

every year with blood that is not his own.

"Blood not his own" – pointing out the difference between a priest sacrificing unwilling animals, and Jesus offering Himself.

**26 Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But He has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself.**

"Many times... once for all" — the animal sacrifice had to be made again and again on the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 16:29-34. Christ's far superior sacrifice was final, for all time.

"Since the creation of the world" — or since the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden, Genesis

3, Hebrews 4:3, there has been the need for a complete and lasting remedy to replace the partial and provisional one.

**27-28 Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.**

"He will appear a second time" — but not to deal with sin, because that has already been accomplished.

"Those who are waiting for Him" — believers are to live in expectation of Christ's return at any time, remaining faithful and ready however long the wait.

**SUMMARY** The writer of Hebrews (possibly Apollos and almost certainly not Paul) addresses believers who have come from a Jewish background, including some former priests. This gives them a sharply-drawn comparison between the rituals of temple and synagogue (as it was then) and the worship in heaven with Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the adoration of the heavenly throng.

**APPLICATION** Repeated rituals of sacrifice in a splendid, but man-made building was an imitation, of sorts. The worship of heaven is the real thing, and we can join with it by inviting the Holy Spirit. When Jesus appears on earth a second time it will be to bring the reality of eternal salvation to those who know their sin is redeemed by Him and that they are already His.

**QUESTION** *Would Jesus prefer you to follow all the nuances of a liturgical order of service, or to have the joy of knowing that you have met with Him and have heard His word for you?*

**PRAYER** Father God, I receive Your love afresh and I thank You that You know me inside out.

You know the ways I am an open book to You. And You are aware where I still cling to some role or position for my identity.

Help me to renounce all that is false, proud or hypocritical – and offensive to You. I ask this in and through Jesus. Amen.

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# The Living Word

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PRINT EDITION

Bible readings for Sunday, November 7, 2021 + commentary & references

Non-denominational Bible study for **November 7** (Revised Common Lectionary readings)

Prepare: read the Bible passages beforehand. Reflect: re-read to think about the message preached

Theme: **No pretence! Be real in your relationship with God**

Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17, Jonah 3:1-5, 10 – Trusting God is a test for us

Mark 12:38-44 – Jesus condemns the falsehood of the scribes

Hebrews 9:24-28 – Christ represents us to God in the reality of heaven

And also read: Psalm 127

## Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17, Jonah 3:1-5, 10 – Trusting God is a test for us

*Ruth finds a kinsman redeemer and  
Jonah finds God's assignment for him*

**3:1-2 One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for. Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor.**

"Find a home" — literally, resting place, or permanent home. As a close relative, Boaz might act as a kinsman-redeemer for Ruth and Naomi.

"Winnowing...threshing floor" — separating the chaff from the grain. The landowner and men slept nearby to prevent theft.

**3-4 "Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do."**

"Uncover his feet" — folding back his long tunic so that he wakes with cold feet, so she can speak privately with him, is not contrary to moral integrity. Ruth's action, dressed as a bride, rather than a widow, amounts to a request for marriage. Another example of appealing to the guardian-redeemer law is Tamar's story, Genesis 38:13-30.

**5 "I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered.**

"Whatever you say" — Ruth was a Moabite,

unfamiliar with Jewish law and custom.

**4:13-15 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth."**

"Gave birth to a son" — the story concludes with the ten generations from Perez, the son of Judah

**Psalm 127 Of Solomon – A song of ascents**

**1 Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain.**

**Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.**

**2 In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat – for He grants sleep to those He loves.**

**3 Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from Him.**

**4 Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth.**

**5 Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court.**

(Jacob's son) to David, grandson of Obed. Ruth and Boaz were ancestors of Israel's greatest king.

**16-17 Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.**

"Obed... father of Jesse" — Ruth and Boaz were also in the ancestral line of Joseph, husband of Mary, mother of Jesus.

The conclusion balances the introduction, Ruth 1:1-5, Ruth 4:13-17. Both focus on Naomi, her former emptiness and reliance on the Lord, now reversed by His provision for her. Both passages are similar in being compressed and having the same number of words in Hebrew.

**Jonah 3:1-5, 10** – *Jonah overcomes his fears and misgivings, obeys the Lord and preaches repentance to Nineveh*

**1-2 Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you."**

"The message I give you" — a prophet is to proclaim a message from God, forth-telling more than fore-telling.

**SUMMARY** The Book of Ruth begins and ends by emphasising the Lord's provision – providing food for them, enabling Ruth to conceive, and the Bethlehem women agreeing with Naomi, "The Lord... has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. Similarly, Jonah's story is bound up with God's provision for him. The parallel theme is trust, quickly achieved in the case of Naomi and Ruth, while for Jonah, this was more 'learning on the job'.

**APPLICATION** Both stories teach us the essential connection between our trusting God, in a real and honest relationship, and seeing God's gracious provision in our lives. God calls us, stretches us through the difficulties which test us, and grows us through them as we learn to trust Him more.

**QUESTION** *To get real with the Lord about how we are doesn't happen easily within formal worship. What other ways of gathering help us to do this?*

**Mark 12:38-44** – Jesus condemns the falsehood of the scribes

*A widow honours God in sincere giving unlike those that made a show of it*

**38-40 As He taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the**

**3 Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it.**

"Jonah obeyed" — this time, unlike his first call to Nineveh, Jonah 1:3, he is quite real with God, and angry to be sent there, Jonah 4:1-5.

"Great city" — it was a large conurbation, about three miles across, not a journey of days, except that it took Jonah time to preach his message, street corner by street corner.

**4-5 Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown." The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.**

"Nineveh... overthrown" — Jonah's message did not include an "unless" clause even though he knew God wanted their repentance rather than their destruction, v.10 (below) Jonah 4:2 (above).

**10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He relented and did not bring on them the destruction He had threatened.**

**marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely."**

"Teachers of the law" — also called 'scribes', were notorious for breaking the law they sought to impose by failing to love God and have His love for people. Jesus names six examples of their self-promoting desire for recognition: wearing long festive garments inappropriate for everyday wear; expecting people to rise and greet them; assuming the right to the prominent places in synagogues, and at banquets; making 'grandstanding' prayers; and preying on vulnerable widows.

"Devour widows' houses" — teachers of the law relied on the generosity of patrons, and widows were vulnerable to exploitation which eventually left them homeless. Defrauding someone else's mother, Mark 7:11-13, was a denial of loving either God or people, with a lack of mercy that rendered their lengthy prayers empty.

• *For further study* — God's concern for widows, Deut. 14:29; Ps. 68:5; Ps. 146:9; Isa. 1:17; Jer. 7:6; Jer. 49:11; and condemnation of those who abuse them, Isa. 1:23, Ezek. 22:7, Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5.

**41-42 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their**

**SUMMARY** The Scribes had a high view of their position and status in Israel's class-conscious society and liked to be recognised and greeted as such. The widow Jesus pointed out as a teaching illustration had no status and very limited means, yet gave more, in God's eyes, than the impressive donations of some of the richer contributors.

**APPLICATION** Jesus points out that those who approach God with a sense of entitlement, behaving arrogantly and drawing attention to themselves with grandstanding prayers, are inviting judgment, while the humble but sincere widow finds God's favour.

**QUESTION** *Do you like the identity that comes from a title or role that you hold? What would it cost you to give it up?*

**Hebrews 9:24-28** – Christ represents us to God in the reality of heaven

*Christ paid for our sin by self-sacrifice. He will return at the end-time*

**24 For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; He entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.**

"Sanctuary... a copy of the true one" – the

**money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.**

"The temple treasury" — a number of trumpet-like receptacles to catch money, in the Court of Women, accessible to men and women. Women were barred from going in further.

"Small...coins" — lit. 'two lepta, which is a quadrans', a Roman measure, because Mark wrote his gospel for the church in Rome. It was equivalent to a sixty-fourth of a basic day's pay.

**43-44 Calling His disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on."**

"She... put in everything" — the widow did exactly what Jesus had told the influential young man, Mark 10:21, and his disciples, Mark 8:34-37, Mark 10:28-29, to do.

regulations for ministry given under the old covenant were for a sanctuary on earth that represented God's transcendent 'otherness' with the holy place that people other than the high priest could not enter. Now Christ enters into the very presence of God in heaven.

**25 Nor did He enter heaven to offer Himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place**