

## Reading Schedule for December 4-10, 2017

I want to remind you that I plan to have us read about the anticipation of Christ's birth found in the Old Testament, as well as New Testament Scriptures highlighting his birth in about a week, as we spend 12 days preparing our hearts for the meaning of Christmas. Until then, we will continue with our story about David and the anticipation of Solomon being king. David remains strong in his relationship with God to the very end.

**December 4 – 2 Samuel 19:** "David replied, 'What does this have to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? What right do you have to interfere? Should anyone be put to death in Israel today? Don't I know that today I am king over Israel?'" (v.22) Absalom wasn't the only person who rebelled against David. Many people had to side with Absalom for them to take over the city of Jerusalem. David showed tremendous mercy and generosity as he returned to Jerusalem. How do you see him being gracious to those who opposed him? David's forgiveness and fairness in returning to the one in charge is an example to us all. He also was very wise in appointing a new commander of his army with Amasa, who was Absalom's commander-in-chief. David was a peacemaker at heart because he didn't want innocent people hurt. Obviously we have read about his skills at being a warrior. But he wanted a peaceful homeland for all the people. He was willing to swallow his pride in doing so. What stands out to you in this chapter? Why?

**December 5 – 2 Samuel 20:** "Joab said to Amasa, 'How are you, my brother?' Then Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him." (v.9) This is again a disappointing aspect of the story, as Joab takes revenge into his own hands. He had killed Abner previously, and now he would repeat a murderous act against Amasa. This was out of jealousy and revenge. It may seem like his sin and treachery goes unpunished, but God's justice is not limited in this life's rewards. Even if Joab had died an old age, he would have faced the day of judgment. These intense storylines are very hard to read. They are not God's approach to working with rebellion. If someone repents, the Lord is gracious. But this did not seem to matter to Joab. How do you respond to this chapter?

**December 6 – 2 Samuel 21:** "David brought the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan from there, and the bones of those who had been killed and exposed were gathered up." (v.13) You would notice that David had an allegiance to Saul and Jonathan that would even extend after they are gone. There are parts of this story that are a bit complicated, but I am drawn to David's respect of the dead. I have not been especially strong about remembering the dead, or even appreciating the grief that many have because of the loss of a loved one. This could be because I have not had many people close to me pass away. There have been several men and women in the church that have gone on to be with the Lord, and I miss them. But I am happy for their eternal destiny. However, those who have lost loved ones continue to grieve, and need to remember with love and appreciation their loved one, so that a gravesite is very helpful in assisting one to remain connected with heartfelt love, but be released from the grief that can weigh a person's life down so much. I thought of the importance of Saul & Jonathan's gravesite and offered a prayer for those who are missing loved ones during this holiday season. How do you respond to this complicated chapter?

**December 7 – 2 Samuel 22:** "David sang to the Lord the words of this song when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul." (v.1)

David was a skilled musician who played his harp for Saul, as we have read previously. This chapter is almost identical to Psalm 18. In it we read about the names that characterize God in so many ways. He begins with the pronouncement that "The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliver;" etc., but he continues on by saying that the Lord is worthy of praise, faithful, powerful, flawless, etc. I think it would be a helpful way of appreciating these 51 verses by identifying the characteristics of God that David emphasizes. It reminds us that David's heart for God was strong and expressed itself in praising God. What part of this Psalm stands out to you?

**December 8 – 2 Samuel 23:** "These are the names of David's mighty warriors: Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite, was chief of the Three; he raised his spear against eight hundred men, whom he killed in one encounter." (v.8) This is the beginning of a section where David's most courageous men are listed as they supported him in battle with unparalleled courage. The three were the most elite group, and there were many others who battled to the very end for David, and ultimately for God. I remember being a part of the beginning New Harvest 14 years ago as I was preaching on the life of David. I acknowledged the mighty men in my life who were a part of our fellowship. Now, 14 years later, they are still standing with me. I appreciate their amazing courage and undying support. David was successful in part because of the mighty men who surrounded him. Do you agree? How do you respond to this acknowledgement of David's mighty men?

**December 9 – 2 Samuel 24:** "Again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, 'Go and take a census of Israel and Judah.'" (v.1) In 1 Chronicles 21:1 it says that Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel. We just read that God caused David to do so. God does not cause people to sin, but he does allow sinners to reveal the sinfulness of their hearts by their actions. God presented the opportunity to David in order to deal with the disastrous natural tendency, and God wanted this desire to show itself. God allowed Satan to tempt David, and so to the Hebrew writer it is as if God did it. Joab knew that the census was wrong, but David did not heed his advice. David's sin was pride and ambition by counting people so that he could glory in the size of his nation and army. We sin in a similar way when we place our security in money, possessions or the might of our own nation. How do you relate to this upsetting chapter? We are dealing again with David's humanness as he takes pride in his own accomplishments.

**December 10 – 1 Kings 1:** "Then Nathan asked Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, 'Have you not heard that Adonijah, the son of Haggith, has become king, and our lord David knows nothing about it?'" (v.11) We haven't read anything about Nathan in some time, but Nathan is a watchman for God's desires to be honored. When Nathan learned of Adonijah's conspiracy, he immediately tried to stop it. We know Nathan to be a man of faith and action. He already knew that God wanted Solomon to be David's successor. Nathan could not stand off, hoping things would turn out right, but rather got involved as he fearlessly pursued God's desires. Sometimes we need to take action. Don't just stand back and offer up a little prayer, with angry feelings. Get involved by honoring God and doing the right thing. Do you agree? How do you respond to this chapter of Solomon being recognized as the king by his father, David?

**Prayers: Pray for a special Women's Christmas Dessert Friday evening as we invite teachers from Hallman Elementary to participate.**