

THE BREAD OF LIFE 2014



*The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places;
Yes, I have a good inheritance.*

PSALM 16:6

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE
Lutheran Spokesman

Online Version : www.lutheranspokesman.org

THE BREAD OF LIFE 2014

FROM THE EDITOR:

These Daily Bible Readings (together with the Bible commentaries) first appeared month by month in an earlier volume of the *Lutheran Spokesman*. CLC Pastor David Lau compiled them for the year 1987. They appear to fit the year 2014 quite well.

We are happy to discover that our *Spokesman* budget allows us to make these daily readings available to our subscribers in pamphlet form as part of their annual subscription. We thank our gracious Lord — and His instrument, Pastor Lau — for making these devotional readings available to us for the coming year. With God’s ever timeless and timely Word as our constant guide and companion, we look forward confidently to another year of His marvelous grace.

“Remember the word to Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life. The proud have me in great derision, yet I do not turn aside from Your law. I remembered Your judgments of old, O LORD, and have comforted myself. Indignation has taken hold of me because of the wicked, who forsake Your law. Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. I remember Your name in the night, O LORD, and I keep Your law. This has become mine, because I kept Your precepts.” (Psalm 119:49-56)

— Pastor Paul Fleischer



*All hymns referenced in the pamphlet are from *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941, CPH)

Cover and layout: Matthew Schaser

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR JANUARY 2014

The second Gospel does not indicate who its human author is, but the ancient Christian writers are unanimous in ascribing it to Mark, who was associated with both the apostles Peter and Paul in the early Christian Church. Mark's home was Jerusalem, for that is where his mother Mary lived. The missionary Barnabas was Mark's close relative.

Internal evidence suggests that Mark intended his Gospel for Gentile readers rather than Jewish readers. The emphasis throughout is on the works and deeds of Jesus rather than on His words. Most of the accounts contained in Mark's Gospel are found also in Matthew's Gospel or in Luke's Gospel. But Mark's Gospel provides additional details that were most likely relayed to Mark by Peter, who was, of course, an eyewitness of almost all the events in Jesus' ministry.

Not many years ago a British actor went from place to place reciting on stage nothing more nor less than the plain text of Mark's Gospel in its entirety according to the King James Version. Reports indicate that this presentation was popular and effective.

But for us Christians the Gospel of Mark is more than a literary masterpiece. It is an authentic record of Jesus' mighty deeds as our Savior and Lord, inspired by the Holy Spirit Himself. As we begin this new year of our Lord 2014, let us read and meditate on what Mark calls "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1).

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
1	Mark 1: 1-8	The beginning of the year —"the beginning of the gospel."	121
2	Mark 1: 9-13	Jesus – the Spirit resting on Him, Satan tempting Him.	413
3	Mark 1: 14-20	Jesus calls on us to follow Him.	270
4	Mark 1: 21-28	Even unclean spirits obey Him.	134: 1-3
5	Mark 1: 29-34	He healed all their diseases.	557
6	Mark 1: 35-45	They came to Jesus from every direction.	501
7	Mark 2: 1-12	"Your sins are forgiven you."	321
8	Mark 2: 13-17	Jesus eats and drinks with sinners.	324
9	Mark 2: 18-22	The new wine needs new wineskins.	99

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
10	Mark 2: 23-28	Not a Sabbath breaker, but the Lord of the Sabbath!	359
11	Mark 3: 1-6	It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.	11
12	Mark 3: 7-12	Great multitudes crowded around Him.	126
13	Mark 3: 13-19	Jesus appointed twelve apostles.	513
14	Mark 3: 20-27	Satan is strong, but Jesus is stronger!	190
15	Mark 3: 28-35	Jesus' family: those who do His Father's will.	474
16	Mark 4: 1-12	He taught them many things by parables.	52
17	Mark 4: 13-20	Blessed are they who hear the Word and bear fruit!	49
18	Mark 4: 21-25	To those who listen more will be given.	48
19	Mark 4: 26-34	The kingdom of God grows and becomes great.	132
20	Mark 4: 35-41	Even the wind and the sea obey Him.	651
21	Mark 5: 1-10	Meet the tomb-dwelling maniac.	254
22	Mark 5: 11-20	Meet the same man in his right mind. Praise God!	262
23	Mark 5: 21-34	The poor woman was healed of her affliction.	352
24	Mark 5: 35-43	Jesus stopped their faithless wailing and scornful laughing.	357
25	Mark 6: 1-6	He marveled because of their unbelief.	415
26	Mark 6: 7-13	They went out and preached.	506
27	Mark 6: 14-20	John boldly denounced Herod's adultery ...	483
28	Mark 6: 21-29	... and paid for it with his life. Praise God!	470
29	Mark 6: 30-36	They were like sheep not having a shepherd.	426
30	Mark 6: 37-44	They all ate and were filled.	312
31	Mark 6: 45-56	"It is I, do not be afraid."	514

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR FEBRUARY 2014

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
1	Mark 7: 1-13	The Word of God is superior to the traditions of men.	292
2	Mark 7: 14-23	What comes out of a man defiles him, not what goes into him. 318	
3	Mark 7: 24-30	Even dogs like ourselves are given the crumbs of God's mercy. 379	
4	Mark 7: 31-37	Jesus has done all things well.	359
5	Mark 8: 1-10	Once more thousands ate and were filled.	350
6	Mark 8: 11-21	How slow we are to understand our Savior!	349: 1-3
7	Mark 8: 22-26	Jesus gives us clear vision.	539
8	Mark 8: 27-33	God and Satan strive for Peter's soul.	263
9	Mark 8:34 – 9:1	Jesus calls us to suffer and die for His sake.	452
10	Mark 9: 2-13	In Jesus dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily.	352
11	Mark 9: 14-29	Jesus succeeds where His disciples had failed.	353
12	Mark 9: 30-37	The disciples failed to understand Jesus' plan of salvation.	384
13	Mark 9: 38-50	Jesus in love warns us of the dangers of hellfire.	607: 14-19
14	Mark 10: 1-12	God designed marriage as a lifelong blessing.	620
15	Mark 10: 13-16	Jesus is not too busy to bless little children.	627
16	Mark 10: 17-22	Jesus in love makes a wealthy young man sad.	295
17	Mark 10: 23-31	It is impossible for anyone to be saved except by grace.	373
18	Mark 10: 32-34	Jesus knew the suffering required of Him.	150
19	Mark 10: 35-45	Jesus wants His disciples to be servants like Himself.	175
20	Mark 10: 46-52	Because of our inborn sin we are all blind beggars.	147
21	Mark 11: 1-11	The kingdom of David is restored in Jesus.	160
22	Mark 11: 12-19	The Jewish leaders were like a fig tree without fruit.	419
23	Mark 11: 20-26	A prayer without faith or willingness to forgive is doomed to fail.	458
24	Mark 11: 27-33	Jesus answered a question by asking a question.	272

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
25	Mark 12: 1-12	They killed the Son, but the inheritance will not be theirs.	460
26	Mark 12: 13-17	Jesus escaped from their trap, and they marveled.	584
27	Mark 12: 18-27	Those who do not know the Scriptures will surely go astray.	603
28	Mark 12: 28-34	Love is the fulfilling of the Law, but only God is love.	289

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR MARCH 2014

As we get into the Lenten season, our readings from the Gospel of Mark take us to the upper room of the Last Supper, the garden of Gethsemane, and finally to the cross of Calvary, where our Lord Jesus was forsaken by God because He was bearing our sins.

Then, before finishing Mark's Gospel and its account of our Lord's resurrection (Mark 16), we turn to the writings of Mark's mentor, the apostle Peter. As "a witness of the sufferings of Christ" (1 Peter 5:1), Peter stressed to his persecuted readers two particular aspects of Jesus' suffering.

First, Jesus "suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). That is, Jesus "bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24) that we might be redeemed with His precious blood (1 Peter 1:18-19).

But then Jesus' suffering on the cross also gives us a second benefit. By His innocent suffering Jesus shows us how we also should suffer. "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example" (1 Peter 2:21). Therefore we also should be willing "to suffer for doing good, if it is the will of God" (1 Peter 3:17), and we should "take it patiently" (1 Peter 2:20), just as Jesus Himself did. For whoever desires to come after Jesus must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Him (Mark 8:34).

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
1	Mark 12: 35-40	Jesus – Son of David and Lord of David!	339
2	Mark 12: 41-44	Jesus shows that "less" may be "more."	438
3	Mark 13: 1-13	To be hated for Jesus' sake is truly a privilege.	452

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
4	Mark 13: 14-23	The “abomination of desolation” foretold by Daniel was “Jerusalem surrounded by armies” (Luke 21:20). The Christians heeded Jesus’ warning and escaped the “tribulation” of Jerusalem.	290
5	Mark 13: 24-31	The words of the Lord Jesus always come to pass.	612
6	Mark 13: 32-37	We need to be ready at all times for Jesus’ return.	606
7	Mark 14: 1-11	What Mary did is being spoken of as a memorial to her.	399
8	Mark 14: 12-21	Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples.	164
9	Mark 14: 22-26	Jesus gave His disciples His body and His blood.	163
10	Mark 14: 27-31	The sheep relied on themselves instead of their Shepherd.	516
11	Mark 14: 32-42	Jesus prayed, but His disciples fell asleep.	446
12	Mark 14: 43-52	Some think the young man who fled naked was Mark himself.	451
13	Mark 14: 53-65	Jesus was worthy of death, for He was bearing our sin.	150
14	Mark 14: 66-72	Think of the coward Peter, and pray for strength!	346
15	Mark 15: 1-5	Jesus says nothing in His own defense.	142: 1-3
16	Mark 15: 6-15	The holy Jesus is condemned; the criminal Barabbas is released.	143: 1-5
17	Mark 15: 16-20	Torture, mockery, crucifixion – all for us!	140
18	Mark 15: 21-25	He was crucified, and we must bear our crosses after Him.	151: 5-7
19	Mark 15: 26-32	He could not save Himself, because He was saving us!	155
20	Mark 15: 33-41	God spared not His own Son when He was bearing our sins.	174
21	Mark 15: 42-47	Yes, He who is God was dead!	167
22	1 Peter 1: 1-12	Like Christ we suffer now; the glory will come later.	527
23	1 Peter 1: 13-21	We were redeemed with Christ’s precious blood.	157
24	1 Peter 1:22 – 2:3	God’s Word brings us to birth and makes us grow.	284
25	1 Peter 2: 4-10	The rejected Jesus is God’s Cornerstone.	460
26	1 Peter 2: 11-17	Jesus submitted to Pilate; we should follow His example.	580
27	1 Peter 2: 18-25	Jesus’ unjust suffering is also our example.	171: 8-12

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
28	1 Peter 3: 1-7	May the wife be submissive to her husband, and the husband give honor to his wife.	424
29	1 Peter 3: 8-17	Jesus suffered for doing good; we are blessed if we so suffer.	173
30	1 Peter 3:18 – 4:6	Jesus redeemed us to be His people, living for God instead of the lusts of the flesh.	144
31	1 Peter 4: 7-11	May our whole lives glorify God.	175

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR APRIL 2014

FIRST PETER

Our Lord Jesus went through a “fiery trial” when He suffered for our sins on the cross. In the last section of his first letter, the apostle Peter reminds us that if we are followers of Jesus, we also can expect a fiery trial of unjust sufferings. But in due time we shall also share in our Savior’s glory.

SECOND PETER

Peter knew in advance that he would die a martyr’s death. Because he knew his time was short, he wrote his second letter as a last reminder to his readers to cling to God’s sure Word and to be on guard against the false teachers and scoffers who were sure to make their appearance in the last days. Peter’s hope and our hope still lie in the future — “the day of the Lord” when Jesus will return to create the new heavens and the new Earth.

JUDE

The false teachers that Peter predicted were already on the scene when Jude, brother of James and brother of Jesus, wrote his brief letter of warning. How tragic it is that false teachers misuse God’s grace for their immoral purposes! But yet there is eternal life for the faithful in Christ Jesus!

PSALM 22

This eternal life was won for us undeserving sinners by our Lord Jesus through His God-forsaken suffering on the cross, as foretold by David in Psalm 22 about 1000 years in advance.

MARK 16

Jesus was not a failure although He was forsaken by God. His suffering in our stead was accepted by God; God raised Him from the dead, as Mark’s Gospel proclaims in its final chapter. Now the Good News of forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ can go out into all the world.

ISAIAH 49-57

This extension of the gospel into the heathen world was foretold already in Old Testament times by the prophet Isaiah. The second part of Isaiah's prophecy (chapters 40-66) is divided into three sections, all concluding with words of judgment. The first section – chapters 40-48, concludes with the words, "There is no peace for the wicked." The second section – chapters 49-57, concludes with the words, "There is no peace for the wicked." The third section – chapters 58-66, concludes with the words, "Their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."

As we rejoice in our Lord's victorious resurrection in this Easter season, we contemplate anew Isaiah's description of God's Suffering Servant in chapters 49-57. Professor August Pieper (1857-1946) has given this section of Isaiah's prophecy the title: "The Redemption from the Guilt of Sin." Indeed "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 51:11).

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
1	1 Peter 4: 12-19	There is shame in suffering as a criminal, but glory in suffering as a Christian.	445
2	1 Peter 5: 1-4	Pastors should be examples, even as the Chief Shepherd is our Example.	490
3	1 Peter 5: 5-14	The devil uses suffering to lead Christians to deny their Lord. Resist him!	268
4	2 Peter 1: 1-9	May we never forget that we have been purged from our old sins.	342
5	2 Peter 1: 10-15	We need to keep on reminding ourselves to be Christians as long as we live.	420
6	2 Peter 1: 16-21	Peter was a witness of Jesus' majesty as well as of — His suffering.	135
7	2 Peter 2: 1-11	Those who deny the Lord who bought them will perish.	415: 1-4
8	2 Peter 2: 12-17	There is no hope for those who insist on forsaking the right way.	610
9	2 Peter 2: 18-22	There is nothing worse than knowing the right way and rejecting it.	604
10	2 Peter 3: 1-9	Still the Lord in His love calls the wicked to repentance.	278
11	2 Peter 3: 10-13	This old Earth will be destroyed; we look forward to a better one.	612

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
12	2 Peter 3: 14-18	Jesus is our Lord and Savior; in Him we are safe.	611
13	Jude 1-4	How horrible it is to turn God's grace into licentiousness!	413
14	Jude 5-11	Cain, Balaam, and Korah knew the truth but rejected it.	417
15	Jude 12-19	The devil lies, cheats, and flatters to snare his victims.	446
16	Jude 20-25	Trust in the Lord's mercy to keep you from stumbling.	163
17	Psalm 22: 1-18	David sees the Son of David hanging on the cross.	174
18	Psalm 22: 19-31	He has done it! It is finished! Praise the Lord!	170
19	Mark 16: 1-8	"He is risen! He is not here!"	190
20	Mark 16: 9-14	Three times we are told: "They did not believe."	203
21	Mark 16: 15-20	Now is the time to go and preach the Gospel.	498
22	Isaiah 49: 1-7	Jesus is God's Salvation to the ends of the Earth.	508
23	Isaiah 49: 8-13	Now is the day of salvation, for the Lord has revealed His mercy.	509
24	Isaiah 49: 14-21	The risen Lord Jesus gathers together His Church.	462
25	Isaiah 49: 22-26	The risen Lord delivers His Church from all its enemies.	264
26	Isaiah 50: 1-6	The Lord was willing to endure "shame and spitting" for us.	210
27	Isaiah 50: 7-11	"If God is for us, who can be against us?"	528: 11-15
28	Isaiah 51: 1-6	The Lord's salvation has gone forth into all the Earth.	198
29	Isaiah 51: 7-16	The ransomed of the Lord rejoice forever.	205
30	Isaiah 51: 17-23	God has removed the cup of wrath from His people.	204

ISAIAH 49-57

In the first part of the month we continue our reading of the middle section (chapters 49-57) of the second part of Isaiah’s prophecy (chapters 40-66). This middle section describes how God has redeemed us from the guilt of sin. The central chapter of this section is the famous chapter 53, where the prophet not only foretells the suffering of Christ but also explains its purpose and meaning. Not even in the New Testament is there a clearer presentation of our Savior’s suffering and death as the Substitute for the human race.

The chapters that follow make repeated references to God’s “covenant of peace” (54:10), His “everlasting covenant” (55:3) of mercy and forgiveness that He wants the whole world to hear about and rely on. But many will nevertheless turn away from God and reject His kindness and continue in their wickedness. The Lord wants His proclamation of peace through Christ to penetrate the hard hearts of men, but there is “no peace for the wicked” (57:21) who prefer their wickedness to the healing compassion of a gracious God.

COLOSSIANS

Next we turn to the apostle Paul’s New Testament letter to the Colossians, that is, the Christians of Colosse, a city in Asia Minor. Most likely this congregation came into existence through the gospel preaching of a man named Epaphras during the time that Paul was in Ephesus on his third mission journey. Paul’s letter to the Colossians was prompted by the presence of a dangerous false teaching described by Paul as “philosophy and empty deceit” (2:8), involving “false humility and worship of angels” (2:18) as well as submission to “regulations” (2:20) concerning food and drink and religious festivals. The Colossians are encouraged to turn away from this nonsense and find all of their religious answers in Christ. Nothing and no one can be superior to Christ, in whom “dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (2:9).

PSALMS 68, 110, 116

As we celebrate Christ’s ascension into heaven, we read three psalms that the New Testament writers have quoted (Psalm 68, with reference to Jesus’ ascension, Psalm 110, with reference to His sitting at God’s right hand, Psalm 116 with reference to speaking because we believe).

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
1	Isaiah 52: 1-6	God promises to redeem His captive people.	268
2	Isaiah 52: 7-12	The joyful message is proclaimed: God’s people are redeemed! 487	
3	Isaiah 52: 13-15	The redemption is accomplished through God’s Servant, Jesus. 510	

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
4	Isaiah 53: 1-6	God's Servant has redeemed us by bearing our sins.	153
5	Isaiah 53: 7-12	The innocent suffering of God's Servant is followed by everlasting victory.	142:1-3
6	Isaiah 54: 1-5	The redeemed people of God bask in the sunshine of God's favor.	640
7	Isaiah 54: 6-10	The Redeemer promises everlasting grace and compassion.	337
8	Isaiah 54: 11-17	The Lord protects His people from all their enemies.	269
9	Isaiah 55: 1-5	Our Savior invites us to enjoy the feast of salvation.	278
10	Isaiah 55: 6-13	The gospel Word goes out into the world to attract sinners to Jesus, our Savior.	279
11	Isaiah 56: 1-8	Let even the foreigners and eunuchs and outcasts come to the Lord.	281
12	Isaiah 56:9 – 57:2	The present pastors of Israel are lazy and greedy.	451
13	Isaiah 57: 3-8	Idolatry still prevails among the people.	19:5-6
14	Isaiah 57: 9-13	There is no value in trusting in idols. Trust in the Lord!	19:1-4
15	Isaiah 57: 14-21	God bestows peace to the repentant sinners, but there is no peace for the impenitent.	610
16	Colossians 1: 1-8	The gospel goes out into all the world and brings forth fruit.	505
17	Colossians 1: 9-14	Our Christian life is like a ceaselessly flowing river of gratitude for our salvation in Jesus Christ	142:4-6
18	Colossians 1: 15-20	Jesus is Redeemer, Creator, Preserver, in all things preeminent!	352
19	Colossians 1: 21-29	Paul reveals the mystery: Jesus is the Savior of Gentiles also.	129
20	Colossians 2: 1-10	Human philosophy cannot save us; we have all we need in Christ.	477
21	Colossians 2: 11-15	Jesus brings us from death to life by the gospel of His death and resurrection.	192:1-4
22	Colossians 2: 16-23	Christ has set us free. Do not revert to bondage under laws.	99
23	Colossians 3: 1-11	Minds that are centered in Christ battle tirelessly against fleshly lusts.	398

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
24	Colossians 3: 12-17	The Holy Spirit works in God's people a spirit of humility, love, and thankfulness.	228
25	Colossians 3:18 – 4:1	Christians serve the Lord in all their relationships with others.	625
26	Colossians 4: 2-18	We are partners in Gospel work; we need to make good use of our time.	506
27	Psalms 68: 1-10	The Lord is triumphant over all His enemies.	214
28	Psalms 68: 11-20	Our Lord ascended to heaven and received gifts for men.	218
29	Psalms 68: 21-35	The Lord's people march on to eternal victory.	658
30	Psalms 110	Our Lord Jesus is ruling at God's right hand.	219
31	Psalms 116	If we truly believe in our Lord Jesus, we shall speak His praises.	221

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR JUNE 2014

After Jesus ascended to heaven, His disciples had to wait only ten days for Him to send the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. They spent this time with the Word of God and prayer. The Book of Acts indicates that the Old Testament Psalms were much on their minds in those days of waiting. In Psalms 69 and 109 they saw Jesus, their suffering Savior, and His relationship with the accursed traitor, Judas Iscariot. They recognized Psalms 16, 89, 132, 118, and 2 as Messianic psalms portraying Jesus' resurrection from the dead and His everlasting reign as Son of David and Son of God. They saw the events of Pentecost itself as the fulfillment of God's prophecy through the prophet Joel.

May God's Holy Spirit strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ through the reading of the same Scriptures that were studied by the apostles in those glorious early days of the New Testament Church.

Beginning with June 15, Trinity Sunday, we are transported in our readings to the last days of the Old Testament kingdom of Judah. Good King Hezekiah was followed on the throne by two notoriously idolatrous rulers: Manasseh and Amon. Because of their wickedness God announced through His prophets that He would send disaster on Jerusalem and all Judah.

Yet in His mercy God postponed the day of disaster by sending to His people one last God-fearing king, Josiah by name, a most zealous reformer who did

more than any other king to rid the land of idolatry. Still, the most that Josiah could accomplish was a delay in God's judgment. The prophetess Huldah and the prophet Zephaniah had the same message from the Lord: the day of God's wrath was at hand. Only a few would survive the disasters of the day. The glories promised to God's people would be enjoyed only by future generations.

As we read the record of this ancient idolatry and hear of God's threatened judgments, we cannot refrain from wondering how and when God will send judgment on this nation of ours because of our abominable idolatries. When judgment comes, will He leave in our land a meek and humble people who trust in the name of the Lord, as He did then? Surely the gates of hell cannot prevail against Christ's Church.

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
1	Psalm 69: 1-12	Jesus: hated without a cause, zealous for God's house	172:1-3
2	Psalm 69: 13-21	Jesus: given gall and vinegar to drink	153
3	Psalm 69: 22-36	Judas Iscariot: blotted out of the book of the living	415:1-3
4	Psalm 109: 1-13	Judas Iscariot: his office is taken by another	278
5	Psalm 109: 14-31	Judas Iscariot: cursed because he turned against the Lord	419
6	Psalm 16	Jesus: not allowed to see corruption	196
7	Joel 2: 28-32	Jesus: saving all those who call on His name	232
8	Psalm 89: 1-18	Jesus: sitting on David's throne forever	236
9	Psalm 89: 19-37	Jesus: God's firstborn, the highest of all the kings of the earth	233
10	Psalm 89: 38-52	Jesus: awaited during dark days when God seemed to forget	231
11	Psalm 132	Jesus: God's anointed Son of David forever	234
12	Psalm 118: 1-14	Jesus: the proof that God is on our side	528:1-5
13	Psalm 118: 15-29	Jesus: the rejected stone that is God's cornerstone forever	460
14	Psalm 2	Jesus: God's Son and Messiah worthy of our worship and trust	528:6-10
15	2 Kings 21: 1-9	Manasseh "did much evil in the sight of the Lord."	580
16	2 Kings 21: 10-18	The Lord will bring calamity on Jerusalem and Judah.	579
17	2 Chronicles 33: 10-20	What mercy! The Lord hears Manasseh's prayer.	583

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
18	2 Kings 21: 19-26	Amon was just as wicked as his father.	265
19	2 Chronicles 34: 1-7	Josiah turned away from the idolatry of his predecessors.	19
20	2 Chronicles 34: 8-13	Josiah repaired what his predecessors had destroyed.	637
21	2 Chronicles 34: 14-21	The lost book of God's Law was found.	290
22	2 Chronicles 34: 22-28	God is willing to postpone the inevitable judgment.	258
23	Zephaniah 1: 1-9	The day of God's judgment is at hand.	604
24	Zephaniah 1: 10-18	The day of God's judgment is a day of wrath.	607:1-10
25	Zephaniah 2: 1-7	May we be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger!	607:11-19
26	Zephaniah 2: 8-15	All the great world capitols shall be devastated.	610
27	Zephaniah 3: 1-7	Jerusalem also must be destroyed.	419
28	Zephaniah 3: 8-13	There will be left the faithful few who trust in the Lord.	608
29	Zephaniah 3: 14-20	There will be joy for God's people after all – later.	613
30	2 Kings 23: 1-14	Blessed are they who hear God's Word and keep it.	260

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR JULY 2014

The prophets of God that were active in the reign of godly king Josiah included Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah. Zephaniah foretold the day of God's wrath, as we considered in our June readings. Habakkuk was informed by God that the Chaldeans (Babylonians) would come and overwhelm Judah before they themselves would be overthrown. What can God's people do in such times as these? Habakkuk's answer: "The just shall live by his faith." Habakkuk's personal comfort in the day of disaster: "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." "The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him."

After Josiah was killed in battle at Megiddo, the threatened judgment of God was no longer postponed. Jeremiah saw this judgment coming and eloquently, repeatedly, and bravely called his people to repentance, but to no avail. The first eight chapters of Jeremiah's book do not make for pleasant summertime reading. Jeremiah laments the ingratitude, the idolatry, and the shamelessness of the citizens of Judah. They were like an unfaithful wife whom her husband was

willing to forgive but who yet continued in her harlotry and adultery. The Lord God would have loved to hold off the threatened attack from the Babylonians, but the continuing impenitence of Judah made the day of God's judgment inevitable. Their temple worship could not save them now. The peace promised by their false prophets was a delusion. In a short time the land of Judah would be desolate.

Let every patriotic American Christian read the book of Jeremiah and repent of his own sins and the sins of his people. The day of judgment will come for our nation also, if there is no day of repentance.

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
1	2 Kings 23: 15-20	Josiah broke down Bethel's altar and burned men's bones on it. (Confer 1 Kings 13: 1-2)	290
2	2 Kings 23: 21-27	There was no king like Josiah in his obedience to God's law.	416
3	2 Chronicles 35: 1-9	A joyful Passover was celebrated as the law commanded.	39
4	Habakkuk 1: 1-11	Yet God would send the Chaldeans to punish wicked Judah.	577
5	Habakkuk 1:12 – 2:1	God would punish the wicked by means of those more wicked.	317
6	Habakkuk 2: 2-4	The just shall live by faith, but the proud will die.	392
7	Habakkuk 2: 5-14	Three woes are pronounced against the wicked Chaldeans.	329
8	Habakkuk 2: 15-20	Two more woes are pronounced. God rules!	4
9	Habakkuk 3: 1-7	Habakkuk prays: "In wrath remember mercy."	583
10	Habakkuk 3: 8-16	God's wrath is for the salvation of His people.	26
11	Habakkuk 3: 17-19	In the worst of times we can still rejoice in our Savior.	573 & 574
12	2 Chronicles 35: 20-27	It was a sad, sad day when Josiah was killed.	600
13	Jeremiah 1: 1-10	Jeremiah was called to be God's prophet in Josiah's reign.	489
14	Jeremiah 1: 11-19	Judah will be destroyed from the north (by Babylon).	612
15	Jeremiah 2: 1-13	Ungrateful Judah has forsaken its God.	419
16	Jeremiah 2: 14-25	Idolatry was the problem. What can be worse?	19
17	Jeremiah 2: 26-37	Judah's false gods will not help them when God's judgment comes.	319
18	Jeremiah 3: 1-13	Judah, the unfaithful wife, can still return to the Lord, her husband.	279

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
19	Jeremiah 3: 14-21	The Lord wants His faithless wife to return.	280
20	Jeremiah 3:22 – 4:4	How good God will be to a repentant people!	582
21	Jeremiah 4: 5-18	The Babylonians are ready to strike. Repent! Repent ! Repent!	579
22	Jeremiah 4: 19-31	See the fierce anger of the Lord!	327
23	Jeremiah 5: 1-13	God’s judgment is just, for Judah’s sins are many.	328
24	Jeremiah 5: 14-31	Prophets, priests, and people all share in Judah’s sins.	415
25	Jeremiah 6: 1-15	God’s judgment will come because they had no sense of shame.	322
26	Jeremiah 6: 16-30	They could have found rest for their souls in God’s old paths.	276
27	Jeremiah 7: 1-15	Their unrepented sins made their temple worship displeasing to God.	3
28	Jeremiah 7: 16-27	Their continued disobedience made God’s judgment inevitable.	318
29	Jeremiah 7:28 – 8:3	God’s prophet sees desolation: corpses and dead men’s bones.	610
30	Jeremiah 8: 4-13	Deceit, covetousness, impenitence, the rejection of God’s Word!	408
31	Jeremiah 8: 14-22	There is no physician or medicine that can heal them now.	278

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR AUGUST 2014

Josiah, the last godly king of Judah, was followed on the throne by two sons, a grandson, and then another son. The generally accepted dates are as follows:

Josiah (639–608 B.C.)

Jehoahaz, Josiah’s son, also called Shallum (608 B.C.)

Jehoiakim, Josiah’s son, also called Eliakim (608–597 B.C.)

Jehoiachin, Josiah’s grandson, also called Coniah (597 B.C.)

Zedekiah, Josiah’s son, also called Mattaniah (597–586 B.C.)

All four of these kings were ungodly. Jehoahaz was carried off to Egypt by the Pharaoh and died there. During Jehoiakim’s reign the great Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem for the first time and took many captives, including the young men Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The false prophets in Judah predicted that this captivity would be short-lived and

that Jerusalem would escape. Jeremiah, however, foretold that the Babylonian Captivity would last for 70 years and that Jerusalem would be destroyed because of the impenitence of the people.

Jehoiachin ruled for only three months before he, too, was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in a second attack, dated 597 B.C. God's prophet Ezekiel was taken captive at this same time and began his work as God's prophet a few years later. Josiah's son Zedekiah now ruled in Jerusalem, but he was no better than his predecessors. Jeremiah continued to foretell the destruction of Jerusalem, and in this he was joined by Ezekiel.

Was there any hope for God's people in this time of distress and impending doom? Yes, there was. Jeremiah spoke of the righteous King that was coming, the Son of David, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." He would save His people. But, as Daniel declared in Babylon, God would not set up this kingdom of the Messiah until four worldly kingdoms had first prospered and flourished. Gold – Babylonia. Silver – Persia. Bronze – Macedonia. Iron – Rome. In the days of the Roman kings God would set up His own everlasting kingdom. As we know, Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
1	2 Kings 23: 28-34	Josiah's son Jehoahaz was king for only three months.	530
2	Jeremiah 22: 1-12	Weep not for Josiah, but for his son Shallum (Jehoahaz).	590
3	2 Kings. 23:35 – 24:7	Josiah's son Jehoiakim was king for eleven wicked years.	518
4	Jeremiah 22: 13-23	Jehoiakim, unlike Josiah, died without being lamented.	598:1-6
5	Jeremiah 26: 1-11	God's prophet Jeremiah was considered worthy of death because he foretold God's judgment.	331:1-4
6	Jeremiah 26: 12-24	God's prophet Urijah was killed; Jeremiah was spared.	598:7-11
7	Jeremiah 20: 1-13	Jeremiah's persecutors will not prevail.	534
8	Daniel 1: 1-20	Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took four talented captives.	434
9	Jeremiah 25: 1-14	The captivity will last only 70 years.	520:7-12
10	Jeremiah 36: 1-19	Baruch publicly read the book of Jeremiah's prophecies.	286
11	Jeremiah 36: 20-32	Flames cannot extinguish God's living Word.	290
12	Daniel 2: 1-18	This was a time to pray for enlightenment.	459
13	Daniel 2: 19-30	God knows the thoughts of our hearts.	233
14	Daniel 2: 31-49	Gold, silver, bronze, iron – four kingdoms followed by the kingdom of God	26

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
15	Daniel 3: 1-18	“We will not worship the gold image.”	435
16	Daniel 3: 19-30	“He delivered His servants who trusted in Him.”	427
17	2 Kings. 24: 8-17	Josiah’s grandson Jehoiachin ruled only three months before being carried off to Babylon.	514
18	Jeremiah 22:24 – 23:8	God will yet keep His promise: The SON OF DAVID will rule.	59
19	Jeremiah 23: 9-24	The false prophets cannot hide from God.	260:1-3
20	Jeremiah 23: 25-40	Perpetual shame will be the fate of false prophets and those who listen to them.	260:4-6
21	2 Chronicles 36: 10-16	Josiah’s son Zedekiah and his people despised the words of God’s prophets.	264:1-3
22	Jeremiah 24: 1-10	Good figs: those carried off to Babylon; bad figs: those left in Jerusalem.	264:4-6
23	Jeremiah 29: 1-19	Jeremiah’s letter repeats the promise of a 70-year captivity.	581
24	Jeremiah 29: 20-32	Three false prophets are rebuked and condemned.	265
25	Jeremiah 27: 1-11	God is the one who gave Nebuchadnezzar his great power.	520:1-6
26	Jeremiah 27: 12-22	Nebuchadnezzar will attack Jerusalem a third time.	521
27	Jeremiah 28: 1-17	Another false prophet is rebuked and condemned.	292:4-8
28	Ezekiel 1:1 – 2:1	In a glorious vision the Lord called Ezekiel to be His prophet.	250
29	Ezekiel 2:2 – 3:11	Ezekiel: the Lord’s spokesman to a rebellious people.	489
30	Ezekiel 3: 12-27	God’s servants are required to proclaim His Word faithfully.	493
31	Ezekiel 6:1 – 7:4	Jerusalem will be destroyed!	605

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR SEPTEMBER 2014

Our readings for the month of September are taken chiefly from the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. These two prophets lived at the same time, but in different places. Ezekiel was with the Jews who had been carried off into captivity by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Jeremiah remained with the Jews in Jerusalem who were threatened and besieged by Nebuchadnezzar's armies in those last years before the long-foretold destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.

The king of Judah during the last six years of the kingdom (591-586 B.C.) was Zedekiah, the last ruling earthly king of the house of David. The Lord told both Ezekiel and Jeremiah that Zedekiah would in no way escape from the Babylonians. God's judgment was already decreed: Jerusalem was doomed. There was nothing Zedekiah could do about it but accept it. Zedekiah, however, tried to run away. He was caught, and the last thing he saw before his eyes were put out was the death of his sons.

In those dismal days, Jeremiah and Ezekiel transmitted God's words of comfort and reassurance to the stricken nation. Consider, for example, Ezekiel's words in Chapter 21: "Take off the crown (from Zedekiah). ... Exalt the lowly, and abase the exalted. ... It shall be no longer until He (the Messiah) comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him." Or Jeremiah's more familiar words in Chapter 31: "I will make a new covenant. ... I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." How can this be? "I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness. ... In those days Judah will be saved" (Jeremiah 33:15-16). As always, the chief subject matter of Old Testament prophecy is Jesus Christ.

591 B.C.

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
1	Ezekiel 11: 10-25	Good news! The remnant of Judah will not be entirely destroyed.	231
2	Ezekiel 12: 1-16	Yet King Zedekiah will not escape from the Babylonians.	610
3	Ezekiel 13: 1-16	The false prophets foretell peace for Judah, but this is not God's word.	265
4	Ezekiel 14: 12-23	Not even Noah, Daniel, or Job can deliver Judah from God's judgments.	612
5	Ezekiel 16: 46-63	Judah is worse than her sisters Samaria and Sodom.	326
6	Ezekiel 18: 2-32	God does not delight in punishing the wicked, but in blessing the penitent.	331

590 B.C.

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
7	Ezekiel 21: 1-13	Babylon is God's sword to bring to an end the kingdom of Judah.	582
8	Ezekiel 21: 18-27	The crown will be taken from King Zedekiah and reserved for the future Messiah.	511
9	Ezekiel 22: 1-3	The Lord enumerates the sins of Judah that cry out for judgment.	583

588 B.C.

10	Ezekiel 24: 15-27	Ezekiel's wife dies, and he is forbidden to show grief.	601:1-5
11	2 Kings 25: 1-2 & Jeremiah 21: 1-14	Jeremiah tells King Zedekiah that Jerusalem will be destroyed.	607:1-6
12	Jeremiah 34: 1-7	Again Jeremiah tells King Zedekiah: Jerusalem will be destroyed.	604

587 B.C.

13	Jeremiah 34: 8-22	King Zedekiah frees the slaves and then enslaves them again.	416
14	Jeremiah 37: 1-10	Jeremiah to Zedekiah: Don't trust in Egypt for help.	269
15	Ezekiel 29: 1-16	Egypt also will be punished. Don't trust in Egypt.	317
16	Jeremiah 37: 11-21	Jeremiah is arrested as a traitor and imprisoned.	445
17	Jeremiah 30: 1-24	The Lord promises restoration to Judah, not "a complete end."	519
18	Jeremiah 31: 1-22	Mourning will be turned into joy on the day of the Lord's mercy.	530
19	Jeremiah 31: 23-40	The Lord will make a new covenant: forgiveness of sins.	289
20	Hebrews 8: 7-13 & Heb. 10: 11-18	This promise is fulfilled for us in Jesus Christ.	220
21	Jeremiah 32: 1-15	Jeremiah buys his cousin's field as an act of faith in God's promise.	381
22	Jeremiah 32: 16-25	Jeremiah asks God why he should buy this field at this time.	39
23	Jeremiah 32: 26-44	The Lord renews His promise: after calamity will come good.	435
24	Jeremiah 33: 1-26	The promise of the Messiah to David can never be broken.	297

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
25	Jeremiah 38: 1-13	Jeremiah is lowered into a muddy cistern and rescued by Ebed-Melech.	534
26	Jeremiah 38: 14-28	Jeremiah's secret message to King Zedekiah is unheeded.	529
586 B.C.			
27	2 Kings 25: 1-21	What had been so long foretold finally happened.	278
28	Jeremiah 39: 11-18	The lives of Jeremiah and Ebed-Melech are preserved.	427
29	Lamentations 1: 1-11	Judah is punished because of its sins.	268
30	Lamentations 1: 12-22	God also punished Jesus when He bore the people's sins.	153

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR OCTOBER 2014

Once more we turn to the three prophets God sent to His people at the time of the Babylonian Captivity (605-535 B.C.).

- 1) Jeremiah, who remained with the poor souls in Jerusalem;
- 2) Ezekiel, who spoke God's Word to the Jewish captives at the Chebar River;
- 3) Daniel, who rose to prominence under Nebuchadnezzar and retained his influence at the Babylonian and Persian courts for many long years.

Jeremiah painfully observed the hardened impenitence of the remaining Jews in Jerusalem. They fled to Egypt, contrary to the word of Jeremiah received from the Lord, and there they renounced the Lord God of Israel and turned to the worship of the pagan goddess of love, "the queen of heaven."

Ezekiel's word from God was also treated with disdain. The Jewish captives heard what he said, but they did not obey him. Yet Ezekiel prophesied the glorious days of the coming Son of David, the Messiah, the Shepherd of Israel.

Daniel was given the special privilege of seeing the coming days of the Messiah by means of mysterious visions. After four worldly kingdoms had appeared on the scene (Babylonia, Persia, Greece, Rome) "one like the Son of Man" would be given an everlasting dominion. This coming King of God would be opposed by the little horn with the "mouth speaking pompous words." In other words, Christ would be opposed by Antichrist.

Daniel witnessed in person the downfall of the first of these four kingdoms and the rise of the second. In vision he saw the contest between the second kingdom and the third kingdom. But above all he saw by God's special grace the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, "to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness." Jerusalem would be rebuilt and then destroyed all over again, but in Jesus Christ "everlasting righteousness" endures.

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon (602-562 B.C.)

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
1	Jeremiah 40: 1-12	Jeremiah remains in Jerusalem with the very poor Jews.	534
2	Jeremiah 40:13 – 41:7	Their puppet king Gedaliah is assassinated by Ishmael.	580:1-4
3	Jeremiah 41: 8-18	There is civil war between Ishmael and Johanan.	263
4	Jeremiah 42: 1-22	The Lord through Jeremiah tells the remaining Jews to stay in Jerusalem.	18
5	Jeremiah 43: 1-13	The Jews disobey God and move to Egypt.	265
6	Jeremiah 44: 1-19	In Egypt they renounce God and worship the “queen of heaven.”	264:1-3
7	Jeremiah 44: 20-30	Jeremiah pronounces God’s judgment on these hardened idolaters.	264:4-6
8	Ezekiel 33: 21-29	Ezekiel in captivity hears about the destruction of Jerusalem.	610
9	Ezekiel 33: 30-33	Ezekiel’s message is heard but not obeyed.	6
10	Ezekiel 34: 1-10	The Lord rebukes the shepherds who feed themselves instead of the sheep.	580:5-7
11	Ezekiel 34: 11-25	Ezekiel foretells the coming of a Good Shepherd: Jesus.	648
12	Ezekiel 37: 1-14	The Lord God will revive the “dry bones” of Israel.	382
13	Ezekiel 37: 15-28	All of God’s people will be united under one King.	224
14	Psalms 77	In days of judgment God’s people ask searching questions.	583
15	Psalms 80	In days of judgment God’s people pray for revival and restoration.	225
16	Psalms 74	In days of judgment it seems God has forgotten His promises.	268
17	Psalms 79	In days of judgment God’s people are scorned and derided.	258
18	Psalms 137	The captives in Babylon know that Babylon also will be judged.	462
19	Daniel 4: 1-18	Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has another strange dream.	446
20	Daniel 4: 19-37	Because of his pride Nebuchadnezzar is afflicted with insanity.	520:6-8

Evilmerodach, King of Babylon (562-560 B.C.)

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
21	2 Kings 25: 27-30 & Jeremiah 52: 31-34	The new king of Babylon befriends the captive king of Judah.	520:9-10

Nabonidus and Belshazzar, Rulers of Babylon (556-539 B.C.)

22	Daniel 7: 1-14	Daniel sees a vision of four kingdoms and the kingdom of God.	339
23	Daniel 7: 15-28	Daniel learns about the fourth kingdom (Rome) and the little horn (Antichrist).	261
24	Daniel 8: 1-14	Daniel sees a furious struggle between a ram and a male goat.	530
25	Daniel 8: 15-27	The angel Gabriel explains the vision—Persia vs. Greece, and later a bad king, Antiochus Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.)	514
26	Daniel 5: 1-12	The handwriting on the wall appears at Belshazzar's feast.	290
27	Daniel 5: 13-30	Daniel explains the words, and they come to pass at once.	520:1-5

Cyrus the Great and Darius the Mede (539 B.C. and following)

28	Daniel 5:31 – 6:17	Daniel is thrown into the den of lions for praying to God.	269
29	Daniel 6: 18-28	The Lord rescues His faithful servant Daniel.	267
30	Daniel 9: 1-19	Daniel pleads with God to end the captivity as He promised.	537
31	Daniel 9: 20-27	Gabriel foretells the coming of Messiah within seventy sevens.	262

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR NOVEMBER 2014

The prophet Jeremiah had foretold that the Jews would remain captives in Babylon for seventy years. In 535 B.C. the seventy years had come to an end. The prophet Isaiah even earlier had foretold that a ruler named Cyrus would set the Jewish captives free. Cyrus was now on the throne of the Persian Empire. Therefore the time was right for God to keep His word. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel (also known as Sheshbazzar) of the house of David, a small band of Jews returned to Jerusalem, revived the daily burnt offerings to the Lord, and laid the foundation of a new temple.

But it was not until Darius was on the throne that the Jews completed the Jerusalem temple. The Lord sent two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to encourage the people to finish the temple project as part of God's glorious plan for His people. For even though the Jews were weak and poor, the best part of

their history was yet to come. The Messiah was on His way, as God had said, to provide His people with the blessings of everlasting peace.

But meanwhile the Jews had an enemy who threatened the total destruction of God’s people in the days of Xerxes I. This enemy was Haman, and his plot to exterminate the Jews failed only because God had seen fit at this very time to exalt the Jewish girl, Esther, to be Xerxes’ queen. Esther bravely used her influence to save her people and her cousin, Mordecai, from the bitter hatred of Haman.

So also today God works in marvelous ways to protect both church and state. Let us thank our Lord for His providential care.

Cyrus the Great (559-530 B.C.)

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
1	Ezra 1: 1-11	God keeps His promise: the Jews can return to Jerusalem.	18
2	Psalms 85	God gives the people a new beginning.	325
3	Psalms 126	“Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy.”	409
4	Ezra 3: 1-7	Burnt offerings are again offered to the Lord in Jerusalem.	567
5	Ezra 3: 8-13	The foundation of the Lord’s Temple is laid.	633
6	Psalms 107: 1-22	God’s merciful deeds lead His people to give thanks.	570
7	Psalms 107: 23-43	Only the truly wise understand the Lord’s loving kindness.	572
8	Ezra 4: 1-5, 24	The Samaritans hinder the work of building God’s Temple.	514

Darius the Great (522-486 B.C.)

9	Ezra 5: 1-2 & Haggai 1: 1-11	God’s prophets Haggai and Zechariah encourage the people to build the Temple.	479
10	Haggai 1:12 – 2:9	The glory of this temple will be greater than the glory of Solomon’s temple.	72
11	Haggai 2: 10-23	God will bless His people and their leader Zerubbabel (an ancestor of Jesus).	460
12	Zechariah 1: 7-17	The Lord will again choose Jerusalem for His Temple.	469
13	Zechariah 2: 1-13	The Lord will again dwell with His people in Jerusalem.	461
14	Zechariah 3: 1-10	The Lord will send the Messiah to remove the people’s iniquity.	360
15	Zechariah 4: 1-14	The Lord has chosen Jeshua as priest and Zerubbabel as ruler.	490
16	Zechariah 7: 1-14	The Lord wants obedience from His people rather than fasting.	398

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
17	Zechariah 8: 1-17	The Lord promises great blessings to His people in Jerusalem.	618
18	Zechariah 9: 9-17	The Lord will send His Messiah-King to establish His peace.	57
19	Ezra 5: 3-17	Governor Tattenai writes to Darius about the Temple project.	263
20	Ezra 6: 1-12	Darius orders Tattenai not to hinder the building of the Temple.	474
21	Ezra 6: 13-22	The Temple is finished, and there is joy in Jerusalem.	36
Xerxes I or Ahasuerus (486-465 B.C.)			
22	Ezra 4:6 & Esther 1: 1-12	Queen Vashti disobeys the orders of Xerxes.	621
23	Esther 1:13 – 2:4	Plans are made to select a new queen to replace Vashti.	4
24	Esther 2: 5-23	The Jewess Esther is chosen as the new queen.	532
25	Esther 3: 1-15	Haman makes plans to exterminate all the Jews in Persia.	582
26	Esther 4: 1-17	Esther agrees to do what she can to save her people.	566
27	Esther 5: 1-14	Esther arranges a banquet for Xerxes and Haman.	435
28	Esther 6: 1-14	Xerxes rewards Esther's cousin Mordecai for faithful service.	581
29	Esther 7:1 – 8:14	Esther reveals Haman's plot, and he is hanged.	569
30	Esther 8:15 – 10:3	The Jews defend themselves against their enemies.	568

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR DECEMBER 2014

Under Zerubbabel, an ancestor of Jesus, a small band of Jews had returned to Jerusalem and had rebuilt the Temple in the days of Cyrus and Darius, kings of Persia. But these Jews in Jerusalem had powerful enemies, and their settlement was very weak.

Artaxerxes I finally permitted the scribe Ezra to lead another band of Jews to Jerusalem. Ezra's chief task was to teach the Jews the laws of God. When Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, he discovered to his horror that the Jews had disobeyed God's Word by taking heathen wives. To correct this error, the Jews proceeded to divorce their heathen wives under Ezra's direction.

A few years later Artaxerxes I permitted his cupbearer, Nehemiah, to go to Jerusalem for the purpose of rebuilding Jerusalem's walls. Nehemiah wholeheartedly devoted himself to this task, and the walls were completed in

fifty-two days. There was a great celebration, of course, but soon the people again began to disobey the Word of the Lord.

God sent one last prophet, Malachi, to rebuke the people for their ingratitude and to announce the advent of better days to come. God was finally going to send the Messiah, the Lord Himself, as well as a messenger to prepare His way. How thankful we can be that God kept His promise and sent John to prepare the way and Jesus as the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings! Let us praise the Lord forever for His mercy and truth!

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
1	Ezra 4: 7-23	The enemies of the Jews succeed in halting the Jerusalem building project.	472
2	Ezra 7: 1-10	Ezra is given permission to teach God's law in Jerusalem.	283
3	Ezra 7: 11-26	The decree of Artaxerxes provides protection for Ezra.	537
4	Ezra 7:27 – 8:20	Ezra and his company get as far as the Ahava River.	434
5	Ezra 8: 21-36	Ezra and his company arrive in Jerusalem under God's guidance.	410
6	Ezra 9: 1-15	Ezra confesses the widespread sin of intermarriage with pagans.	318
7	Ezra 10: 1-17	The people take strong steps to correct the sin of intermarriage.	424
8	Psalm 102	We are guilty, but God's mercy endures forever.	583
9	Psalm 130	In our guilt and misery our only hope is God's merciful redemption.	329
10	Nehemiah 1: 1-11	Artaxerxes' cupbearer, Nehemiah, asks God to help His people.	462
11	Nehemiah 2: 1-11	Artaxerxes authorizes Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem.	540
12	Nehemiah 2: 12-20	Nehemiah resolves to build the walls of Jerusalem.	451
13	Nehemiah 4: 1-12	In spite of ridicule and opposition the building project continues.	445
14	Nehemiah 4: 13-23	The builders are provided with weapons, and the work continues.	449
15	Nehemiah 5: 1-19	Nehemiah rebukes the rich Jews who were oppressing the poor.	440
16	Nehemiah 6: 1-19	The walls are completed in fifty-two days.	640

Date	Scripture	Thought prompted by the text	Hymn
17	Nehemiah 8: 1-18	Ezra teaches God's Law, and the people worship joyfully.	296
18	Nehemiah 9: 1-21	The Levites confess the sins of Israel's history.	19:1-3
19	Nehemiah 9: 22-38	The Levites praise the Lord God for His faithfulness.	19:4-8
20	Nehemiah 12: 27-43	The walls of Jerusalem are dedicated to God.	638
21	Nehemiah 13: 4-31	Once more Nehemiah has to rebuke their unlawful activities.	515
22	Malachi 1: 1-14	God's people are ungrateful for the Lord's blessings.	59
23	Malachi 2: 1-17	The priests are corrupt, and the people are still marrying heathen wives.	75
24	Malachi 3: 1-7	Two messengers are on their way: the preparing messenger, and the Lord Himself.	136
25	Malachi 4: 1-6	The Sun of righteousness arises with healing in His wings.	94
26	Malachi 3: 8-18	God mercifully spares and blesses His repentant people.	338
27	Psalm 146	The God of Jacob "keeps truth forever."	26
28	Psalm 147	Those who hope in the Lord's mercy are blessed.	41
29	Psalm 148	Let both old and young praise the name of the Lord.	243
30	Psalm 149	The Lord "will beautify the humble with salvation."	43
31	Psalm 150	"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord."	39

