

If then you have
been raised with
Christ, seek the
things that are
above, where Christ
is, seated at the
right hand of God.
Set your minds on
things that are
above, not on things
that are on earth.

THE DAILY READING BIBLE

ACTS 1-9

NUMBERS

COLOSSIANS

60 daily readings with full Bible text

THE DAILY READING BIBLE

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THE DAILY READING BIBLE

Volume 18

ACTS 1-9

NUMBERS

COLOSSIANS

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INTRODUCTION

Readng our Bibles regularly is getting harder. That, at least, seems to be the common experience of many Christians. We could waste lots of ink speculating on the reasons for this: is it the frenetic pace of life these days? Is it spiritual laziness? Is it the impact of postmodernism on our culture and the lack of certainty when it comes to interpreting the written word?

But a better option than speculating on the reasons, we thought, was to provide a new resource for Christians to help them get back into a more regular habit of reflecting daily on God's word. So back in June 2001, we decided to start including a section called 'Bible Brief' in our monthly magazine, *The Briefing* (see www.matthiasmedia.com.au for more information about *The Briefing*). The 'Bible Brief' provided 20 short readings each month—acknowledging that there will be days we miss or days when we want to do something a bit different—with questions, thoughts to ponder, and suggestions to get started in prayer.

Now, several years later, we have a good collection of 'Bible Briefs', and it's time to offer them to a wider audience in a format that will, we hope, be even more convenient and useful.

This eighteenth volume contains 60 readings, all designed to be done in 15–20 minutes. These daily Bible readings are

designed to help you feed regularly from God's word. They won't cover every issue in each passage, nor even every passage from each Bible book. In other words, *they are no substitute for the in-depth study of the Scriptures* that you may undertake personally, in small groups or through listening to sermons.

With the kind permission of our friends at Crossway Bibles, we've been able to make this a complete package to take with you—we've included the English Standard Version Bible text with each daily study. So you can take this one book with you and have everything you need—on the train, on the bus, or to the park at lunchtime—wherever and whenever you can get 20 minutes to yourself.

How to use these readings

- *With a penitent heart*, the true prerequisite for all Bible reading. Open with prayer (perhaps using the prayer suggested at the beginning of each set of studies).
- *With 15–20 minutes* of peace and quiet. If you can take longer, and want to read and pray further—great! But we have designed the readings to be done in a fairly short space of time.
- *With an accurate modern translation*. We recommend and have included the new ESV translation. The writers of the studies refer to this translation. Contact us for further details about the ESV or visit www.matthiasmedia.com.au/ESV

- *With a pen.* Even if you only jot down brief ideas, writing focuses the mind.
- *As a guide and help, not a straitjacket.* Feel free to dig further into the passage, to notice and ponder things that the questions don't point to.
- *As a launch-pad for prayer.* Use the prayer ideas at the end of each reading as a starting point for your daily prayer. Many of the points that will arise from the readings will be things you can pray for yourself, and also for others (family, friends, neighbours, etc.). Why not compile a list of people you want to pray for (you can write them in the blank space below), and use the prayer ideas from each reading to pray for the next person on your list?

This eighteenth volume includes:

- studies on Acts 1-9 (written by Bryson

Smith, one of the members of the ministry team at Dubbo Presbyterian Church)

- studies on Numbers (written by Simon Flinders, assistant minister at St Thomas' Anglican Church, North Sydney)
- studies on Colossians (written by Neil Atwood, associate pastor at Springwood/Winmalee Anglican Church).

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Please note: the main section of Scripture for each study is reproduced before the questions. Other Scripture references are reproduced as footnotes at the bottom of the page, or, where the passages are too long to be included as footnotes, in the appendix.

PEOPLE TO PRAY FOR:

ACTS 1-9

INTRODUCTION

Do you ever wish you were part of something big? Every day the alarm goes off in the morning, you roll out of bed for another day and go through the same old routine. Everything seems so mundane and small-scale. Do you sometimes feel like it would be nice to be caught up in something a bit more spectacular?

The book of Acts is a wonderful book because it helps us to see that when we are followers of Jesus, we are, in fact, caught up in something much bigger than ourselves. As Christians, we are caught up in a worldwide movement—a passing on of a message that has been transforming people's lives in every single country on the face of this earth for thousands of years. We share the thrill of being labourers in the ongoing, outgoing work of the risen Christ!

You might like to use this prayer (or your own variation of it) before each of the next 20 studies:

Dear God and Father,

Thank you for your compassion and mercy in allowing me to call you my Father. Thank you for saving me in these last days through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you in the name of Jesus Christ for granting me forgiveness for my sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. As I read your word in Acts, please continue your good work in me. Please transform me so that I will think your thoughts and share your passions. Dear Father, please change me so that I will be your effective and productive servant.

Amen.

NB: Tick the box when you've completed each study ✓

READING 1

ACTS 1:1-11

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to

wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my

witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." ⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

1. *What does the phrase "all that Jesus began to do and teach" (v. 1) lead you to expect about the book of Acts?*

2. *What special plans does Jesus have for his disciples?*

3. *What signs are there in the passage that indicate that the disciples don't yet understand Jesus' plans and purposes?*

PONDER What are the implications (if any) for you of Jesus' instructions to his disciples?

PRAYER IDEAS Thank God for the ongoing work of Jesus Christ in this world. Thank him in particular for the gift of his Holy Spirit.

READING 2

ACTS 1:12-26

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³ And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, ¹⁶ "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷ For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." ¹⁸ (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst

open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. ¹⁹ And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) ²⁰ "For it is written in the Book of Psalms,

"May his camp become desolate,
and let there be no one to dwell in it';

and

"Let another take his office'.

²¹ So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." ²³ And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴ And they prayed and said, "You,

Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." ²⁶ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

1. What happened to Judas?

2. Peter quotes Psalms 69:25¹ and 109:8²—both psalms of David in which David calls upon God to judge his enemies. Where do you see the fulfillment of these Scriptures in Judas' fate?

3. What characteristics must Judas' replacement have?

4. According to verses 24–25, why did the disciples cast lots?

PONDER Do you think it's ever okay to toss a coin in order to pick a Christian leader?

PRAYER IDEAS Thank God for the way in which the message of the gospel has been protected throughout history by faithful witnesses of Jesus.

READING 3

ACTS 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own

native language?" ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." ¹² And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.

¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

1. May their camp be a desolation;
let no one dwell in their tents.

2. May his days be few;
may another take his office!

17 "And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
 that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
 and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
 and your young men shall see visions,
 and your old men shall dream dreams;
 18 even on my male servants and female servants
 in those days I will pour out my Spirit,
 and they shall prophesy.
 19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above
 and signs on the earth below,
 blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;
 20 the sun shall be turned to darkness
 and the moon to blood,
 before the day of the Lord comes, the
 great and magnificent day.
 21 And it shall come to pass that everyone
 who calls upon the name of the
 Lord shall be saved.'

1. List all the extraordinary events that occur in 2:2-4.

2. According to verse 17, the filling of the apostles with the Holy Spirit means that the 'last days' have now commenced. According to verse 20, what do these last days precede?

3. The "day of the Lord" is a reference to the final judgement when God will punish all sin. What necessary task should be undertaken during these last days preceding the "day of the Lord" (v. 21)?

PONDER Do you think that the disciples' Pentecost experience is something all Christians should share? Why/why not?

PRAYER IDEAS Thank God for giving you the opportunity in these last days to call on the name of Jesus and be saved. Ask him to extend that opportunity to anyone you know who hasn't done that.

READING 4

ACTS 2:14-36

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.
 15 For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

17 "And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
 that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,

and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
 and your young men shall see visions,
 and your old men shall dream dreams;
 18 even on my male servants and female servants
 in those days I will pour out my Spirit,
 and they shall prophesy.
 19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above
 and signs on the earth below,
 blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;

²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the day of the Lord comes, the
great and magnificent day.

²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone
who calls upon the name of the
Lord shall be saved!

²² "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus
of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God
with mighty works and wonders and signs
that God did through him in your midst, as
you yourselves know—²³ this Jesus, delivered
up according to the definite plan and
foreknowledge of God, you crucified and
killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ God
raised him up, loosing the pangs of death,
because it was not possible for him to be held
by it. ²⁵ For David says concerning him,

"I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand that I may
not be shaken;

²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my
tongue rejoiced;
my flesh also will dwell in hope.

²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to
Hades,
or let your Holy One see corruption.

²⁸ You have made known to me the paths
of life;
you will make me full of gladness with
your presence!

²⁹ "Brothers, I may say to you with
confidence about the patriarch David that
he both died and was buried, and his tomb
is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a
prophet, and knowing that God had sworn
with an oath to him that he would set
one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he
foresaw and spoke about the resurrection
of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to
Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This
Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are
witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the

right hand of God, and having received from
the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit,
he has poured out this that you yourselves
are seeing and hearing. ³⁴ For David did not
ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

"The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit at my right hand,

³⁵ until I make your enemies your
footstool!

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know
for certain that God has made him both Lord
and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

*In our last reading, we left the disciples
behaving very strangely indeed—speaking in
languages they were not meant to be able
to speak! Peter has claimed that this is a
sign of the last days (i.e. the time leading
up to the final judgement of God—the time
during which we need to call on the name of
the Lord in order to be saved). However, the
problem for the crowd at Jerusalem is that
they have just crucified that Lord!*

1. According to verses 22-24, what did men
do to Jesus? What did God do?

2. According to verse 27, what did David in
the Old Testament predict about God's
coming king? In the light of your answer
to question 1, what does this tell you
about Jesus?

3. Verse 36 now comes as Peter's punchline.
Have a go at rewriting it in your own
words.