

THE ONE YEAR BIBLE Reading for April 9:

Deuteronomy 33:1-29:

Moses knows his death is near at hand, so he pronounces blessing upon the tribes of Israel (33:1). He mentions all the tribes (including Ephraim and Manasseh under the name of their father, Joseph) except for Simeon. Though we are not sure why this is the case, many believe it may be due to the fact that Jacob had predicted they would be scattered throughout the other tribes (Genesis 49:7).

Of most interest in today's reading is the way the chapter begins. Moses depicts the LORD coming forth from Mount Sinai in glory—from the presence of ten thousand holy ones (angels). The giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai was seen as a crucial and gracious event in the life of Israel. Angels are not only associated with the giving of the Law (see Hebrews 2:2), but they also seem to function here as they often do in Scripture to heighten the mystery and glory of God (see Isaiah 6). The greatest statement out of this preface, however, is found in 3a: "Indeed, it is really true, He continually loves, He cherishes His people" (an amplified translation). It is based upon this fervent love that Moses knows he can pronounce blessing upon the tribes. It is also based upon God's continual fervent love of us we know we will enjoy the blessings of God in Christ!

Luke 13:1-21:

As Jesus continues to make His way to Jerusalem, there were some people present with Him who told Him about an incident when Pilate (the Roman governor) killed some Galilean Jews who were in the middle of offering their sacrifices. The implication is that the people present with Jesus were explaining this horrendous event by suggesting it must have happened since they had sinned terribly. This was common thinking among Jews at the time (see John 9). Jesus brings up another incident—when a tower in Jerusalem fell and killed 18 people—and He affirms that in both cases those who lost their lives (at the hands of cruel men or by means of an accident) were not worse sinners than others around them. The events were reminders that all will someday face judgment. In fact, Jesus says, unless those around Him now repent, they will perish in like fashion (in other words, they will face judgment [perish is a technical term for undergoing judgment] without the opportunity to repent).

After Jesus challenged His hearers with the importance of repenting, He drives home the importance of not putting off that repentance in the parable of the barren fig tree (6-9). They ought to repent now since judgment is just around the corner due to their fruitlessness. Of course, part of the reason judgment is near to the Jews is exemplified in verses 10-17 and the attitude of the synagogue ruler in response to Jesus' delivery of a woman on the Sabbath. All the ruler could do is focus on the fact it had been done on the Sabbath. He could not rejoice that a woman was free from the disabling evil spirit or that he had just witnessed the work of God. As a result, Jesus rebuked this hardened ruler and his attitude. Jesus follows this up with two parables about the kingdom, for He wants to contrast those part of the kingdom (they have faith and it permeates people and it grows) with those whose hard hearts keep them out (18-21).

Today's New Testament reading challenges us from several directions to look at our heart. Are we repentant? Are we aware of judgment? Do we love, exercise faith, and see the kingdom permeating all we are?

Psalm 78:65-72:

See the last couple days' entries.

Proverbs 12:25:

When we lose sight of God and are filled with anxiety, this weighs us down, it depresses us. This is not only a call to avoid anxiety, but the remainder of the verse, the parallel statement, calls us to speak a word to such a weighed-down person to encourage them. This is great wisdom for those part of the body of Christ who are to encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:14).