

## DAILY BIBLE STUDY SHEET

*Daily meditation on the Word of God is imperative to our growth. As the people of God, we should commit to reading Scripture every day. There are questions to help prompt your meditation. If you do not have a Bible, please contact the church office and one will be given to you. To locate the passages, use the Table of Contents to find the page number of the book. The number before the colon will tell you the chapter to find. The numbers after the colon are the superscript numbers in your Bible indicating the verses to read.*

### **Monday, February 19<sup>th</sup> – Malachi 3:1-3, Malachi 4:5-6, and Luke 1:13-17**

Malachi is one of the last prophets and the author of the last book in the Old Testament. Writing about the day of judgment, God promises through Malachi that he will send his messenger to “prepare the way” for him. This will not be a comfortable time, and will involve fiery cleansing and refining like that done to silver and gold. Elijah will be sent to reconcile the hearts of parents and children. Four centuries and more go past. The angel Gabriel appears to the priest, Zechariah, and promises him a son, John, who will be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb. John will turn many Jews back to the Lord, turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the disobedient to a true faith (“the wisdom of the just”). The purpose? To make people ready and prepared for the Lord. How will John do this? –“in the spirit and power of Elijah.” Malachi’s prophecy will be fulfilled in John. Many Jews believed this meant that the Messiah would then come in fiery judgment on all the world, with the exception of Israel. But does the end of verse 17 sound like that? Does “to make ready for the Lord a people prepared” sound like the end of the world to you? Or does it sound like God wants his people to get ready to do something more for him than look forward to the condemnation of others? What do you look forward to when the end of the world comes? What will your fate be? What does God want you to do to get ready for him?

### **Tuesday, February 20<sup>th</sup> – John 1:19-34**

John testifies that he is neither the Messiah (“Christ”), nor Elijah, nor the prophet promised by Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15). He humbly precedes one who will come after him, one whose sandal strap John is not worthy to untie. John quotes Isaiah 40:3 as his ministry, to prepare the way before the Lord, to make straight a highway for God, to lift up valleys, level the ground, mountains and hills, smooth out the rough places (Is. 40:3-5). In the old days, messengers were sent out before a king arrived, calling out the people to repair the dirt roads, remove rocks, fallen trees and other obstacles, smoothing out the way for the king and his entourage. John’s ministry was similar, to prepare the people for the coming of their king, to repent and be ready to receive him and to live and work for him in their lives. In verses 29-34 of John 1, John the Baptist testifies that Jesus is the Lamb of God, that he will take away the sin of the world, and that all of John’s baptizing was to reveal Jesus to Israel. John saw the Holy Spirit descending and remaining on Jesus like a dove, and testifies that Jesus is the Son of God. John may not have known that the world was not coming to an end. But he did know that Jesus was coming and he was to introduce him, and get people ready for him. How do you respond to this strong witness of John the Baptist? Are you ready to respond to Jesus, today and every day? If not, why not?

### **Wednesday, February 21<sup>st</sup> – Luke 3:7-18 and Isaiah 1:16-18**

John proclaims a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3). Great crowds respond, coming out into the wilderness to be baptized by him. He calls them all a “brood of vipers,” trying to avoid the Lord’s wrath by buying “fire insurance” (a Pastor Shirley term—not in the Gospel!). He tells them if they are truly repentant of their sins, they should show it in their lives and actions. They must not think that being Jewish gives them this “fire insurance.” The Isaiah passage shows this is no new message. As Abraham’s descendants, they are to bear good fruit in their lives, or face a fate similar to bad trees being cut down and thrown into the fire. He tells them to share with those in need, and live lives of integrity. He doesn’t even tell the hated tax collectors and soldiers to quit their jobs, but rather to perform their duties with honesty and integrity. John is not the Christ. John baptizes with water, while Jesus will (and does!) baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit. Have you felt the burning of the Lord in your heart? Has he convicted, chastened and cleansed you? If not, why not? Are you ready to turn it all over to him? Do so today! Luke tells us in 3:17 that Jesus has his winnowing fork in his hand. He will gather sincere believers to be with him, while pretenders will face “unquenchable fire.” Do you believe what Jesus says?

### **Thursday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> – John 3:22-30**

John tells his disciples they should not be concerned about everyone flocking to Jesus’ ministry and baptism. He reminds them that he had told them that he is not the Christ, but that he had been sent to come before Jesus. As a “friend of the bridegroom” who has now come, he is happy, and his joy is how complete. In the language of those times, the party did not start until the bridegroom arrived. Jesus is the bridegroom, so let the party begin! A very memorable line is then uttered by John (verse 30): “He must increase, but I must decrease.” This humble man knew his place and reminds us all as Christians that our goal each day should be for Christ to increase in us, while our own wants, desires, and ambitions should decrease. We should become more and more transparent to all around us, so that they can easily see into us, through us, and what they should see is the light of Christ, as we grow to be more and more like him. How can you be the light of Christ to others? Pray today for God to show you where you still need to decrease. Pray also asking for the light of Christ to shine brightly through you to those who are lonely and lost.

### **Friday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> – Matthew 11:2-19**

John is in prison, awaiting death. Jesus’ mission had unfolded in unexpected ways, and John asks through his disciples whether Jesus really is the Messiah. Jesus responds by reporting the fulfillment of various Old Testament prophecies. He mildly rebukes John not to be offended by Jesus, and then sings John’s praises to the crowd. He is the best human who ever lived but is less than the least person saved under Christ. John knew who Jesus was. He had served him well. He just had doubts in a cold jail cell waiting to be killed. When things turn out differently than we expected or hoped for, we must not lose faith. Hold onto Jesus and trust in him. He understands the doubting times and loves us anyway. Remember John’s faithfulness, zeal, and humility. Praise God for his example and pray we may all be more like him. Pray, asking God to reveal where you have doubts. Also pray, asking God to direct you so that you may become less and He may become more.

### **Saturday, February 24<sup>th</sup> – Prepare for tomorrow by reading Luke 14:1-6**