

connecting faith and daily life

Walk steadily in faith

Julia McGuinness *reflects on* 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

In every generation of Christians there have been those who are keen to predict the date of the second coming. And yet, just like the Thessalonians addressed in Paul's letter, we still live in anticipation of his return.

Some of Paul's readers were convinced that this event was imminent – so close, in fact, that it was not worth pursuing much beyond waiting for the day. But Paul insists that Christians are not only to wait, but also be prepared for the Lord's appearing. This is not the passivity of sitting in a doctor's waiting room. It's more like ensuring that everything is ready for a royal visit that could happen at any moment.

Paul urges his readers not to be caught off guard by those

proclaiming "peace and security" – the slogan of the Roman Empire under whose rule they lived. Christians are to exercise faith in God's kingdom. Indeed, within twenty years of Paul's letter, the empire was overthrown and consigned to history.

If we knew the date of Christ's return, we would focus on the calendar and not on our relationship with him. We are called to trust our Saviour day by day, including his promise to return. We are to walk steadily in faith, love and hope. In the words of the American author and publisher Joseph T. Bayly, "God's people should plan for a voyage of a thousand years, but be prepared to abandon ship overnight." ☺



Lord, thank you that you are faithful in your promise to come again, your glory seen by all. As we wait, we pray our lives may reflect your light ever more clearly, intoxicated by nothing other than Christ at our centre. Amen.

Books of the Old Testament

Jeremiah

by Richard Greatrex

Richard Greatrex continues our book-by-book series about the Old Testament.

Born out of a tragedy so devastating that it resonates throughout the rest of scripture – Jerusalem fallen, the first Temple destroyed, the Davidic monarchy crushed and a majority of Judah exiled – the prophecies of Jeremiah swirl with both despair and hope.

Jeremiah's prophetic life covers forty momentous years in ancient Middle Eastern history, beginning in 626 BC, during the reign of

Josiah, and continuing until shortly after the destruction of the Temple in 587 BC.

As the people of Judah reject God's message and persecute Jeremiah, so Jeremiah prophesies that they will face humiliating punishment at the hands of Nebuchadrezzar. Yet chapters thirty to thirty-three, at the book's heart, detailing Judah's blackest hours, are also known as the "oracles of consolation", offering strands of hope.

Despite its aura of despair, Jeremiah's fearsome fidelity to God's message shines through. God will not abandon the chosen ones; redemption is always possible. ☺

“The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.”

Psalms 24:1

The Bible through the week

by Richard Greatrex

Richard Greatrex continues reflecting on the Bible readings for the coming week, from Monday to Saturday.

Stepping closer to Advent, themes of judgement, persecution and end-times grow stronger. There is clear instruction in this week's readings on both the commitment and cost of true discipleship. The readings from Maccabees begin on Monday (1 Maccabees 1:10-15. 41-43. 54-57. 62-64), by describing the king's vicious torture of Jews he is attempting to force to apostatise. However, many stand firm, sacrificing everything to stay faithful.

The Revelation readings open on Monday (1:1-4; 2:1-5) with the angel naming the seven churches and calling out the respective strengths and weaknesses of their discipleship. Throughout the week all three strands of texts converge on both the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem. Jesus has arrived at the destination for his showdown with the earthly powers. In Thursday's Gospel (Luke 19:41-44) he weeps over the city, predicting the destruction of AD 70. It is here that he will show himself to be the slaughtered lamb of Thursday's Revelation reading (5:1-10), whose truly sacrificial discipleship effects the salvation of creation. ☺