

Bible Challenge December 7 - 13, 2015

The promise in this week's readings is hope. That hope persists despite current events or a personal situation that would seem more likely to prompt despair. Each reading has both an historical context as well as a timeless message. As you study these readings, consider what promise of hope you need to hear this advent season.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 7:10-14

Adventure Challenge: Isaiah 7:1–17.

Explorer Challenge: Isaiah 7 begins, “In the day of Ahaz son of Jotham son of Uzziah,” and refers to events of the Syro-Ephraimite war of 735-732 BCE. Read 2 Chronicles 28 or do some research to learn about the situation facing King Ahaz and the historical context for Isaiah’s prophesy. How might that context help make Isaiah’s promise relevant even for events in the 21st century?

PSALM: Psalm 40:5-10

Adventure Challenge: Psalm 40.

Explorer Challenge: Read Psalm 40:5-10 and imagine (or jot down a short description of) who you think the speaker might be. What do we know and what don’t we know? Now read the whole psalm. How does the rest of the psalm expand your first impressions of the speaker? Look especially at v. 12 and v. 17. How do these verses relate to verse 4?

SECOND READING: Romans 16:25-27

Adventure Challenge: Compare Roman’s 16:25-27 (the conclusion or postscript of Romans) with 1:1-7, the opening verses of this epistle. What phrases and ideas are repeated?

Explorer Challenge: Some scholars have suggested that Roman 16:17-20 might be a later addition to Romans and not part of Paul’s original postscript. Read Romans 16 and decide if you agree that these verses seem out of place.

GOSPEL: Luke 1:26-38

Adventure Challenge: Luke 1:26-80. (This is the same challenge as last week; see if you find new meaning in the passage.)

Explorer Challenge: In verse 32 Gabriel says Mary’s son will receive “the throne of his ancestor David.” Read 2 Samuel 7:8-17 to learn of the original promise made to David. Why would Gabriel’s statement be important in the context of the actual events of history when Jesus was born, or when Luke was written?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Greetings, O favored one! The Lord is with you. The Holy Spirit will come upon you. (*Luke 1:28, 35*)