

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

AUGUST 10 - 14, 2020



MONDAY

Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Chronicles 29:15; John 17:14-16

Perhaps you've heard that Christians are to "be in the world, but not of the world," partly paraphrasing what Jesus said in John 15:19 and 17:14-16. Paul develops this theme in Romans 12:2 and Ephesians 4:22-24. Ephesians 2:19-22 starts here: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens ..." Belonging to God as "citizens of another kingdom" (John 18:36; Philippians 3:20) is thematic throughout the Bible.

Abraham was called away from his Chaldean birthplace and home (Genesis 12), not knowing where God would lead. As a roaming shepherd without permanent earthly roots, he—like son Isaac and grandson Jacob—lived most of his life as a tent-dweller. The Jews themselves, after 400+ years as slaves in Egypt, lived in tents until occupying the Promised Land. And God's glory settled amidst His people at the tabernacle, a huge tent with its contents representing the heavenly temple per God's detailed specifications (Exodus 25-27).

John 1:14 begins with the familiar text, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ..." The word "dwelt" (σκηνώω in Greek) used here is actually more precisely translated "tabernacle" or "pitched a tent."

The Apostle Paul took no pay for his ministry, but worked a trade to support himself financially. His occupation? Tentmaker (Acts 18)! Tent-making was a purposeful job for Paul, as it built a network for spreading the Gospel—his clients were mobile, often soldiers on military assignments throughout the Roman Empire. I wonder if Paul's vocation also was intended to reinforce believers as sojourners in this world, "strangers and aliens." Mere coincidence?

“The Word became flesh and tabernacled” (TLV translation)—left His heavenly home and put on humanity—to join us in our fallen plight and sacrifice for our sins. Following Christ, then, includes being in the world while not of it—recognizing our eternal, heavenly citizenship as we faithfully pass through this world. It also calls us to live and proclaim His Gospel, lovingly representing the Messiah to others desperately needing Him. Are you too wed to this world? Or, conversely, do you live in a Christian bubble, dismissing non-Christian relationships? Neither of these is Jesus’ way.

QUESTIONS

What does “being in, but not of the world” mean? What’s the significance of the tent imagery that runs throughout the Bible? How do you balance not always living in a “Christian bubble” with not being overly wed to this world?

PRAYERS FOR PERCH CHURCH

Pray for Perch Church, an ECO church plant in Glendale, whose vision is to love Jesus and to love like Jesus, where increasing love for Jesus allows God to form believers to become more like Him by loving our neighbors the way Jesus loves them.

TUESDAY

Ephesians 2:19; Galatians 4:3-7; John 1:12-13

Upon receiving Christ, we are spiritually regenerated and adopted into God's family along with other believers, "*fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God*" (Ephesians 2:19 ESV). Such a dynamic, joining the spiritual family of the sovereign Creator—the true and living God—is unique to Christianity.

"Adoption was not common in the Jewish world. A person's standing was based on his birth. ... If a (Jewish) man died, his brother was supposed to marry the widow ... so that his family line would continue." (GotQuestions.org) Jesus, in His famous John 3 exchange with Nicodemus, emphasized the regeneration accompanying God's salvation as being "*born again*"; adoption was not discussed. Though Jews see God as personal, the notion of close, personal relationship with Him is believed unique to Abraham and Moses, and perhaps Jacob and a prophet or two.

"In the [ancient] Roman world, adoption was a significant and common practice. ... If a (Roman) man had no sons or if he felt that his sons were incapable of managing his wealth or were unworthy of it, he would have to adopt someone who would make a worthy son." (GotQuestions.org) Unlike 1st century Roman adoption, however, entry into God's family is based upon a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, unrelated to one's "worthiness."

Hindus, Buddhists, Confucianists, Taoists and New Agers see "the god consciousness" goal, ultimately, as impersonal. Accordingly, the notion of "adoption into God's family" is absurd to these. Even among non-Christian

monotheistic faiths, potential for family relationship with the Creator is unknowable.

Some believers maintain, “You can’t lose your salvation because you cannot be ‘un-adopted.’” I don’t love the legal feel of this opinion—it seemingly ignores the personal aspect of God’s adoption “*in Christ*” (Galatians 3:26). The legal transaction—our justification—was handled solely between Father and Son on Calvary’s cross, cancelling believers’ unpayable sin debt. Adoption is thereupon relationally based, again, “*in Christ*.”

While the adoption and family aspects of Christianity are elusive to many, they can also feel attractive and compelling. Share this truth with unbelieving friends. See how the Holy Spirit might use these truths to do something amazing.

QUESTIONS

Why is adoption such an important concept in our faith? How did the ancient Jews and Romans view adoption very differently? Why is it important to grasp that right relationship with God is personal and not legal?

PRAYERS FOR PERCH CHURCH

Praise God! We are thankful for the level of engagement from our Launch Team. We do not have a Launch Team member who is not serving or committed in some way. Even during COVID-19, all of our Launch Team members have been just as engaged or more engaged than before.

WEDNESDAY

Ephesians 2:20; Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:14-17

A family member was raised in a denomination and tradition de-emphasizing the Bible and its teaching. She had always been “a good person” and considered herself “religious,” but didn’t really come to know Jesus Christ personally until many years later via women’s Bible study. A brother alongside whom I served on the board for a Christian organization, a mature 70-something believer, once advised, “Don’t ask me Bible questions—I don’t know it very well.” He shared this matter-of-factly without any apparent embarrassment or concern.

Ephesians 2:20 reminds us that our family relationship with God in Christ is “*built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.*” That foundation is conveyed by the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments. How can one grasp that foundation and build upon it if it is unknown to them? Moreover, how can you have a close relationship with Someone you don’t know well? “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17 NKJV).

Can one be saved, born again by the Holy Spirit and thereby adopted into God’s family, while unfamiliar with the Bible? Of course. “*The heavens declare the glory of God*” (Psalm 19:1). You can be an American while knowing little about US history and heritage. You can be in a family with limited knowledge of your ancestry and the resultant context in which you’ve been raised. But wouldn’t you be missing much if you are ignorant about such things? Moreover, a believer who is unfamiliar with the Bible generally has shallow roots, making them more vulnerable to life’s inevitable storms.

“The Bible is God’s Word and is His revelation of Himself, His promises, His will. The Bible is essentially a love letter written to us from a loving God who created us to know Him intimately. What better way to learn about our Creator than to immerse ourselves in His Word, revealed to us for this very reason?” (GotQuestions.org)

If given the choice, would you rather find yourself suddenly struck with amnesia or prefer retaining knowledge of your roots, relationships and history? Why, then, would any committed Christ follower willingly choose biblical illiteracy?

QUESTIONS

Why is Bible study and reflection on God’s Word important? How is the Bible a “love letter written to us”?

PRAYERS FOR PERCH CHURCH

Pray that Perch Church’s Launch Team grows. While the church has been getting fairly good engagement and exposure with its online content, it’s so difficult to know who will be at the church in person when it regathers in person.

THURSDAY

Ephesians 2:20-21; 1 Peter 2:4-7; Colossians 1:15-20

Jesus as the “cornerstone in whom the whole structure ... grows together into a holy temple” (Ephesians 2:20-21 ESV) presents fascinating imagery, a theme Peter applies from the prophecy of Psalm 118:2 (1 Peter 2). However, the metaphor of the Messiah as a stone or rock shows up also in Isaiah’s and Daniel’s prophecies, among other places in the Old Testament.

Isaiah prophesied regarding “a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over” (Isaiah 8:14) and “a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation” (28:16)—predicting the Lord’s rejection by Israel, to their destruction, and Jesus’ sacrifice underpinning God’s plan of salvation. Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream included prophecy regarding “a stone ... cut out without hands” (Daniel 2:34), which crushed the succession of world empires “and filled the whole earth” (2:35). Daniel interpreted that such “will take place in the future” (2:45), foretelling Jesus’ coming and God building His worldwide Church.

Journeying toward the Promised Land, the Jews complained about their thirstiness. At God’s instruction, Moses struck the rock at Horeb to produce water (Exodus 17:6). The Apostle Paul later interpreted this: “For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4).

A rabbinic parable tells of how, as the building of Solomon's temple commenced, a large, odd-shaped stone arrived pre-cut from the quarry. The project's leaders, perplexed, cast it aside. As the construction neared completion years later, the workers searched for the capstone which would hold it together. Then one remembered the discarded stone. They retrieved it and, putting it in place, found it an exact fit—*"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone"* (Psalm 118:2).

Those denying Christ, the Solid Rock, reject the Living God by and for whom all was created. *"He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning,"* the Way to reconciliation with God and the Redeemer of fallen creation (Colossians 1:15-20).

Intercede for your friends who don't know Jesus. If they are Jews, pray that they will recognize their Messiah, the previously-rejected Cornerstone. For all, ask the Spirit to stir them to repent and receive the Savior. Appeal to God to bring them into His family.

QUESTIONS

What's the meaning of "Jesus as the Cornerstone"? How does the Bible use rock and stone imagery to inform and encourage us?

PRAYERS FOR PERCH CHURCH

Pray for Perch Church during uncertainty as the Launch Team is still hoping to publicly launch in October of 2020, but they are not sure that can happen.

FRIDAY

Ephesians 2:22; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 2:4-10

The core concept of Ephesians 2:22—the Holy Spirit indwells Christ followers and builds the true Church from these—can feel so familiar that we overlook its wonder and majesty. Let’s unpack this with help from today’s featured Scriptures.

Note that this verse begins “*In Him*,” reminding us that saving faith and adoption into God’s family are relational and not legal. While our relationship with God in Christ is personal, we’re reminded we are to be in supportive, caring fellowship also with other Christians. We should be known by our love for one another (John 13:35), helping fellow believers with burdens (Galatians 6:2) and sharing their ups and downs (Romans 12:15). We are “being built together” (2:22) as God sanctifies (refines and fashions into increasing Christlikeness) us both individually and corporately.

Believers are, collectively, the “*Body of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 12:27)—His ambassadors in a desperately needy world—and the “*Bride of Christ*” (Revelation 19:7)—His beloved, eternal prize. 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV) expands on this, calling God’s people “*a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness.*”

Ephesians 2:22 also deems us “*a dwelling place for God.*” That may sound routine to mature believers. However, I urge you to meditate upon this. God—being Spirit and the almighty, eternal Creator—needs no dwelling place, for “*Did not [His] hand make all these things?*” (Acts 7:50). “*The Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands*” (Acts 7:48 NKJV). When Yahweh displayed His glory in the ancient tabernacle

(Exodus 4:34) or in Solomon’s newly-built temple (2 Chronicles 7), even when God’s glory departed the temple in Ezekiel 10, these were to benefit the Israelites. God indwells us as a “*temple for the Holy Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 6:19) for our benefit.

I wish I could say that I continually act, think and speak like God’s dwelling place. Sadly, I can default to strife and selfishness. Fortunately, I have the Spirit and community of saints to help me. O LORD, please give me a surrendered, teachable spirit!

QUESTIONS

Is relationship with God in Christ confined only to individual believers—how does it apply to the greater church body? Why does the Bible call Christ followers both the “Body of Christ” and “Bride of Christ”? What does it mean to be “*a dwelling place for God*”?

PRAYERS FOR PERCH CHURCH

Please pray that Perch Church would still be able to launch “successfully” in October 2020, however God defines “successfully.” This does not necessarily mean that the launch is large in numbers, but it does mean that we launch being a good and healthy church. Please pray for unity, solidarity, resilience, and wisdom in the Leadership Team and Launch Team.

Sources:

- GotQuestions.org quotes can be found at <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-adoption.html> and <https://www.gotquestions.org/knowing-God.html>
- Thursday's parable of the rejected capstone from Jerusalem's temple can be found at <https://www.thewinedarksea.com/2017/03/19/stone-builders-rejected/>

