



# PEACE RIVER NEW CHURCH CURRENT

NEWSLETTER OF THE DAWSON CREEK CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

MARCH 2014

## A GUIDE TO THE WORD

By Rev. Coleman Glenn

Over the years I have heard a number of people express that they have trouble reading from the literal sense of the Word, in large part because they don't have a clear sense of the big picture. So I thought it might be useful to present a summary of the whole Bible, with tips for getting insights from the literal sense and directions to go to find more about the internal sense. I've included all the books of the Bible in this list; books in italics are not part of "the Word" in the truest sense, because they do not contain a "continuous internal sense" that is entirely about "the Lord and His kingdom" (see *White Horse* 16, *Arcana Coelestia* 3540). Still, the Writings do quote from most of these books, and the epistles, for example, are called "good books for the church."

### THE OLD TESTAMENT

#### Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

These are called the "Five Books of Moses" because they are attributed to Moses as their author. These books tell the history of the children of Israel up until they reached the land of Canaan, but before they entered in.

#### Genesis

The first eleven chapters of Genesis consist of what the Heavenly Doctrine call "invented historicals." That is, they describe events that are not to be taken literally, but that were written for the sake of the internal sense. This includes the story of creation, of Adam and Eve, of Cain and Abel, of Noah and the flood, and Noah's descendants until the time of the tower of Babel.

After these chapters, Genesis becomes a historical account of the people who God would call His "chosen people," or what the Writings call the "Israelitish church or the Jewish church." This group was not "chosen" because they were superior to anyone else, but because

they were able to worship in a way that represented spiritual things.

This line of people called by God begins with Abraham; God made a *covenant* or pact with Abraham and Abraham's "seed" or descendant. If Abraham and His seed would follow God and have faith in Him, then God would bless them and give them the land of Canaan. This covenant is the foundation of the entire Old Testament; and even the New Covenant of the New Testament is really a revelation of the real meaning of this covenant.

The book of Genesis continues to follow Abraham's descendants: Issac, Jacob (whose name is changed to Israel), and the sons of Jacob, i.e. the children of Israel. It follows the story of Joseph, the second to youngest son, being sold into slavery in Egypt and rising up to become Pharaoh's right-hand man. Genesis concludes with Joseph inviting his father Israel and all his brothers to live with him in Egypt.

*What to look for when reading Genesis:* notice the way that the *covenant* comes up - that the Lord promises to bless these people as long as they remain faithful to Him. And notice the way that Divine Providence operates to bless those who *do* believe in Him, even though at times it seems like circumstances are very bad (e.g., Joseph being thrown into prison). The internal sense of Genesis is described in the first eight volumes of *Arcana Coelestia*.

#### Exodus

Exodus describes what happened to the descendants of Israel and his sons in the centuries following their move to Egypt. An unfriendly Pharaoh rose up and enslaved all the descendants of Jacob/Israel (now referred to collectively as "the sons of Israel" or "the children of Israel" or "Israelites"). But the Lord raised up Moses to rescue His people. The book of Exodus describes the way that the Lord led the people of Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness to Mount Sinai, where He delivered the Ten Commandments, as well as several

other laws, and described to them how they were to build His tabernacle, or tent of worship.

*What to look for when reading Exodus:* notice the theme of the Lord's faithfulness, and the Lord's ability to rescue His people out of seemingly impossible situations.

### **Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy**

These books are primarily books of *laws* for the children of Israel, describing how they are to live once they enter the promised land. They also describe what happens when the children of Israel do not trust the Lord enough to enter the promised land: they have to endure forty years of wandering in the wilderness before they will be allowed to enter.

*What to look for when reading Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy:* some of the laws in these books can seem strange or repetitive or difficult to understand. But pay attention to the laws of *moral living*, which are still useful for us to day, and try to see how the *civil laws* try to ensure a state of justice. The laws about sacrifice and worship tend to *represent* spiritual things; these no longer apply today, but you can search the Heavenly Doctrine for a deeper understanding of what they represent (the website [kemptonproject.org](http://kemptonproject.org) allows you to look at all the Writings' references to Scripture passages).

### **Joshua**

The book of Joshua describes the events that took place when the children of Israel finally entered the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua (whom the Lord appointed to succeed Moses): the battles they fought, and the victories the Lord gave them over their enemies, as well as times they failed in battle because of disobedience to the Lord.

*What to look for when reading Joshua:* Joshua is a wonderful book to turn to for strength when we are experiencing spiritual battles. Notice the way that battle succeeds when the children of Israel acknowledge the Lord as the only source of power, and the way it fails when they look to themselves.

### **Judges**

The book of Judges describes the centuries following Joshua's leadership of the children of Israel into the promised land. It describes "judges" or "heroes" whom the Lord raised up to rescue the children of Israel from their enemies - enemies who conquered them every time they turned away from Him.

*What to look for when reading Judges:* Notice the cycle that repeats over and over: the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, an enemy conquered them, they

cried out to the Lord for help, and He sent a judge to deliver them. This shows us something both about the consequences of turning away from the Lord, and about the incredible forgiveness that the Lord offers again and again.

### **1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings**

These books describe the history of Israel as it moved from having judges over the various tribes to having kings, which they demanded to have because the nations around them had kings. The books of Samuel take place during the life of Samuel, the high priest; they describe the way he spoke for the Lord to the people of Israel, and to their first kings: Saul, and David.

The two books of Kings begin with a description of the reign of Solomon, David's son. But after Solomon's reign, there was a split in the kingdom that would never be healed. The ten northern tribes banded together and were called the kingdom of Israel, with the city of Samaria as their capital; the tribe of Judah in the south merged with the tribe of Benjamin, and became the kingdom of Judah, with Jerusalem as the capital.

The kings of Israel were all bad; eventually the northern kingdom was conquered by the empire of Assyria, and they were scattered; to this day, the descendants of those tribes have never been identified, as they probably intermarried and lost their identity. The southern kingdom of Judah had some bad kings and some good kings. Eventually they, too, were captured; and the second book of Kings ends with the description of their captivity in Babylon. As it turns out, that captivity would last 70 years, and the people of Judah would return to their land. It is there that the Lord was born and preached - the kingdom of "Judea," which is the same as "Judah." The northern land became inhabited by people who adopted only *some* of the Judean religion, and who were became known as "Samaritans" after the city of Samaria. By the time of the Lord's birth, there were also Judeans (i.e. Jews) living in what had been the northern kingdom; the region of Galilee, where Jesus grew up, was in that northern area.

*What to look for when reading Samuel and Kings:* Notice the way the covenant continues to be important: as the Lord promised, when the people obey His laws, they are blessed; when they disobey, the land is taken from them.

### **Ruth, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther**

These books do not have a continuous internal sense, but the Writings occasionally refer to them to confirm points of history. They are all books of history.

Ruth (which comes before 1 Samuel) describes events that took place during the period of judges, and tells the story of one of King David's ancestors. 1 and 2 Chronicles describe roughly the same period as the books of Kings; and Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther all describe events that took place during or after the Judeans' 70-year captivity in Babylon.

### **Job**

According to the Heavenly Doctrine, the book of Job is a book written by people of the Ancient Church. As such, it is a very good book, filled with correspondences, but not directly written by God, and not maintaining an internal sense consistently throughout. The book is an extended parable of a man named Job, who loses everything he has and still puts His faith in God.

### **Psalms**

The "psalms" are all songs of worship. There are many kinds of psalms: psalms of sorrow, psalms of praise, psalms of repentance, and many more. Many of the psalms are attributed to David, and others seem to come from the period shortly afterward.

*What to look for when reading the Psalms:* In many cases, we do not need any help reading the Psalms - they speak directly to us in a way that we can understand. One useful thing to realize, though, is that many Psalms in their deepest sense are actually about the Lord's experience on earth, and it can be valuable to see them this way and reflect on all the things the Lord went through for our sake. Swedenborg wrote (but never published) a little book called "Prophets and Psalms" that describes the general meaning of every psalm and every chapter from the prophets; it can be helpful to have by your side when reading the Psalms and the prophets.

### **Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon**

Again, these are books that do not have a continuous internal sense, but are referred to positively in a few places in the Writings (although *Arcana Coelestia* 3942 points out that the literal sense of Song of Solomon contains "things not decorous"). They contain bits of wisdom and poetry that bear on how people ought to relate to each other and to God.

### **Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi**

These final books of the Old Testament are the Prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations (attributed to Jeremiah), Ezekiel, and Daniel are known as the Major Prophets, not because of greater importance but because they are longer than the others; the remaining twelve are

known as the Minor Prophets. These books can be a little confusing, partly because they are not in chronological order. Generally speaking, the books begin with a description of what kings the prophet lived under, and by comparing that to the book of Kings or Chronicles, you can get a rough idea of when they occur. All of them were written during the time of the divided kingdom. Some of them take place before the northern kingdom (Israel) had been captured; others take place after the northern kingdom had been captured but before the southern kingdom (Judah) had been; and others take place during and after Judah's 70-year captivity in Babylon.

*What to look for when reading the prophets:* There is a lot of complexity in the prophets, and it can be very helpful to read it with *Prophets and Psalms* as a guide to the internal meaning. As a general rule, though, look for three things: 1.) Commands for reform, and particularly commands that the people in power not oppress the people under them. 2.) Promises of hope, and that the Lord does not forget His people. 3.) Promises of a Messiah who will come to save His people.

If you're looking for particular parts of the prophets that are easier to follow than others, I recommend reading Isaiah (particularly Isaiah 40-66), Jonah, Daniel 1-6, and Malachi - although of course all of them are worth reading, and all of them have some teaching that can be easily understood even if parts are obscure.

## **THE NEW TESTAMENT**

### **Matthew, Mark, and Luke**

These first three gospels are known as the "synoptic" gospels, which means "seen together," because they seem to follow similar structures and describe similar events, sometimes mirroring each other almost word for word. They describe the birth, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*What to look for when reading the Synoptic Gospels:* There is a lot we could suggest here, but in general terms the most important thing in these books is that in them we see the Lord Jesus Christ, God in human form, and we can get to know Him. Pay attention to his *teachings*, His commandments, and the way that He deepens the teachings of the Old Testament, particularly in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Pay attention also to His *actions*, since in these we see how God acted when He was in the world. A final thing to note: there are many instances throughout the New Testament when Jesus speaks to the Father as if to someone other than Himself. We do not need to be bothered by this, though; because while the Lord was in the world, He had parts of

Himself that He had inherited from His merely human mother, and when He spoke and thought from those, He was in some sense separate from His Father. It was only through His battles against hell and constant victory, and finally by His last temptation on the cross, that the Lord *completely* united His Human and His Divine, and became totally and completely one with the Father, that is, with the infinite Divine love that made up His soul.

### John

The gospel of John is a little bit different from the synoptic gospels: it is structured differently, and although there is some overlap, it focuses on different events in the Lord's life. More than any other book in the Old or New Testament, the gospel of John focuses on the Lord's *divinity*, examining what it really meant that He was one with the Father.

*What to look for when reading the Gospel of John:* Notice how often Jesus criticizes His followers for not seeing the deeper meaning within what He says, and keep that in mind whenever you read His statements in John, which can sometimes sound confusing. In this book in particular, He tells us plainly that He is speaking in parables, and He invites us to look deeper than the appearance.

### Acts

Acts describes the history of the early days of the Christian church, focusing at first on Jesus' disciples, and shifting its focus later on to the work of Paul, a Jewish (i.e. Judean) leader who had persecuted the Christians until the Lord had revealed Himself to him and called him to change his ways. While the book of Acts does not contain a continuous internal sense, the Writings cite it frequently as containing true history.

*What to look for when reading Acts:* Pay attention to what the apostles say when they preach "the gospel": it almost always includes a call to *repentance*, it speaks of Jesus' crucifixion primarily as an evil action on the part of mankind, and focuses on the *resurrection* as the cause for hope and rejoicing.

***Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude***

These books are known as the "epistles," which simply means "letters." They are letters that were sent by Paul (Romans-Philemon) and others (Hebrews-Jude) to groups of Christians and to individuals. Swedenborg called these "good books for the church" despite the fact

that being "doctrinal" works, they do not contain a complete internal sense.

*What to look for when reading the Epistles:* One common theme that comes up again and again is the question of "the law." A major question in the early days of Christianity was whether non-Jews (or anyone) had to be circumcised and offer sacrifices – that is, to become Jewish – to inherit the promises that had been made to Abraham. When Paul criticizes people wanting to be justified by "the law," he is criticizing people who think that they will be saved simply because they have *become Jewish* through circumcision and putting themselves under the ceremonial Jewish law. But Paul contends that there is a *new covenant* - that the covenant of circumcision only *represented* the true circumcision of the heart - and that this comes only from faith in Christ. So, when you read about "the law" in the epistles, know that often it is using that to mean "the distinctive things that mark a person as Jewish."

The other thing to notice throughout the epistles is the emphasis on *putting to death* worldly, fleshly things (e.g. hatred, anger, stealing, adultery) and instead *living* by the spirit (i.e., in love and faith). Notice that almost every time they speak of the Lord's death on the cross, they emphasize that we are to die *with* Him, and that the important thing is not just His death, but His resurrection, because this means that when we die to ourselves, He can live in us.

### Revelation

The final book of the Word is Revelation. It was written by John, disciple of Jesus, while He was on the island of Patmos. In the literal sense, it describes visions he had of a great judgment, and finally of the Holy City descending from heaven - a promise of a new life. The book *Apocalypse Revealed* describes the internal sense of the book of Revelation; in that internal sense, it is a prophecy of the judgment on the first Christian Church and the rise of a New Christian Church. (*Apocalypse Explained*, published after Swedenborg's death, also covers Revelation and goes into much greater detail but doesn't cover the last few chapters of the book.)

*What to look for when reading Revelation:* There is a lot of imagery in Revelation that only makes sense when we know the internal sense given in *Apocalypse Revealed*. Still, there are truths that shine through in the literal sense. Notice especially the references to the importance of *repentance* and the *way people live*; notice also the references to the Lord Jesus Christ as being "the Alpha and the Omega," and sitting on the throne, and other descriptions that clearly present Him as Divine.

## GARAGE SALE

Bev Bourbeau and Kathy Beattie have volunteered to organize the Ladies' Group garage sale again this year – thank you Bev and Kathy! We have not decided on a date yet, but it will probably be some time toward the end of April or early May. In the meantime, though, you can start bringing items for donation; please bring them downstairs and leave them on the stage for sorting if you're able to. Thank you in advance!

## NEW CHURCH DAY PLANNING MEETING

Danelle Kilber has offered to organize nineteenth of June activities for this year. She would like to have a meeting soon, though, to help plan and to make sure that we meet the needs of all the children involved, particularly the older children. **If you'd be willing to come to a meeting – especially if you're a parent or grandparent of an older child – please contact Danelle or Rev. Coleman Glenn.** Thank you!

## THE “ALMIGHTY LIGHTS” HAND DANCING

The Almighty Lights will be giving a performance at the church hall on **Sunday, March 16<sup>th</sup>, at 1:00 p.m.** The Almighty Lights are a youth group organized by the Dawson Creek Salvation Army. They perform black light mime skits, sign language and sing Christian-based songs. They perform free of charge. (You can visit <http://www.bit.ly/1fnrxzs> for an example of what they do.) We'll have a potluck lunch ahead of time, with snacks afterward. Feel free to invite friends!

## VISIT FROM BISHOP BRIAN KEITH

The Rt. Rev. Brian Keith, the executive bishop of the General Church, and his wife Gretchen will be visiting the Dawson Creek congregation and Grande Prairie circle this month from **March 21-24**. To welcome them and get to know them, we will be having a **potluck supper at the church in Dawson Creek at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>**. There will be a sign-up sheet at the church from now until then to make sure that we have all our bases covered for the supper, but feel free to bring something even if you don't manage to sign up. Hope to see you there!

## VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

We are stilling looking for volunteers to serve in two important positions beginning in June. The first position is a **volunteers coordinator**. I don't foresee this position requiring a whole lot of work – we just need someone to make sure that each month, someone is covering each of the church uses listed on the “church uses” sheet - e.g. church cleaning, mowing, etc. We have lots of willing volunteers in this congregation, but if no one's making sure all the jobs are filled, then some things fall through the cracks.

The other job is a little bit bigger, although still wouldn't need to be a huge commitment: we need a **newsletter editor**. That person wouldn't be required to write articles themselves; in fact, the “newsletter” could be trimmed down to nothing more than just a monthly calendar. But we do at least need someone to have that calendar / newsletter printed and sent out via email and post.

If you'd be willing to fill either of those positions, please get in touch with Rev. Coleman Glenn. Thank you!

## THE DAWSON CREEK CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

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**Worship: Sundays at 11 a.m.**

For information on services in Grande Prairie & Debolt, please contact Mrs. Lavina Scott at (780) 957-3625.

**If you have news or other information for this publication, or if you have any pastoral concerns, please call the pastor, Coleman Glenn, at (250) 782-0710 or (cell) (250) 467-2313, or e-mail [pastor@dawsoncreeknewchurch.ca](mailto:pastor@dawsoncreeknewchurch.ca).**

# CHURCH CALENDAR

## MARCH 2014

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>Sermon Topics:</b> <b>March 2:</b> Fish and Birds; <b>March 9:</b> Animals and Man; <b>March 16:</b> The Day of Rest; <b>March 23:</b> TBD; <b>March 30:</b> TBD						1
2 11 a.m. Family Service	3	4 7 p.m. Days of Creation Group	5	6	7	8
9 11 a.m. Traditional Service  4:30 p.m. Worship and Class (Grande Prairie)	10	11 7 p.m. Days of Creation Group	12	13	14	15
16 11 a.m. Traditional Service 1 p.m. Almighty Lights Performance	17	18 7 p.m. Days of Creation Group	19	20	21 Visit from Bishop Brian Keith (to March 23 <sup>rd</sup> )	22 5 p.m. Potluck Supper with Rt. Rev. and Mrs. Brian Keith
23 11 a.m. Traditional Service 4:30 p.m. Traditional Service (DeBolt)	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 11 a.m. Traditional Service with Rev. Brad Heinrichs	31					

**Note: All events take place at the Dawson Creek Church of the New Jerusalem unless noted otherwise.**