

Morning Watch Readings

2018

JANUARY



AMBASSADORS AND YOUNG ADULTS

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This Morning Watch Calendar follows the **Believe** *His* Prophets Daily Bible Reading Guide.



Each chapter has a study verse to be used as the
Youth Morning Watch verse of the day.
Daily chapter summary statements are provided.



JANUARY 1

CHAPTER: Habakkuk 2

THEME: God Answers the Prophet

STUDY VERSE: Habakkuk 2:4

STATEMENT: This chapter has a lot to say! I hope you read it all prayerfully. Writers especially like the first two verses—if you are a writer or speaker, you can see why. Probably the most appropriate part, though is verse 4, since we’ve just completed a year of study on all the forms and meanings of reformation, and this is the verse that turned the world upside down, 501 years ago this October! What is *your* favorite part?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Mighty God, as I stand at the doorway of a new year, may I live it for You alone. May I live by faith, and may I make the message of Your love so big that all who see me can read it.*



JANUARY 2

CHAPTER: Habakkuk 3

THEME: Habakkuk's Song

STUDY VERSE: Habakkuk 3:18, 19

STATEMENT: This is a beautiful song, and if you like, it's worth trying to set it to music. The most important part is from verse 17 onward. If you check Deut. 28, you'll realize that the prophet is saying, *EVEN if the very covenant promises themselves fail, **I will still trust.*** Is your faith that strong?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Great Redeemer, Your splendor covers the heavens and the earth is full of Your praise. Keep my faith strong and true. Let me trust You completely, always, no matter what!*



JANUARY 3

CHAPTER: Zephaniah 1

THEME: God is Angry

STUDY VERSE: Zephaniah 1:7

STATEMENT: Why is God angry in this chapter? Even a shallow reading will answer this question. The first verse says it's during King Josiah's reign, so perhaps it comes before he makes his reforms, or perhaps it's in response to the people who refuse to follow his reforms. God offers an infinity of love and compassion to us. Is it any wonder He gets furious when people prefer human-made idols, or worse, false gods that are all about anger and appeasement? Do faithful people have anything to fear from God and His judgment?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Oh, my Lord, I am so deeply sorry for the way we humans treat You! I am most sorry of all for the ways in which I am not faithful. Help me to not only keep my face toward You, but also urge others to turn to You, too.*



JANUARY 4

CHAPTER: Zephaniah 2

THEME: Taunting Doesn't Help

STUDY VERSE: Zephaniah 2:3

STATEMENT: God is angry with His faithless ones, but He is just as quick to condemn those who mock them. Pointing our fingers and saying, "They are getting what they deserve" is not helpful, and will bring the mockers under judgment, too. Verse 3 answers the question we ended with yesterday. If one is afraid of God's wrath, the safest thing to do is not run away, but run *toward* Him! Why do you think that is true?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Judge of all the earth, I know I don't deserve acquittal. But You have offered Your heart as a sanctuary to me, and Your Son as my surety. I hide in You, and I am no longer afraid.*



JANUARY 5

CHAPTER: Zephaniah 3

THEME: Hope for the Hopeless

STUDY VERSE: Zephaniah 3:9, 10

STATEMENT: Here is the hope for which the despairing have waited. Despite the shameful things a person may have done, there is *always* forgiveness (v. 11). Those who completely refuse it will be gone, and those who remain will be humble, lowly, and safe. Make a list of the gentle promises in verse 12 and beyond.

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Shepherd of Your flock, thank You so much for Your endless patience! No matter how bad we are, no matter how angry You rightfully are, You keep on offering us another chance. Help me to help my friends to understand that won't be forever. Today is the day to say Yes to You!*



JANUARY 6

CHAPTER: Haggai 1

THEME: Belated Rebuilding

STUDY VERSE: Haggai 1:12

STATEMENT: The books of the Minor Prophets are not in chronological order in our Bible. This one comes some years after Cyrus has allowed many Jews to come back home from the 70-year captivity in Babylon. In those years, people have rebuilt their homes, but God's house still lies desolate. What does God say through Haggai about this? What is the people's response? Then what does God reply?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Lord, I don't want to put my own interests, even legitimate ones, ahead of You and Your interests. Show me if there are ways I am "building my own home" and allowing Your temple in my heart to lie desolate. And if so, help me to respond faithfully, as Haggai and his people did.*



JANUARY 7

CHAPTER: Haggai 2

THEME: Blessed Encouragement

STUDY VERSE: Haggai 2:4, 5

STATEMENT: What loving encouragement God gives His people in this chapter! The old ones, those who saw the temple in its former glory, must have wept to see the new one. Verse 3 says it seemed like nothing in comparison. Have you ever had hopes that didn't meet your expectations? Take to yourself what God says here. Put your own name in place of Zerubbabel or Joshua and read 4 and 5 again, and take courage!

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Dear God, thank You for Your endless love and kindness! I will lift up my head when I am disappointed, and I will hear Your voice saying, "I am with you...My Spirit is abiding...do not fear!"*



JANUARY 8

CHAPTER: Zechariah 1

THEME: Restoration

STUDY VERSE: Zechariah 1:17

STATEMENT: This prophecy *is* chronological, still in the second year of Darius. The people are in a state of discouragement from a nearly lifelong captivity they know they and their parents caused by unrepentant disobedience. God is saying to them, “Don’t worry, I have forgiven you. I will punish those who punished you, and I will restore you.” There is also a fascinating vision of horsemen, interesting to compare to the horsemen in Revelation, though they are quite different.

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Father God, You have forgiven me so much. I sometimes grow discouraged and think I’ll never be good enough. When that happens, remind me that to You, I am worth the life of Your Son, and that You love me and are working to make me just the person You designed me to be.*



JANUARY 9

CHAPTER: Zechariah 2

THEME: God's Presence Restored

STUDY VERSE: Zechariah 2:10

STATEMENT: Like many prophecies, this one refers both to its own time, and to the time of the end. Which things can you see that you think will be fully fulfilled only after Jesus comes again? In what ways was it fulfilled in Zechariah's time? In what ways can it be true to you personally, now, today?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Lord, I can hardly believe that You think of me as "the apple of Your eye," but You say it, and I trust You. I do sing for joy and I am glad, because I know You dwell in me now. And I can't wait for the time when You come and dwell with us in all Your glory!*



JANUARY 10

CHAPTER: Zechariah 3

THEME: Rebuking the Accuser

STUDY VERSE: Zechariah 3:2

STATEMENT: This lovely little chapter begins with a scene with which all God's children are all too familiar: Satan accusing us — and rightly so! Joshua was a sinner, so am I, and so are you. But what is God's response? Can He say of you that you were plucked from the fire of sin? Why do you think the chapter ends with an invitation to your friends to sit with you? What would you like to share with them?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Mighty One, You have pulled me from the fire, and burned Your own holy hand in doing it. I will serve You forever, and I will share my story with my friends in the hope that they will see You for who You really are.*



JANUARY 11

CHAPTER: Zechariah 4

THEME: The Candlestick and Olive Trees

STUDY VERSE: Zechariah 4:6

STATEMENT: This is a beautiful vision of God's constant care and guidance of His children. We know from other passages in the Bible that olive oil represents the Holy Spirit. In this vision, the trees are there, giving oil continuously. What does this mean to you?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Lord of light, You promise Your presence, Your love, and Your guidance. Please keep my channels open so that I can continuously receive your light and power.*



JANUARY 12

CHAPTER: Zechariah 5

THEME: More Visions

STUDY VERSE: Zechariah 5:5

STATEMENT: This vision is of wickedness and the curse on those who steal and swear falsely by God's name. It even says wickedness will be set up in its own temple! So it's hard to find a good verse to cling to. But God does keep saying to Zechariah, "Lift up your eyes and look!" How can we keep lifting up our eyes and looking to see what God is saying?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Dear God, I am often tempted to keep my eyes on the ground, but I do want to lift up my eyes to You. Even if what I see is bad all around me, if I lift up my eyes to You, I will always see You dealing with it, and not be afraid.*



JANUARY 13

CHAPTER: Zechariah 6

THEME: Chariots and Crowns

STUDY VERSE: Zechariah 6:15

STATEMENT: Once again, God uses horses as symbols of His strength and might going throughout the earth. In those days, horses were the strongest and fastest way to travel. Then He says to crown the high priest. That seems odd! Read verses 12 and 13 again and see if you can tell who is being prophesied here. (Hint: go back to Zech. 3:8 and look up Is. 11:1.)

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *High King of Heaven, You are the only One I crown in my heart. You are Lord of Lords and King of Kings and I trust You, now and always, with my life.*



JANUARY 14

CHAPTER: Zechariah 7

THEME: To Fast or Not to Fast

STUDY VERSE: Zechariah 7:9, 10

STATEMENT: For 70 years, the people had been in Babylonian captivity because of their disobedience. During that time, they had fasted in the 5th month, on the anniversary of the day Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem. Now they were back home, and the new temple was half done. Should they continue to fast? God tells them that not even His own fast for Yom Kippur (7th month) mattered if they still refused to change their hearts.

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Holy One, You know the secrets of my heart. You know whether I truly seek to follow You or only seek to look good to those around me. Please purify me and help me to keep the fasts You really require: justice, kindness, and compassion.*



JANUARY 15

CHAPTER: Zechariah 8

THEME: God Promises Restoration

STUDY VERSE: Zechariah 8:8

STATEMENT: After a lifetime of sorrow in a foreign land, the people may have a hard time really trusting that things are different now. God keeps repeating His promises that peace is now real, if they continue to obey. Notice the joy in verses 4 and 5. Are your streets like that?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *God of my fathers and mothers, You have sometimes had to allow painful consequences for disobedience, but You always restore if only we let You, and You show how much You love us and want our good.*



JANUARY 16

CHAPTER: Zechariah 9

THEME: Messiah!

STUDY VERSE: Zechariah 9:9

STATEMENT: In the midst of God's promises of peace to His people, there are still negative judgments against those who mocked them in their distress. But in the midst of everything—a Messianic promise! When do you see this promise fulfilled in the Bible?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Prince of Peace, thank You, thank You, thank You! You came humbly and gently, speaking peace to the nations, and soon Your dominion will be worldwide and all will be at rest.*



JANUARY 17

CHAPTER: Zechariah 10

THEME: The Gentle Shepherd

STUDY VERSE: Zechariah 10:6

STATEMENT: Notice verse 8: have you ever heard a shepherd whistle for his flocks? Have you seen them gather joyfully around him, knowing they will be fed, watered, and cared for? This is one way of seeing God, as our gentle, caring Shepherd.

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Great Shepherd, all I want to do is be Your little lamb. Let me not stray, not think I know better than You do, and not murmur when I don't understand what You are doing. Let me just run to You when You call.*



JANUARY 18

CHAPTER: Zechariah 11

THEME: The Wicked Shepherd

STUDY VERSE: Zechariah 11:5

STATEMENT: Human “sheep” are not as faithful in running *only* to their own Shepherd as real sheep are. Here is a ringing judgment on the wicked shepherds (leaders, teachers, pastors, etc.) who pretend to lead, but only for their own gain. What do you think it represents for shepherds to “sell” their human sheep and then brag about being rich? Have you seen or heard of leaders who did this?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Good Shepherd, let me hear only Your voice, and hear it clearly. Let me also guide others to the true Voice, and help them to see false shepherds for what they are.*



JANUARY 19

CHAPTER: Zechariah 12

THEME: Another Messianic Prophecy

STUDY VERSE: Zechariah 12:10

STATEMENT: This chapter looks back at the curse that was earlier pronounced on Israel and Judah, but then looks forward to the end of their captivity. It also looks even further forward in time. How many prophecies of Jesus can you find?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Dear Lord, I often feel feeble and inadequate for what I need to do. Help me to be like David when he was young, following You faithfully and leaning on Your power.*



JANUARY 20

CHAPTER: Zechariah 13

THEME: The Fountain of Cleansing

STUDY VERSE: Zechariah 13:1

STATEMENT: There is a lot in this chapter, but the beginning and the end have special depth. What is the fountain God says will be opened “for impurity”? We have songs that sing about it. In the end, what is the only right answer to “They are *my* people”?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *God, I am Your person. I thank You for the fountain of Jesus’ precious blood that cleanses me from all sin. I will listen only to You, no matter what.*



JANUARY 21

CHAPTER: Zechariah 14

THEME: The Great Day

STUDY VERSE: Zechariah 14:9

STATEMENT: All through Zechariah, there have been words from God that speak to the people where they were, and words that speak to the future—the coming Messiah in particular. This chapter looks as if it's all about an even further and even brighter future. Reading carefully, what time do you think this chapter is prophesying about?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Oh, Lord, I can't wait for the day to come when You will be king over all the earth; You will be the only one, and Your name the only one. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*



JANUARY 22

CHAPTER: Malachi 1

THEME: “Please Come Back!”

STUDY VERSE: Malachi 1:9

STATEMENT: This Minor Prophet is right where it belongs chronologically: at the very end of the Old Testament. Years have passed, and the people hardly remember the captivity or the disobedience that caused it. Once again, they are refusing to follow God. In this chapter, can you hear God’s pain as He begs people to be faithful? Do you practice what He asks in verse 9?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *My God, I do entreat Your favor. I do offer my best, and most importantly, offer my heart. Be gracious unto me, I pray.*



JANUARY 23

CHAPTER: Malachi 2

THEME: Rebuke to the Priests

STUDY VERSE: Malachi 2:10

STATEMENT: The priests are all about the feasts and rituals, and pay no attention to what they mean—no attention to the contrite heart they are supposed to encourage. They deal falsely with their people, and even with their own wives. Then they complain that God doesn't listen. How can we guard against this temptation?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Father of us all, help me to remember that I am a member of one earthly family of God, and to treat my brothers and sisters as You would.*



JANUARY 24

CHAPTER: Malachi 3

THEME: Robbing God

STUDY VERSE: Malachi 3:1

STATEMENT: We are familiar with this passage, and often refer to it as God's instructions on tithes and offerings, which it is. But we can do the same as the people of that time, and think that if we just pay the right amount of tithe, we don't have to think about a pure heart. The fact is, ***all we have*** belongs to God. Tithes and offerings given from a cold heart mean no more to God than the old sacrifices given without love. Where do you stand?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Messenger of God, clear a path in my heart, please. Make a way of righteousness so that all I do will be done only for love of You and others.*



JANUARY 25

CHAPTER: Malachi 4

THEME: A Final End—and Beginning

STUDY VERSE: Malachi 4:2

STATEMENT: We have reached the very end of the pre-Christ stories and admonitions God gave to His people. We have seen them turn towards Him and away from Him, again and again and again. We have seen God keep on reaching, and trying, and forgiving. He's still doing that. But this chapter describes the very, very end of time, when there will be no more chances given. Lock verse 2 in your heart, so that when He comes, you will skip with joy.

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Sun of Righteousness, I want to be Yours entirely, Yours completely, Yours forever! Keep me faithful and help me to seek only You and only Your righteousness.*



JANUARY 26

CHAPTER: Matthew 1

THEME: Messiah—At Last!

STUDY VERSE: Matthew 1:24

STATEMENT: And so we come to the point of the whole Bible, the one thing the earth and all its inhabitants have awaited since the fall of Adam and Eve. Try to pretend you haven't heard this story before. We get so used to it that we forget how astonishing it all is—God shrinking to a tiny baby, just for you! Matthew says Joseph “woke from sleep and obeyed.” Have you been spiritually asleep? Have you been confused, as Joseph (understandably) was?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Great God, wake me up! Come to me as You did to Mary, and to Joseph. Tell me what You would have me do, then please give me the strength and faith to carry it through.*



JANUARY 27

CHAPTER: Matthew 2

THEME: The Magi

STUDY VERSE: Matthew 2:11

STATEMENT: This happened up to a year, perhaps even longer, after Jesus was born. In the ordinary daily life of caring for a baby, if Mary and Joseph have forgotten any of the miracles of the night of His birth, this visit will certainly remind them. Imagine how shocking it was for them—a poor country couple receiving visits, and rich gifts, from exotic, wealthy easterners! They would soon need those gifts to finance a flight to Egypt.

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Great King, You watched over Your Son and His appointed family. Watch over me and mine as well. And thank You **so much** for the gift of Your Son! May I worship Him as faithfully as those wise ones did.*



JANUARY 28

CHAPTER: Matthew 3

THEME: John the Baptist and Jesus

STUDY VERSE: Matthew 3:16, 17

STATEMENT: The quiet years, first in Egypt then in Nazareth, have passed, and Jesus' cousin John, son of Elizabeth and Zechariah, has begun to preach that the Messiah is on His way. Jesus knows it is time to begin His ministry. If you were John, how would you react if Jesus came to be baptized by you?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Father God, Your voice proclaimed Your love for Your Son. I can understand that. What I can't understand is that You proclaim the same love for me! Help me to live every day of my life within the safety and freedom of that love.*



JANUARY 29

CHAPTER: Matthew 4

THEME: The Beginning

STUDY VERSE: Matthew 4:23

STATEMENT: There is a lot in this **CHAPTER:** the temptations, which represent all the classes of temptation we face; the beginning of Jesus' ministry; and the calling of the first disciples. Read the last three verses again and try to imagine what it was like. What would you do if someone began walking through your town healing people and proclaiming the love of God?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Dear Jesus, You walk through my life as well. You heal my fears and infirmities, even though You don't always heal today as You did then. I want to follow You too. I believe in the complete healing You promise—when You come, if not now.*



JANUARY 30

CHAPTER: Matthew 5

THEME: Sermon on the Mount, Part 1

STUDY VERSE: Matthew 5:2-10

STATEMENT: Try to memorize the whole beatitudes passage, but also pick out the one that most speaks to you. Different ones will call to you at different times in your life. Which one is yours for today? Pray that God will make it a reality in your life.

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *Blessed Teacher, bless me too! Help me not to see these or any of Jesus' teachings as "oughts" and "shoulds" and burdens, but as encouragement to live with Your Spirit within.*



JANUARY 31

CHAPTER: Matthew 6

THEME: Sermon on the Mount, Part 2

STUDY VERSE: Matthew 6:33

STATEMENT: This chapter contains

- a cure for legalism: try to keep your good deeds secret between you and God;
- a cure for greed: serve God and money will lose its power over you;
- a cure for anxiety: seek God and His kingdom, and let Him worry about the details.

Which means the most to you today?

RESPONSE:

PRAYER: *My heavenly Father, I know that You care for the smallest of Your creatures, and sometimes I feel that's me. Keep my eyes on You and on Your love.*

