



# **GROW. PRAY. STUDY.**

The Church of the Resurrection – Weekly Guide

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## ***Christianity and Religions of the World “Judaism”***

### **SUNDAY 1.28.18**

One of them, a legal expert, tested [Jesus]. “Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the Law?” He replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.” *Matthew 22:35-40*

Questions in this GPS marked with an arrow bullet point are particularly recommended for group discussion. Group leaders may add other discussion questions, or substitute other questions for the marked ones, at their discretion.

## **God’s covenant with Abraham**

### **MONDAY 1.29.18 Genesis 12:1-3, 15:1-6**

God loved the human family and wanted to bless them. The early chapters of Genesis said, through a series of archetypal stories, that humans kept refusing to bless one another as God wanted. So God chose a people (Abram—later Abraham (cf. [Genesis 17:5](#))—and his descendants. He often repeated his plan to bless the whole world through them (see also [Genesis 18:18](#), [22:18](#), [28:14](#)).

- God promised Abram a land, but when he died he was still a nomad. God promised that he’d become a great nation, but when he died that hope rested in his one son Isaac (cf. [Hebrews 11:9-10](#), [13](#)). Genesis 15:6 identified the key to Abraham’s good life—he “trusted the Lord.” In what ways have you learned to let your spiritual life rest, not so much on concrete human accomplishments and possessions, but on trust in God?
- With the promised blessings, God gave a great responsibility. Abram and his family were to be a channel through which God would bless all peoples on earth. What are some ways in which Abram’s ethnic descendants in the Jewish faith have blessed the world? Mentally list the blessings you believe you have received. In what ways have you been open to allowing God to bless others through you?

**Prayer:** Lord God, teach me how to trust you as Abraham did. And attune my heart to your call to me, as it was to Abraham, to use your blessings to bless others. Amen.

## **A covenant based on obedience**

### **TUESDAY 1.30.18 Exodus 24:7, 34:27-35**

Written on stone, the Ten Commandments were the “covenant document” stored in the Ark of the Covenant. But as the reference to a “covenant scroll” showed, the Hebrew Scriptures added a wide variety of other rules and commands. With blood and solemn promises, Israel said they accepted their covenant with God. Sadly, they would learn all too soon that it was much easier to say, “Everything that the LORD has said we will do, and we will obey” than it was to actually live that out.

- ✚ “In Judaism...the primary goal is obedience to the covenant that God made with Moses and the people. Here is how Rabbi [Mark] Levin puts it: Judaism is morality. It is God’s revelation through inspiration of how to spend our lives being God’s servants.” \* What positives spring from a deep desire to live out God’s principles? What is the spiritual hazard of believing that falling short of fully living out those principles cuts us off from God?
- ✚ Abraham’s descendants’ history did not match their brave words when Moses read the covenant scroll. As Pastor Hamilton wrote, “I will summarize it as the great theologian and scholar Albert Outler once did: The Hebrew Bible is the story of covenant-making and covenant-breaking... the Scriptures record generation after generation who fall away from God.” \*\* January is nearly over. Have any of your fine 2018 resolutions already fallen by the wayside? What makes it hard for us to live up to even our best intentions?

**Prayer:** O Lord, give me the desire to live my life in total obedience to you. Give me your mercy when I fall short of the good I desire. Amen.

\* Adam Hamilton, *Christianity and World Religions*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005, pp. 95.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 91.

## **God’s covenant with David and his descendants**

### **WEDNESDAY 1.31.18 2 Samuel 7:8-16, Psalm 89:3-4**

The prophet Nathan delivered the covenant promise in 2 Samuel 7 to Israel’s King David on God’s behalf. The promise at first seemed to describe David’s son, who became King Solomon. For roughly 400 years, descendants of David were kings, though many of them were physical but not spiritual heirs of David. That history made it clear no human king could fully live up to God’s sweeping promise.

- ✚ The prophet Jeremiah ministered when Babylon’s growing power seemed increasingly likely to break the succession of Israelite kings. He warned that bad human choices could lead to even God not being able to fulfil previous promises (cf. [Jeremiah 18:7-10](#)). In what ways did shortsighted choices by Davidic kings lead to the breaking of their line in 587 B.C.E.? Did that make the promise that “Your throne will be established forever” false?
- ✚ God did not forget the promise to David. In Luke 1:32-33, we read that the angel who appeared to Mary told her that she would bear no ordinary boy: “The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob’s house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom.” The Savior, God’s Messiah (“anointed one”) descended from David, and would reign forever (cf. also [Isaiah 9:6-7](#)). How did the angel’s words cast light on why both Matthew and Luke included genealogies in their story of Jesus?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you were born much as I was—into a family, into a town. Yet you were and are so much more. I look forward to following and serving you forever. Amen.

## Jesus, David's "son," claimed the new covenant

### THURSDAY 2.1.18 Jeremiah 31:31-34, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

The prophet Jeremiah grieved over Israel's faithlessness, which was leading to judgment and exile. But he also looked to a hopeful future based on God's mercy. He said God pledged to "engrave" his instructions on each heart that was open to God's love. Then he added God's merciful promise: "I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sins."

- ✚ Jeremiah linked God "engraving" God's instructions on our hearts (an echo of the stone tablets on which God engraved the 10 Commandments— cf. [Exodus 31:18](#)) with God mercifully forgiving our sins. Why would God's mercy change how a person lives? How has your gratitude for God's forgiving mercy in Jesus moved you toward living as God wants you to live?
- ✚ Sometimes at a communion service, we hear Jesus' words, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" without sensing their import. But he was pointing back to Jeremiah's promise. He was saying, as scholar William Barclay translated it, "This cup is the new covenant and it cost my blood." \* How can you deepen your worship experience at communion by recognizing it as the symbol Jesus chose for his "new covenant" bond with you?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you don't want a casual, come-and-go connection with me. You shed your blood to invite me into an enduring covenant. Help me to whole-heartedly accept. Amen.

\* William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters to the Corinthians (Revised Edition)*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975, p. 103.

## Jesus—the ultimate revelation of God

### FRIDAY 2.2.18 Hebrews 1:1-3

Much of Judaism's faith is also part of Christian faith. We share the first 39 books of our Scriptures, faith in one creator God who is our shepherd and our king, and that we are called to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and strength (cf. [Deuteronomy 6:5](#)). "On one thing we disagree, however, and that is the identity of Jesus Christ." \* The writer of Hebrews said that while God spoke "in many times and many ways," God's final and ultimate word was not a book, but a person: Jesus.

- ✚ Sometimes we read the Bible as a set of short verses, all equally true (in Pastor Scot McKnight's phrase, "sanctified morsels of truth" \*\*), none of them shaped by any of the others. But if Jesus is God's ultimate word, then all the Bible's pieces are part of the Bible's overall grand story, whose saving center is Jesus. When have you sensed Jesus' presence teaching you the priority of love as you read your Bible? In what ways does making him the standard of all truth illuminate many of the Bible's difficult parts?
- ✚ The writer of Hebrews, and likely the readers, did not see faith in Jesus as repudiating the Hebrew Scriptures. The writer affirmed that God spoke through the prophets "in many times and many ways." Pastor Hamilton expressed that faith: "For me as a Christian, Jesus represents the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham four thousand years ago.... It was through this descendant of David that a king would rule forever.... I believe he is the fulfillment of God's covenants." \*\*\* What has helped you better grasp the continuity of your faith with the faith of God's Old Testament people?

**Prayer:** Lord God, you have worked through the millennia to communicate with our human family. Thank you for the Hebrew historians, poets and prophets who wrote so much of the Bible that guides me today. And thank you for Jesus. Amen.

\* Adam Hamilton, *Christianity and World Religions*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005, pp. 100.

\*\* Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008, p. 46.

\*\*\* Adam Hamilton, *Christianity and World Religions*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005, pp. 104.

## All Christ-followers are Abraham's heirs

### SATURDAY 2.3.18 Galatians 3:6-9, 26-29

The apostle Paul loved his Hebrew heritage. Seeing many of his people (though certainly not all of them) reject Jesus as Messiah hurt him (cf. [Romans 9-11](#), where he wrestled with various ways to understand what had happened). As he carried the gospel of Jesus into the Gentile world, and saw the God he had always loved at work in the lives of his converts, he saw God's activity not as destroying the faith in which he had grown up, but as enlarging the family of Abraham and carrying out the promise to bless all nations. Even some Jewish Christians struggled to accept that (cf. [Acts 15](#)). He rejoiced that God had called him to devote his life to bringing more and more of God's children into the covenant family.

- ✚ How much do you understand about the roots of your faith in the Hebrew Scriptures? How might you learn to know and value that history and those roots more highly? The lack of such understanding has produced ugly, tragic consequences: "Christians have given their approval—sometimes directly, sometimes by their silence—to anti-Semitism." \* How can you better equip yourself to accept the pastor's challenge: "I want to challenge you to hold our Jewish friends and neighbors in highest esteem. They are our older brothers and sisters in faith—first born.... Be bridge builders who bear witness to our faith with boldness, but also with respect and reverence"? \*\*

**Prayer:** Lord God, it's remarkable to trace my spiritual family tree all the way back to the great patriarch Abraham. You worked to bless the world through him and his descendants. Since I'm one of those descendants, please bless the world through me. Amen.

\* Adam Hamilton, *Christianity and World Religions*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005, pp. 108.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 110.

**Family Activity:** Part of understanding people of different faiths can be experiencing their worship. As a family, choose one world religion (other than Christianity) you would like to learn more about. Begin by listening to Pastor Hamilton's sermon on that religion. Discuss similarities between that religion and our Christian faith. Research where in Kansas City people of that religion worship, and attend a service. (Check online to see if there is any dress code.) Or, even better, find someone who practices that faith and ask to worship with them in a spirit of friendship and curiosity. Offer to reciprocate if they would like to visit Resurrection! Discuss similarities and differences between ways of worship and share discoveries as a family. Thank God for loving all people and ask God to help you love others too.