

Through The Bible In One Year

The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Unpublished Work, December 2005, David W. Shockey.

Daily Devotional Companion

Week 6

Day 36. Read Exodus 21.22-23.13; Matthew 24.1-28;
Psalm 29.1-11 and Proverbs 7.6-23.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Exodus: Full freedom for a slave if his or her tooth gets knocked out?! Isn't that a little 'over the top?!' What kind of a social order is that? This fallen world, with its "what's mine is mine" mentality looks at God's new order and the different way God's people are to live and shakes its head in disgust. "Don't mistreat the alien, for you were foreigners in Egypt, slaves whom I set free" God reminds them. Everything believers do is to flow from the wondrous new reality God has created by his own initiative: we have been set free to follow him. No more sorcery, no astrology. No more immoral sexual relations. If you lend money, don't charge interest. If you discover your enemy's animal wandering off, return it to him or her. Do good, even to your enemy! Even our relation to the land is changed. Every so often, God's people are to let their land replenish itself by allowing it to lie fallow and not farming it. God's word to his people is, "You are to be my holy people." Holiness means, out of love for his saving us, we turn everything we are and have over to him. Every aspect of our lives is dedicated to God. Because of his transforming love for us, we can now say, 'What's mine is really his.' **Questions:** 1. What areas of my life do I resist turning over to God? 2. Do my ways of relating to others and treating others reflect God's living, loving presence in my life, or do the people around me still see me in bondage to myself and my own desires? Does anyone ever look at my godly actions with surprise and wonder 'what's got into her (or him)?' or "why'd she (or he) do that?!" 3. What one area of my life today needs most to be turned over to God? What is the next step in turning it over to God?

Matthew: Impressive buildings? Superstructures and exteriors mean little to God. The magnificent temple in Jerusalem will be utterly destroyed, Jesus prophesies, its huge stones tossed aside like tinker toys. Times of trouble and tribulation will necessarily come for the followers of Jesus. False teachers and deceivers will come claiming to be Christ himself. People close to us will abandon or even betray us. Many who follow will grow cold and fall away. But those who stand firm to the end will be saved. One day history itself will end; the world will cease to be; a new world will dawn, when Jesus returns to earth. When he returns the second time, it will not be quietly, humbly, as his first coming, when he was

born a helpless baby in Bethlehem's stable. His first coming was little noted. But his second coming will be like lightning shattering the night sky. Everyone will mark it. God's people are people who live in expectation. He will come again. **Questions:** 1. Does expecting Jesus to return at any time change the way I live my days now? Why or why not? 2. All who follow Jesus go through troubles and experience times when our faith runs hotter...or colder. Where am I now on the hot-to-cold scale now? Am I growing hotter or colder? 3. What will help my faith burn brighter and hotter as I await Jesus' coming?

Prayer: Some areas of my life are cultivated...and fruitful for you, my God. But others are weedy, neglected, left to fend for themselves. Lord, I cannot even turn them over to you, because I want to keep them to myself. I don't want you to have control over every part of my life. It is no wonder that my faith in you at times grows cold. It is no wonder that others don't see Christ in me much of the time, because I won't let you be Lord all the time. Yet you love me as I am. You bear with me. And that makes me love you all the more...and long all the more to be like you. This is my true desire. Break the power of all other desires in me, by your gracious, strong love for me in Christ. Amen.

Day 37. Read Exodus 23.14-25.40; Matthew 24.29-51;
Psalm 30.1-12 and Proverbs 7.24-27.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Exodus: Three times a year! God commands that his people celebrate with him three times a year. Our relationship with God needs cultivating and care, just like any living thing. Bring the first fruits, not the leftovers. As our most precious relationship, it requires the very best we have. Don't worship others gods of the people around you. Don't be misled into settling for less than the best, for less than true life. Moses relates all the God has said. The words God has spoken to the people are written down, which is the beginning of the scriptures, the story of God's relationship with his people in history. The people accept the covenant relationship—the marriage-like life of intimate relationship God offers—saying “everything the Lord has said, we promise to do.” The intimacy of the relationship is shown in God's speaking to his people and the people listening... both hearing... and heeding. The relationship is literally sealed in blood—the blood of the covenant—sprinkled on the people. The cost of re-establishing the broken relationship is the blood...and very life... of the sacrificial animal. It cost God the life of his Son, whose blood will make a totally new covenant based not on law, but on love...supernatural love. **Questions:** 1. How careful am I to nurture my relationship with God? How is it faring right now? What can I do to strengthen it through prayer, worship, Bible reading, real honest fellowship with other believers, giving generously, serving, telling others of Jesus? 2. Which among my relationships tend to pull me away from God or weaken my relationship

with God? What can I do to pull them toward God, rather than be pulled away from God by them? 3. What does the blood Jesus shed for me on the cross mean to me personally?

Matthew: Everything in this world will pass away. Only two things will abide forever. God's word is one. 'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away,' Jesus declares. God's Word is permanent. It is the only 'sure thing' to found your life upon. The other eternal thing is people. Every person who ever lived, every person you will ever meet, is an eternal being, because God will raise everyone from the dead and give everyone eternal life. When Christ returns, he will gather the faithful 'from the four winds,' from the four corners of the world, to live with him. Not one will be left or lost. They will live with him forever. This loving God gives everyone the desire of their heart. Those who choose to live away from him in this life will live apart from him forever.

Questions: 1. How well 'anchored' am I in the Word which will never pass away? How solid is my knowledge of the Word? Can I stand on it in times of trial or trouble? 2. Do I value people as God values people? Who do I tend to downplay or disregard? What can I do this week to show them they matter to God and to me? 3. What can I do to help someone else come to know God through his Word?

Prayer: God, you alone are the source of life itself. Why do I forget? Why do I flirt with other loves in this life, things that are temporary and will pass away? Lovingly you call me to spend time with you, to take time to hear your Word of love to me, to share the holy meal with you, to get together with my sisters and brothers in your family to lavish love upon you, to speak intimately with you all alone in prayer, pouring out the secret longings and fears of my spirit to you alone. Nothing else will suffice. Nothing other than you will fill the longing of my soul, no thing at all. When I turn aside, when I forget and fail to relish and nourish our love, turn me back again. To wander away means death itself. And Lord, let me convey to everyone I know how much you love them, so they may know the love which alone fulfills. Amen.

Day 38. Read Exodus 26.1-27.21; Matthew 25.1-30;
Psalm 31.1-8; and Proverbs 8.1-11.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Exodus: A tent? God's people are people on the move. Life with God is a journey. And God goes with God's people. God wants to be known. God yearns for real relationship with people and appoints ways where we can meet with him. He commands making a tent—called the Tabernacle—as the place of meeting. There is an outer courtyard and an inner sanctum. There is a curtain to separate the courtyard from the camp surrounding the Tabernacle. There are perpetual lamps burning, their light signifying God's continued wakefulness and watchfulness over his people. The worship place is moveable—a tent, replete with poles and pegs—because God's people are people on a journey with God,

always stepping out to follow God's leading. **Questions:** 1. Where and in what ways does God come to me now, to meet with me and nurture our relationship? What ways does he offer a deeper relationship that I tend to shy away from, or neglect? 2. When and how do I tend to get "bogged down" in relationship with God? Has my worship, prayer, reading of God's Word, giving, serving or other aspects of my relationship become merely routine, just going through the motions?

Matthew: Christ will come again. Though the darkness of night be deep around us, dawn will surely come. Life for those who know Christ's love is forever different. This Lover will never forget his promise, nor fail to fulfill it. We live in expectancy and hope, with courage and confidence. We are free to concentrate on what lies before us, around us, here and now, not worrying about tomorrow or what the future will hold, because he holds the future. We can be about his business, the business of putting the very gifts and resources he entrusted to us to work for his glory and the good of people around us. Like lamps shining in the darkness, we shine with his light. Like workers entrusted with riches far beyond anything of our own, we work to bear fruit for the one who loves us, trusts us, is coming for us. **Questions:** 1. How brightly is my lamp burning for God at the moment? What needs to be trimmed so my wick will burn brighter, so others will see his love for them through me? 2. What abilities, resources and spiritual gifts has God entrusted to me? How can I use them to serve my brothers and sisters in God's family of faith, my church? To serve those outside, whom God wants to attract to his family?

Prayer: You promise your presence with me all the way! Your promise 'I am with you always' is what gives me courage to follow. Let my own heart be your moveable temple. Let the center of my soul be the holy space where you are always worshipped, so that wherever I go at your bidding, wherever you lead me and I follow, you are worshipped...in my thoughts...in my words...in my actions...all day ...every day. Thank you for the ways where you come meet me... in your Word, in your people as we gather together in your name, in your holy Supper. For as you come, I find strength for the journey that otherwise would be too much for me. Use me as a place where others may meet you, so my thoughts, words and deeds transparently proclaim your love for others, giving them strength for their long journey. Amen.

Day 39. Read Exodus 28.1-43; Matthew 25.31-26.13;
Psalm 31.9-18 and Proverbs 8.12-13.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Exodus: A sacred place is set apart for God to meet his people during their wilderness journey: the Tabernacle. One certain person is set apart to be a priest, the mediator between the holy God and fallen people. His set-apartness is signified by the special clothing, holy vestments, he must wear. Chief among the vestments is a breast piece set

with twelve precious stones, each stone engraved with a name of tribe of God's people on it. The priest wears the breast piece next to his heart as he serves in God's presence, offering incense and sacrifices for the people as worship to God. Now, the resurrected and ascended Lord, Jesus Christ, our high priest, stands in God's presence praying for his people day and night. The priest in the Tabernacle is to wear a turban with a gold plate engraved with the words "Holy To The Lord" on his forehead. Christ, our priest and mediator with God, is the Holy One. And for his sake, because of his holiness alone and not any of our own, God remembers us. **Questions:** 1. How does it change you and the way I live to know that Jesus Christ speaks about me personally by name to God his Father? 2. Since I am called to follow in Christ's footsteps and carry on his work, whom do I need to be praying for to God the Father in the name of Jesus?

Matthew: God seeks us. God comes to meet us in unexpected ways. Among the most important ways the Son of God comes to us is in our neighbor's need. As we encounter and serve the true needs of others—the hungry, the homeless, the sick, the imprisoned, the stranger—we meet and serve Jesus Christ himself. Our neighbor is Christ's real presence to us, hidden and humble, just as are the ordinary bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, or the mundane words of the Bible. More people will miss life with God forever, not for the terrible things they did wrong, or the blatant sins even the world recognizes, but for simply forgetting and failing to serve their neighbors in their real needs. Just days away from his death, Jesus predicts his crucifixion. He goes to Jerusalem fully aware of what awaits him, like a convicted capital criminal sentenced to die on a certain day, in a certain way. Yet he goes willingly, to serve us in our deepest need of all: our need to be reconciled to God. A woman lavishes a costly fragrant lotion on him and is criticized by the disciples. But Jesus welcomes her action—she is meeting one of the most basic needs Jesus shared with every person who has ever lived: the need for tangible love, for compassion, as he suffers death. **Questions:** 1. Whom has God given me an opportunity recently to serve as though I was serving him? Whom did I overlook to love and serve for God recently? 2. Do I lavish my love and devotion on Jesus, the way the woman poured the ointment on him? How?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for coming between me and God. In you, God and humanity meet. If you had not come between us, all would be lost; for I do not deserve to stand in God presence on my own. I have not loved others as my Father would have me. I have often hurt others and not helped them. Most often I have just ignored the needs of others, as I concentrated on satisfying my own. Yet even so, you identified so completely with me, you came between me and my just punishment. You had my name in your heart, and on your lips, as you died on the cross, the sacrificial lamb who takes away my sin. You died on the cross so I might live with your Father—now my Father—forever. Lord, I know I cannot repay you. I know I don't need to, for you ask for nothing in return. Lord, let me live as you live, for others. Let me feed the hungry, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, give living water to the thirsty, and visit those in prison. When I meet the true need of another, I am serving you, because you identify with them in their need, just as you did in mine! I cannot pour the ointment of my love

on you face to face yet. Let me pour it on these people you love...as if it were you!
Amen.

Day 40. Read Exodus 29.1-30.10; Matthew 26.14-46;
Psalm 31.19-24 and Proverbs 8.14-26.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Exodus: The sacrifices given to God must be absolutely perfect. Animals without defect. Bread and cakes made from the finest wheat flour, without yeast, which means without being sullied by something dying. Before anyone can serve as priest before God in the Tabernacle, his sin must be atoned for by sacrifices. The person must lay his hand upon the sacrificial animal, showing his identification with it and transferring his sin through the touch. The blood of a bull must be dashed against the altar to cleanse it. Then the blood of a ram, burnt whole on the altar, again after the laying on of hands. The blood of yet another sacrificial ram is used to cleanse and consecrate the priest, put on his right earlobe, right thumb, and right big toe. He must be cleansed literally from top to toe. All this so the mediator, the priest, might offer sacrifices acceptable to God for others. **Questions:** 1. Why does it take offering a life to restore someone to life? 2. What does the Old Testament sacrificial custom of laying hands on the animal victim's head signify? What does it say about my relationship with Jesus, my substitute? 3. What does the consecrating blood of the sacrificial victim being put on the ear, thumb and toe of the priest signify for me, as I am totally covered in Christ's blood shed on the cross? How shall I live now?

Matthew: Jesus is betrayed, not by an enemy, but by a friend, a close one. Yet on the night before he is to die, Jesus serves that "friend" a special meal. He serves all his followers—one of whom would deny him, and the rest who would forsake him. "This is my body, this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Jesus is the host; Jesus is the sacrifice. In Gethsemane he prays that, if possible, the cup of suffering might pass from him, yet "not my will but yours be done." It is God's will. It is God's will that his Son die, so many may live. **Questions:** 1. When have I betrayed others I know well? How? 2. When I receive Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper, what does it mean to me that he personally gives me them freely and fully? That, as my food, he comes and lives within me, one with me? 3. How does it change the way I think and act, knowing his limitless love for me that gave his very last drop of blood for me?

Prayer: God, why must the innocent die so the guilty might be reconciled? Only the spotless and pure can atone. Only your Son could conquer sin and save us from our certain death. Just saying 'thank you' sounds so feeble. Let me be consecrated, like the priests of the Old Testament, from head to toe in service to you. Let all of me, and all of

my days, be spent in praising you and serving others like you, even as you love me forever. Amen.

Day 41. Read Exodus 30.11-31.18; Matthew 26.47-68;
Psalm 32.1-11 and Proverbs 8.27-32.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Exodus: Other furnishings of the Tabernacle are commanded, each with symbolic spiritual meaning. A bronze basin - in which the priests are to cleanse their hands and feet before entering the Tabernacle or offering sacrifices. Fragrant oil - to be used only for anointing and consecrating the Tent of Meeting, all the furnishings, and even the priests who serve. Special aromatic incense - to be burned. Everything connected with the Tabernacles is to be consecrated—anointed and incensed- so they will be holy, and whatever touches them will be holy. To accomplish the work, God appoints someone filled with the Spirit and gifted by God with artistic talent. Helpers are appointed to assist in the work of making the Tent of Meeting and all its furnishings and supplies. Finally, a special time is set aside—the Sabbath—as a time “holy to the Lord”—a time to be lived toward God intentionally, celebrating and nurturing the relationship God has reestablished.

Questions: 1. The basin for washing prophesies and prefigures the sacrament of Holy Baptism given to the church by Christ himself (see Matthew 28.18-20; Romans 6.2-7). What does it mean for me that I am washed, cleansed and anointed for God’s service, just like the priests of the Old Testament? 2. What spiritual gifts has God given me, and how am I to use them to create opportunities for God to meet with people

Matthew: Far from the crowds he addressed in the Temple courts in broad daylight, the authorities arrest him at night as he is praying. “Friend,” Jesus responds to Judas’ kiss of betrayal. Jesus shows forgiveness and love, even for his betrayer. All the disciples forsake him and flee. Contrary to the law, Jesus is taken at night to a kangaroo court and charged with...blasphemy? He is subverting the religion? He is proclaiming lies about God and about himself? “Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God,” the high priest commands him. “Yes,” Jesus responds simply, sealing his fate. **Questions:** 1. Why didn’t Jesus try to save his own life? What would it have taken to do so? What would that mean for me? For the world? 2. If Jesus calls Judas ‘friend’ right when he is in the very act of betraying him, what does that say about Jesus’ attitude toward sinners, even the very worst? What does it say about Jesus’ attitude toward me?

Prayer: I am your... friend? Really? Can it be? Yes, it is so. Because you say so. And you never lie. You wouldn’t even lie to save your own life. You admitted the truth though it killed you. You are the Son of God. And you are the ‘friend of sinners’ as they charged. It is either blasphemy, or madness, or... it is must be true! Such love, that

calls even a betrayer a friend, is truly divine. I don't have it in me to do that, unless you do it within me. Live within me, Lord who died for me, so I may live like you and with you, and make many 'friends' to live with you forever. Let me forgive and love those who betray me, as you love me even when I betray you. Amen.

Day 42. Read Exodus 32.1-33.23; Matthew 26.69-27.14;
Psalm 33.1-11 and Proverbs 8.33-36.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Exodus: The people are impatient. They want to have security, they want order. They want to be like everyone else, like all the nations around them, even like Egypt from which God rescued them. Even while God is meeting their mediator, Moses, on the mountain, and instructing him in the new covenant relationship so he can teach the people, the people betray the God who delivered them from slavery for fullness of life in freedom through relationship with him and one another. 'Make us gods who can go before us' they demand—gods we can touch, gods we can take where we want to go. We want control of our own lives. What they want will return them to slavery, for to be free from a relationship with God means to be free from freedom. From the gold rings and earrings, a golden calf is made. 'Leave me alone' God says, 'and let me destroy this stubborn people, and then I will make a great nation out of you.' Moses, the mediator, won't leave God alone. Knowing God's nature—slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love—he persuades God: 'Turn from your hot anger. Remember your promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to make a great nation of them.' God relents. It is his nature to forgive. It is his nature to give a second chance...and another. But the consequences of separating ourselves from God, who is the source of our life and wholeness, come of necessity: a plague breaks out among the people. Many perish. Moses asks God to help lead the people. The main quality of a leader of God's people is to know God intimately. Moses pitches a tent outside the camp, to avoid the Holy God coming into contact with an unholy people and destroying them by his holiness, where he may meet God. 'If I please you, teach me your ways so I can truly know you and continue to please you.' Moses begs God to reveal himself: show me your glory, the splendor of your being. God wants to reveal himself, but only in the way that will be best for Moses. Moses must hide his face so he doesn't see God in his naked glory and power. 'I will pass in front of you' he tells Moses. He must hide in a crevice on the mountain. God will cover his face with his hand and let him see his back. For any mortal to see the face of the Holy God means to die.

Questions: 1. What other than God do I tend to put my trust in and seek security from? Money? Things? Work? People? Myself and my own abilities? 2. What consequences in my life have I suffered for trusting someone or something other than God? 3. How bold am I in my seeking after God? Have I, like Moses, pleaded with God to reveal himself to

me more? 4. Why does God reveal only part of himself? What is God's guiding purpose or thought in his timing and the ways God chooses to reveal himself to me?

Matthew: Peter promised 'I will never betray you.' But now, in the crisis, he does not betray Jesus once, but three times! Once with a curse, invoking an oath, using God's name. Jesus looked at him. He didn't turn his face away in anger or disgust. He looked at him. A message can be sent with a look. A message of rejection...or love. Jesus looked at Peter in love, even as he was in the act of betraying him. There is no condemnation in Jesus' eyes, no fault-finding. He looks at us. He looks for us...to come to him and be transformed to be like him **Questions:** 1. When have I saved my skin rather than speak up and admit I follow Jesus? 2. What does it mean to me to know that, just as Jesus looked at Peter with love, even as Peter betrayed him, Jesus looks on me with love always, even when I fail him? How does that help me to try for him, even beyond my comfort zone? To try again after I fail?

Prayer: Lord, I never mean to betray you, yet I do. Repeatedly. Daily. The deepest desire of my heart is to know you, to love you. Reveal yourself to me more, God, even if it means revealing myself to me more in all my brokenness and betrayal. Thank you for the places you have appointed to meet me. Thank you for coming to me and revealing your character and your will to me. In your Word. In your Supper. In your community, your faithful, forgiven people gathered around your presence in the Word and meal. I sense your presence. I feel you near. You come the only way you can: in love, hidden for my sake and safety, yet revealed. Though I betray you, you cannot betray yourself. You remain who you are always, faithful...forgiving. Beloved Lord, let me know you more and more, for that means to love you more, and to love means to become like the beloved. Amen.

Through The Bible In One Year: Week 6 Sunday Worship Lessons

First Lesson (Old Testament): Exodus 33.12-23

Psalm: 32.1-11

Second (New Testament) Lesson: Matthew 25.31-46.

Theme: Want More of God?