

## THESE ARE THE READINGS FOR THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### GOD'S WORD FOR THIS WEEK

#### FAITH-LIFE KEEPS WATCHING FOR THE LORD

A 2011 Australian study found that after the age of 25, every hour of television reduced the viewer's life expectancy by 21.8 minutes. (Yikes!) God's warning for us all is far more dire than the old "slouch on the couch." He says that by frittering time away we could slide away from him and into eternal death. Conversely, how good it will be for those whom Jesus finds busy and watching for him when he reappears.

#### **TRADITIONAL FIRST LESSON – GENESIS 15:1-6**

**15**<sup>1</sup>After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."<sup>2</sup> But Abram said, "Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?"<sup>3</sup> And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."<sup>4</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir."<sup>5</sup> He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."<sup>6</sup> Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

#### **Q 1) What promise had the Lord made to Abram?**

The Lord had promised that Abram would have a son in his old age and that through his offspring he would become the father of many nations. Jesus was the offspring or seed to whom this promise ultimately referred. (See [Galatians 3:16](#).) Abraham is the father of many nations because he is the father of all those who *believe* in Jesus, both Jew and Gentile. (See [Romans 4:16-17](#).)

#### **Q 2) At this point in his life, how was Abram feeling about the promise God had made him?**

Abram was beginning to wonder whether God would keep his promise or whether he had himself misunderstood. His faith was being exercised!

#### **Q 3) What did the Lord do, and how did Abram respond?**

The Lord reiterated his promise to Abram. He told him that a son from his own body would be his heir, and Abram believed the Lord. He waited patiently upon him.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON – HAGGAI 1:2-14**

**1**<sup>2</sup>This is what the LORD Almighty says: "These people say, 'The time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD's house.'"<sup>3</sup> Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: **4** "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?"<sup>5</sup> Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. **6** You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."<sup>7</sup> This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. **8** Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the LORD. **9** "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the LORD Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house. **10** Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. **11** I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the olive oil and everything else the ground produces, on people and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands."<sup>12</sup> Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the message of the prophet Haggai, because the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD. **13** Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, gave this message of the LORD to the people: "I am with you," declares the LORD. **14** So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God,

#### **Q 1) How were the Jews of Haggai's day doing financially? How can you tell? (See 1:6 and 1:10-11.)**

The Jews of Haggai's day were not doing well, financially. They had planted much but harvested little. God had sent a drought because they had been busy with their houses, not with his house (the temple).

#### **Q 2) What did God want his people to do? (See 1:8.)**

God wanted them to a) give careful thought to their ways and b) go get timber and finish building his house.

#### **Q 3) What attitude do we also need? (See 1:12.)**

If we are going to be properly industrious while waiting for the Lord, it will stem from revering the Lord. Such fear of God comes from the Word of God.

#### **TRADITIONAL SECOND LESSON – HEBREWS 11:1-3, 8-16**

**11**<sup>1</sup> Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. <sup>2</sup> This is what the ancients were commended for. <sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible... <sup>8</sup> By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. <sup>9</sup> By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. <sup>10</sup> For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. <sup>11</sup> And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the

promise. <sup>12</sup> And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. <sup>13</sup> All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. <sup>14</sup> People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. <sup>15</sup> If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

**Q 1) What is the scriptural definition of faith?**

“Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” In other words, seeing is not believing. Instead, Jesus said, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” ([John 20:29](#)). Faith-life is exercised by waiting patiently upon the Lord.

**Q 2) How is Abraham such a wonderful example of faith?**

The writer to the Hebrews points out the many times that Abraham trusted the Lord “even though” the visible evidence suggested he should not. (See 11:8, 11)

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON – REVELATION 3:1-6**

*<sup>3</sup> <sup>1</sup> “To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. <sup>2</sup> Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. <sup>3</sup> Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. <sup>4</sup> Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. <sup>5</sup> The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. <sup>6</sup> Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

**Q 1) What reputation did the church in Sardis have? By contrast, what did Jesus think? (See 3:1.)**

The church in Sardis had the reputation of being alive, but Jesus says they were dead.

**Q 2) In what way will Jesus come like a thief? (See 3:3.)**

Like a thief, Jesus will come not only on a day we cannot *predict*, but at a time when we do not expect him. (See also [Luke 12:40](#).)

**GOSPEL – LUKE 12:32-40**

*<sup>12</sup> <sup>32</sup> “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. <sup>33</sup> Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. <sup>34</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. <sup>35</sup> “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, <sup>36</sup> like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. <sup>37</sup> It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. <sup>38</sup> It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak. <sup>39</sup> But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. <sup>40</sup> You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”*

**Q 1) What attitude does Jesus encourage Christians to have about this world and the things of this world?**

Christians should not be engrossed with the things of this world. Jesus goes so far as to suggest that we should sell our worldly possessions and give to the poor. The reason for Jesus’ encouragement is simple: the things of this world have no lasting worth. In time worldly things will all be exhausted, stolen, or destroyed. Why waste time on the constant pursuit of such things?

**Q 2) Instead of worldly things, with what should we concern ourselves?**

Jesus repeatedly encourages us to set our hearts on the kingdom of God, on the eternal things that are in store for us in our heavenly home. He wants us to be ready when he comes again because he will only take those who have been waiting for him to be with him forever. They are like servants waiting by the door for their master to knock after a long journey.

**PRAYERS FOR THE WEEK**

**Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost**

Almighty and everlasting God, You are always more ready to hear than we are to pray, and give us more than we either desire or deserve. Pour upon us the abundance of Your mercy, forgiving us those things for which our consciences are afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen