 2	2	II King 16, 17	I Thess 1
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6	Song Sol 1-3	Galatians 4	6	Isaiah 59, 60	Psalm 86	6	II King 24, 25	I Thess 5
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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
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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
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See page 6 for some thoughts on the daily readings.
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