

Back To Basics

Volume 1

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Number 1

A Monthly Journal Dedicated To Teaching First Principles

THE NEED TO GET BACK TO BASICS

Johnie Edwards

There is a great need for getting back to basic Bible teaching. It is easy to get away from first principle Bible teaching, thinking “everyone knows that.” Never underestimate what folks know and don’t know concerning simple Bible truths. The Old Testament reported, “And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua...And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel” (Jud. 2:7-10). We need to be concerned that we are only about one generation away from this taking place among the Lord’s people in this century.

1) IT’S TIME TO GET BACK TO BASICS. When some of our own brethren are teaching, “God has had only one continuous covenant for man,” and that there is nothing wrong with using mechanical instrumental music in worship; when the role of women in the church is being expanded to include women elders, heads of committees, and women in decision-making meetings; when it is said that Jesus saves, not baptism; when preachers are saying, “one does not have to be a member of the church of Christ to be saved,” and when many sermons never include the Lord’s plan of salvation, it is time to get “Back to Basics.”

2) THREE REASONS FOR GETTING BACK TO BASICS. We need to get back to first principle teaching because:

Some Have Never Heard. Most non-member visitors have never heard basic Bible teaching on the Lord’s plan for saving man. It would be sad for them to attend a church service, leave, and not know how to be saved! So, why not read or quote Mark 16:16 where Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...”?

The Young Grow Up. It is never easy to know when a young person becomes responsible to God. No doubt, some become accountable every time teaching and preaching is being done. The young need to hear some lessons on first principles. If we do not teach them, they may never know. They need to hear Acts 2:38 and 1 Timothy 5:22.

Circumstances Change. A person may not want to listen to first principles today, because they are just not interested. But remember, events can change the attitude toward becoming a Christian. Most teachers have experienced this situation. So, keep teaching on first principles from time to time. Life gets shorter and shorter for folks all the time (Jas. 4:14).

"WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"

Johnie Paul Edwards

In Acts 16:30, the keeper of the prison asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" This question and its answer is of utmost importance.

1) **"WHAT MUST."** This suggests that whatever the keeper was told to do was essential.

2) **"I DO."** The pronoun "I" suggests individual responsibility. The action verb "do" emphasizes that something had to be carried out.

3) **"TO BE SAVED."** This gives special importance to his being delivered or redeemed.

4) **"BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST."** To believe is to have faith in something or someone. In this case, the keeper was told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

5) **"AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED."** "Thou" refers to the keeper. "Shalt be saved" means that he would be delivered or redeemed, if he would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This "prescription" was true for those of his house as well (Acts 16:31).

6) **"THEY SPAKE UNTO HIM THE WORD OF THE LORD."** Before he could believe on the

Lord Jesus Christ, he had to hear the Word of the Lord. Paul taught, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Further, all those of his house heard the Word of the Lord (Acts 16:32).

7) **"HE TOOK THEM...WASHED THEIR STRIPES; AND WAS BAPTIZED."** Notice that this was done the same hour of the night. Certainly this calls our attention to the urgency of the matter. His penitence was followed by his being baptized. Jesus had taught, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:16).

8) **"BELIEVING IN GOD WITH ALL HIS HOUSE."** This is a summary of all that was done in response to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" His faith led him to do every "must."

9) **"AND REJOICED."** Rejoicing comes to those who do all that God requires in being saved. He brought them to his house, set meat before them, and rejoiced. In Acts 8:39, the man of Ethiopia, who did the things God required of him, "went on his way rejoicing."

Will you do what God requires of you?

Back To Basics

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WHAT CAN YOU GET FOR A DOLLAR?

John Isaac Edwards

How long has it been since you got something for a dollar? For just four quarters a month (less than you pay for a gallon of gas), you can get *Back To Basics*. A dollar can go a long way. What can you get for a dollar?

1) ANSWERS TO HELP YOU COMBAT ERROR.

We are surrounded by error as most people have wrong impressions about what the Bible teaches. We aim to oppose error in these pages as Paul besought, “charge some that they teach no other doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:3). In *Back To Basics*, you will find studies to help equip you to “give an answer of the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15).

2) LESSONS TO HELP YOU GROW.

God expects His children to grow, and it takes food to grow. The Word of the Lord provides the food necessary for our growth. Peter declared, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). As you read *Back To Basics* each month, you will read articles that promote spiritual growth.

3) WORDS TO HELP YOU BE STRONG.

Who among us is so strong that he needs no more strength? The Lord’s people are to be a spiritually strong people. Paul urged, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Eph. 6:10). In subscribing to *Back To Basics*, you will be receiving words written to make you strong from a spiritual standpoint. Do you want to be strong?

4) WRITINGS TO HELP YOU REMEMBER.

Do you ever have trouble remembering? A good spiritual memory is important to us all. We are saved, if we “keep in memory” (1 Cor. 15:1-2).

We need to be reminded from time to time of vital things we need to know, because it is so easy to forget (2 Pet. 1:12).

5) WARNINGS TO HELP YOU AVOID APOSTASY.

There are paths that lead men away from the truth. We must be warned, so we can steer clear of apostasy. As you invest in *Back To Basics* each month, you will gain information that will help you stay in the way that is strait and narrow (Mt. 7:13-14). Gospel preaching is warning preaching (Acts 20:28-31), and *Back To Basics* will be used to give “warning” as needed (Col. 1:28).

Who says you can’t get anything for a dollar?

The Need To Get Back To Basics	
Johnie Edwards.....	1
“What Must I Do To Be Saved?”	
Johnie Paul Edwards.....	2
What Can You Get For A Dollar?	
John Isaac Edwards.....	3
Reconciled	
Raymond E. Harris.....	4
Failure To Get Back To Basics	
Connie W. Adams.....	6
Conversion Of The 3,000 Jews	
Donnie V. Rader.....	8
The Age Of The Earth, and “Scientific” Dating Methods	
Greg Gwin.....	9
Introducing “The Kid’s Activity Page”	
Paul Adams.....	10

RECONCILED

Raymond E. Harris

An instance of reconciliation always brings joy to the heart of the godly. The terms “reconcile,” “reconciled,” “reconciliation,” and “reconciling” are found a total of 13 times in the New Testament.

1) **BROTHER TO BROTHER.** In Matthew 5:24, Jesus explained that it is futile to attempt to worship God, if we are at enmity with a brother. Hence, He stresses the importance of being reconciled immediately. If there arises dissension between two brethren, both have a responsibility, and should desire, to achieve reconciliation at the earliest moment. In the passage mentioned above, Jesus is simply saying they must “make up.” There has been mutual hostility. Now there must be concession on the part of each, that they might be at peace again.

It should be noted that this is the only passage in the New Testament that uses a term denoting mutual hostility and mutual concession. In every other passage dealing with reconciliation, a term is used denoting one-sided hostility, demanding one-sided change. In such a dispute, the innocent party has nothing to repent of and need not make concessions. Only the guilty must adjust his course of action!

2) **WIFE TO HUSBAND.** In 1 Corinthians 7:11, Paul explained that a woman who departs from her husband (when he has not committed adultery) has but two choices. She must remain unmarried or “be reconciled to her husband.” The word “reconciled,” in that passage, is used as a verb denoting action. The very nature of the term here indicates that the woman, having departed, must make the concession, or adjustment, and come back.

3) **JEW AND GENTILE.** In Ephesians 2, Paul explained that by abolishing the law of Moses, the wall between the Jews and Gentiles had been broken down. Hence, for the first time, in 1,500 years, there could be a reconciliation between the seed of Abraham and other peoples. In Ephesians 2:16, we learn that this reconciliation was made possible by the cross of Christ. As Jews and Gentiles obeyed the gospel, were baptized into Christ, they adjusted their lives, came into fellowship with God, and, in one body, the church, had fellowship one with another.

4) **MAN TO GOD.** Even though we are pleased to see brethren, marriage partners and nations reconciled, it is more important to see people reconciled to God. The person who has never been a Christian, as well as unfaithful church members, need to be reconciled to God. Until our sins are removed, we are separated from God. In Isaiah 59:2, the prophet explained, “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” We remind you that God has never sinned against man. God has never separated Himself and left man. No, God is not at fault. The problem is always with man. Man sins, he departs, he alienates himself from his Creator, the loving heavenly Father. It is not up to God to make concessions to bring about reconciliation.

However, our heavenly Parent so desired reconciliation that He worked out a system whereby peace could be restored (2 Cor. 5:18-20). God has done His part. Won’t you do yours?

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God's Basic Plan For Saving Man

The Divine Side:

1. God sent His Son (Jn. 3:16).
2. God bestowed His grace (Eph. 2:8-9).
3. Christ died (Rom. 5:8).
4. Jesus shed His blood (Eph. 1:7).
5. The Holy Spirit revealed God's will to man (Eph. 3:3-6).

The Human Side:

1. Hear the gospel (Mt. 17:5).
2. Faith in Christ (Jn. 8:24).
3. Repentance of sins (Acts 17:30).
4. The confession (Mt. 10:32).
5. Baptism (Mk. 16:16).
6. Faithfulness (Rev. 2:10).

FAILURE TO GET BACK TO BASICS

Connie W. Adams

When fundamentals are neglected, it is impossible to “go on unto perfection” (Heb. 6:1), and it becomes necessary to teach again “the first principles of the oracles of God” (Heb. 5:12). There can be no “work of faith” (1 Th. 1:3), unless faith is first established. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). “Without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb. 11:6). It is from the body of truth (“the faith,” Jude 3) that personal faith is derived. That is the gist of Paul’s statement in the signature passage of Romans when he said, “For therein (in the gospel of verse 16) is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith” (Rom. 1:17). When basic truths of the gospel are being neglected, then the faith of Christians is weak and congregations made up of such weak people become weak as well.

1) IGNORANCE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

Through Hosea God said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6). When we do not know the will of God on the very basic truths of the gospel, we are exposed to all forms of error and danger. Many congregations are filled with people who do not know the basic difference between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. They cannot “rightly divide the word of truth.” Lack of knowledge on the purpose of baptism has caused some to fail to distinguish between denominational error and practice on the subject and what the Bible teaches. There are many who could not tell a friend or neighbor why instrumental music in worship is wrong. They really do not know.

It was ignorance of the truth on the nature, work, and organization of the church that laid the groundwork for the institutional division. Some preachers thought they could just

“preach the principles” without making specific application and all would be well. They were wrong. One older preacher told me several years ago, “Some of us preached the principles and lost the churches where we worked.” Ignorance of the Scriptures is equally deadly when it comes to the nature of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit and His role in the Godhead, the function and duration of miracles, and a host of other issues. Indeed, ignorance is the seed-bed out of which the weeds of error grow. The remedy? “Preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2).

2) TOLERATION OF WEAK TEACHING AND

PREACHING. It would severely shock some congregations to hear plain, old-fashioned gospel preaching with full exposition of text and context, backed up by other passages which relate to the same subject. We used to call that “book, chapter and verse” preaching. What some are hearing is entertaining speakers who can move the audience from laughter to tears with their stories. They have learned the techniques of Lucado, Shelly, McArthur, Swindoll. But the writings of Cogdill, Wallace, Whiteside, Brents, McGarvey are anathema to them, not to mention their lack of familiarity with what Paul, Peter, James, John, and even our Lord said. They have been drawing from the wrong wells. The result? Congregations fed on such a diet come to like the taste of this new wine and do not want to hear basic and fundamental teaching of the pure Word of God. They develop “itching ears” (2 Tim. 4:4-5) and seek trained “scratchers” to satisfy their itch. Some elders, with more concern for not rocking the boat than for “sound speech that cannot be condemned” (Ti. 2:1, 7-8), have sought out men to fill the pulpit who can present a positive message in an entertaining manner. Never mind how much worldliness is in the

church, how many adulterous marriages are being tolerated, how many young people are drinking, dancing and being promiscuous, how many members visit the gambling boats, casinos or buy lottery tickets, or how much immodesty is being allowed.

3) **THE SPIRITUAL STATE OF SUCH CHURCHES.**

Churches fed on the kind of diet we have just described become not only weak in teaching, but in practice as well. Subtle shifts are made in the work being done and even in the worship being offered. The worship must be well manicured, short, and to-the-point. Sermons must fit this format. If the sermon runs a little longer than usual, or there is a baptism which delays getting to Sunday afternoon plans, then that becomes a matter of complaint. It never seems to occur to some that some subjects and some circumstances warrant a longer time. Some churches have so limited the time for Bible classes that there is inadequate opportunity for fair treatment of passages and for any productive time for discussion and class participation. May I ask, what is the hurry?

Weak, untaught congregations attract worldly-minded and weak people who want to salve their consciences with the veneer of religious interest, while not being challenged to change attitudes and practices in their lives. Moral weakness follows in the wake of doctrinal softness. If the Bible is the inspired and inerrant Word of God, then what it says on whatever subject is the final word on that subject. Paul said, "let us walk by the same rule" (Phil. 3:16). But, where basics are neglected, you can expect to find materialism, a desire to find a respectable niche among the denominations, a tolerant spirit toward moral looseness, and an absolute, unbending aversion to anything controversial. Calling error by its name, or identifying by name those who are in the forefront of promoting error, must never be allowed. Never mind the fact that the prophets of old, Jesus, and the apostles did exactly that, when the occasion required it.

4) **EVANGELISM IS HINDERED.** When the basics of the gospel are neglected, then there is a corresponding hindrance to the saving of souls. Jesus said those who come to Him must first be "taught of God" and must "learn" of Him (Jn. 6:44-45). People need to learn that the gospel plan of salvation requires hearing the Word, believing in the Son of God, repentance from sin, confession of faith in Christ, and baptism for the remission of sins. They need to know the difference in Bible baptism and denominational baptism, and that Scriptural baptism puts one into Christ (Gal. 3:27). They need to know that Scriptural worship consists of singing (not playing), prayer, teaching, and, on the Lord's Day, the observance of the Lord's supper and giving (Acts 2:42; Col. 3:16; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). They need to be well grounded as to the difference between the church Jesus built and those founded by men (Mt. 16:18). As they have time to grow, they need to learn of the work God gave the church: Preaching the gospel to the lost (1 Tim. 3:15), edifying the saints (Eph. 4:12), and relieving saints in need (1 Tim. 5:16). They need to learn about faithfulness, devotion, relationships in the church and family, corrective church discipline, moral conduct. There needs to be developed a genuine appreciation for the beauty of truth and the hideousness of error.

When a sinner is well taught the will of God concerning the salvation of his soul, he needs to be invited to obey that truth. He needs to clearly understand what he is being asked to do and why, whether that teaching has been done in a private or public setting! "The Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

We must not, we dare not, fail to get back to basics. Souls are at stake.

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CONVERSION OF THE 3,000 JEWS

Donnie V. Rader

In Acts 2, we find the beginning of the fulfillment of the great commission to carry the gospel into the world, beginning at Jerusalem (Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:47). In this chapter, we see what the prospective converts were told, what they believed, and what they did in becoming Christians. Let's consider an overview of the chapter.

1) **THE RECEPTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (vs. 1-13).** On the day of Pentecost, the apostles received the Holy Spirit (vs. 1-4), as was promised in John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; Acts 1:1-5. They were enabled to speak in other languages as the Spirit directed them.

There was an audience that had gathered in Jerusalem from all parts of the earth (v. 5). Their reaction to the Spirit-filled apostles was one of amazement (vs. 6-8, 12). Some accused the apostles of drunkenness (v. 13).

2) **PETER'S SERMON (vs. 14-36).** Peter begins by stating that the apostles were not drunk and reasoned why that could not be (vs. 14-15). However, they were witnessing something that was in fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel (vs. 16-21).

Now, Peter gets to the heart of his sermon: The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Three points are made about His resurrection: (1) This is the one they had crucified (vs. 22-24). Though their wicked hands had put Him to death, God had raised Him up. (2) David had prophesied of this resurrection (vs. 25-31). Peter quotes Psalm 16:8-11 and gives evidence that David did not speak of himself, but of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (3) Jesus is now exalted as Lord and Christ (vs. 32-36). The climax of the sermon is,

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (v. 36).

3) **THE RESPONSE OF THE MULTITUDE (vs. 37-41).** Upon hearing the evidence of the resurrection, the people asked what they needed to do (v. 37). Peter responded by commanding repentance and baptism for the remission of sins (v. 38).

Those who had an open mind to receive the truth willfully obeyed the instructions they had been given (v. 41). The number was about 3,000.

4) **THEY CONTINUED IN THE APOSTLES' DOCTRINE (vs. 42-47).** After this large number was baptized, they did not seek to serve God as their own desires dictated. Rather, they continued steadfastly in the doctrine taught by the apostles (v. 42), they worshiped (the things mentioned in verse 42 are acts of worship), they were benevolent to their brethren (vs. 44-45), and they continued in daily service to God (vs. 46-47).

5) **WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS CASE OF CONVERSION?** (1) We learn what they were taught in order to become Christians. They were taught about the resurrection of Christ and what it means. (2) We learn what they believed. They believed the message taught (v. 41). (3) We learn what they did. They heard the message (v. 22), believed the message (vs. 36, 41), repented of their sins (v. 38), and were baptized (vs. 38, 41). You can be saved just like the 3,000 on Pentecost. Why not do what they did?

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THE AGE OF THE EARTH, AND "SCIENTIFIC" DATING METHODS

Greg Gwin

The Bible clearly teaches that we live in a relatively "young" earth (Gen. 1; Ex. 20:11). Based upon what is taught in the Bible, the earth cannot possibly be more than 6,000 to 8,000 years old. It is absolutely impossible to harmonize what the Bible teaches concerning the age of the earth with the claims of some evolutionists. They would have us believe that the earth is billions of years old.

In defense of the "old earth" model, some would offer the "proof" of various "scientific" dating methods. Some of the better known dating methods (called "radiometric" tests) are Uranium/Lead; Potassium/Argon, and Carbon 14. Each of these methods attempts to establish the age of things by measuring the levels of radioactive isotopes present in the substance now and comparing these to assumed original levels. These tests often yield apparent ages in the range of millions of years. Can these "clocks" be trusted?

Consider this: Everyone knows that in order to have a reliable "clock," and to measure time, some things are necessary. These would include:

- 1) The clock must be set correctly at the beginning of the test period.
- 2) The clock must not be disturbed or reset during the test period.
- 3) The clock must run at a known, constant rate.

As an example, compare these necessary things to the Uranium/Lead "radiometric clock."

1) We do not know the setting of the "clock" at the beginning of the test. It is assumed that there was no lead in the sample initially. This simply cannot be proved. In effect, we do not know where the "clock" was set at the beginning of the test. How then can we possibly be able to measure the elapsed time since the beginning of the test?

2) It is assumed that no external sources contaminated the sample during the test period. In reality there may have been many natural factors that either added to or took from the levels of Uranium and Lead in the test sample. This would effectively "reset the clock" throughout the test period, and completely ruin any hope of accurately establishing how much time has passed.

3) It is further assumed that the decay rate of Uranium into Lead has always been the same. This may be true, but it cannot be proved. Knowledgeable scientists admit the possibility that such rates may have varied over time making it impossible to know that the "clock" rate was always constant.

The various methods of radioactive dating simply cannot be trusted to be reliable over the time periods they presume to test.

As Bible believers, we need ultimate confidence in the Word of God. Those who attempt to compromise the Scriptures with the unproven claims of "science" are unwise.

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INTRODUCING "THE KID'S ACTIVITY PAGE"

Paul Adams

It has been decided to include within the pages of *Back To Basics* an activity page for children. "The Kid's Activity Page" will begin with the February issue. There is a tremendous need to instill within our children some basic Bible principles. "The Kid's Activity Page" will be a teaching tool for the young (and young at heart).

1) **CHILDREN ARE TO BE INCLUDED IN BIBLE TEACHING.** When it comes to Bible study and teaching, we must remember the children. Churches, families, and individual Christians must never forget the little ones. The minds of children are to be instructed in the Word of God.

Even under the law of Moses, children were to be taught the commands of God. "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Dt. 6:7).

Timothy, as a boy, received instruction from his mother and grandmother. Paul wrote the young man, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (2 Tim. 1:5). Again Paul said, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).

2) **CHILDREN NEED POSITIVE INFLUENCE.** Paul reminds us, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33). Children are exposed to a multitude of

evil influences today: Movies, music, friends, and such like. We may try to protect the young from as much evil as possible, but there will always be something, or someone, at work to lead them astray. We must be proactive. We must be diligent to provide godly teaching, activities, and influence.

3) **CHILDREN ARE OF GREAT VALUE IN THE EYES OF THE LORD.** We see how the Lord valued children when He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mk. 10:14). Since the Lord so highly values children, we ought to greatly value them as well. When we properly value children, we will give them our time and effort in meeting their needs.

4) **CHILDREN ARE OUR FUTURE.** Psalm 127:3 says, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." The future is in the lives of our children. When we help a child learn to walk in the Lord's ways, our work lives on in the adult life of that child. So, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). The children of today are the church of tomorrow. If the church is to be strong and stand for truth, we must place emphasis on teaching children.

It is with these thoughts in mind that "The Kid's Activity Page" will be included in *Back To Basics*. Let us make sure we never forget the great value in working with children.

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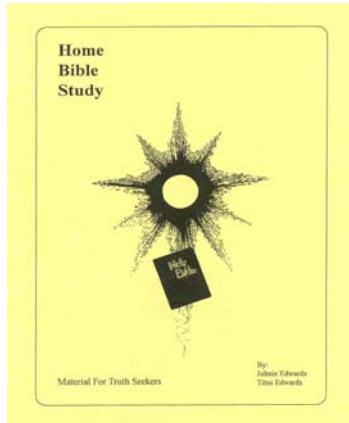
What Saith The Scripture? (book)

"Blessed Is He That Readeth"

Daily Bible Reading Schedule For January

Day	Morning	Evening
1	Gen. 1-2	Mt. 1
2	Gen. 3-5	Mt. 2
3	Gen. 6-8	Mt. 3
4	Gen. 9-11	Mt. 4
5	Gen. 12-14	Mt. 5:1-26
6	Gen. 15-17	Mt. 5:27-48
7	Gen. 18-19	Mt. 6
8	Gen. 20-22	Mt. 7
9	Gen. 23-24	Mt. 8
10	Gen. 25-26	Mt. 9:1-17
11	Gen. 27-28	Mt. 9:18-38
12	Gen. 29-30	Mt. 10:1-23
13	Gen. 31-32	Mt. 10:24-42
14	Gen. 33-35	Mt. 11
15	Gen. 36-37	Mt. 12:1-21
16	Gen. 38-40	Mt. 12:22-50
17	Gen. 41	Mt. 13:1-32
18	Gen. 42-43	Mt. 13:33-58
19	Gen. 44-45	Mt. 14:1-21
20	Gen. 46-48	Mt. 14:22-36
21	Gen. 49-50	Mt. 15:1-20
22	Ex. 1-3	Mt. 15:21-39
23	Ex. 4-6	Mt. 16
24	Ex. 7-8	Mt. 17
25	Ex. 9-10	Mt. 18:1-20
26	Ex. 11-12	Mt. 18:21-35
27	Ex. 13-15	Mt. 19:1-15
28	Ex. 16-18	Mt. 19:16-30
29	Ex. 19-21	Mt. 20:1-16
30	Ex. 22-24	Mt. 20:17-34
31	Ex. 25-26	Mt. 21:1-22

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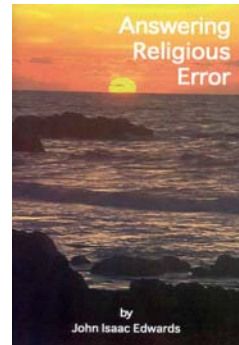


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