



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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October 5, 2016

Understanding the Old Testament The Rule of the Greeks and Romans and the Book of Daniel

I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. ¹⁴To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed. Daniel 7:13-14

As should be apparent by now the Old Testament is, in part, a history book and a commentary on history. The Old Testament begins in pre-history with creation, the fall and the flood. The fundamentalist/creationist view, ignoring science that contradicts the conclusion, dates human history as beginning around 4000 BCE as opposed to a date of around 15 million BCE for the emergence of hominids. We have greater confidence about dates the closer we come to the present. Most scholars agree that the entry into Canaan, the Promised Land, came around 1200 BCE and the anointing of Saul at around 1050. The return from exile in Babylon began in 538. Recall that, when the exiles returned to Jerusalem, they were still part of the Persian Empire.

Alexander the Great defeated the Persian Empire in 331 BCE. Alexander's empire began the Hellenization of the whole Mediterranean region. Hellenization refers to the spreading of Greek culture. Greek culture dominated everything including art, literature, music, science, philosophy, religion, cuisine and architecture. An instructor of mine used the omnipresence of Coke and McDonalds around the world as a modern example of the type of cultural dominance that occurred. The Hellenistic influences are apparent today throughout the Middle East. Alexander died in 323 BCE and his empire was divided among his generals. Ptolemy and his line ruled Palestine for the next 150 years.

In the beginning, the Greeks mostly tolerated the stubbornness of the Jews in adhering to their faith. However, with the ascension of Antiochus Epiphanes IV in 172 BCE came persecution. The practice of Judaism in any form, including circumcision or possessing the Torah, became a capital crime. These persecutions are described in 1 Maccabees:

⁴¹ Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, ⁴² and that all should give up their particular customs. ⁴³ All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted

his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath. ⁴⁴ And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, ⁴⁵ to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and festivals, ⁴⁶ to defile the sanctuary and the priests, ⁴⁷ to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals, ⁴⁸ and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, ⁴⁹ so that they would forget the law and change all the ordinances. ⁵⁰ He added, “And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die.” 1 Mac 1:41-50

⁵⁶ The books of the law that they [the Greeks] found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. ⁵⁷ Anyone found possessing the book of the covenant, or anyone who adhered to the law, was condemned to death by decree of the king. ⁵⁸ They kept using violence against Israel, against those who were found month after month in the towns. ⁵⁹ On the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar that was on top of the altar of burnt offering. ⁶⁰ According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, ⁶¹ and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers’ necks. 1 Mac 1:56-61

Still the people resisted.

During this time of persecution, the Book of Daniel was written. The first half of the book, written mostly in Hebrew, contains stories of faithfulness set during the Babylonian Exile. These include the familiar stories of Daniel in the Lion’s Den and the Men in the Fiery Furnace. The second half of the book, written in the Aramaic commonly used in Palestine during that time, is a form of literature known as Apocalyptic.

Apocalyptic literature emphasizes specific themes. It divides time into two eras: the evil present and the future reign of God. It describes the eternal struggle between Good and Evil. It uses symbolic language to describe current events, usually describing these scenes as visions. Apocalyptic proclaims that God will always ultimately prevail over Evil, but that Evil will seem to prevail for a time. Apocalyptic calls the people to be faithful to God in the face of persecution; to be faithful during the Evil times. In the Book of Daniel Chapter 7 there are references to four beasts. Most scholars believe that the images are meant to describe the Babylonian, Median, Persian and Greek Empires. The last beast with ten horns is the Greek Empire, referring to Alexander’s divided empire under the ten generals of Alexander. The “little horn with the arrogant mouth” is believed to represent Antiochus Epiphanes IV. Daniel should be seen by Christians as a proclamation that God is ultimately in control of creation and that we must be faithful even in the face of persecution.

In passing, I believe that I should address how some Christians have, in my view, misused the Book of Daniel and other apocalyptic literature. A minority of commentators who follow a belief system known as “Dispensationalism” (which includes, among other things, the belief in the Rapture of a few and the punishment of many) claim that the final beast is meant to be Rome. Hal Lindsay, the author of *The Late Great Planet Earth* and also a Dispensationalist, asserted that the last beast was the European Common Market. In his vision, the Lion/Eagle beast was the USA and the Bear beast was the former Soviet Union. Even though all his predictions from the 1970s failed to materialize, he continues to offer predictions about the future. The symbolism of apocalyptic literature is so broad that it can be applied to many things in different eras.

Two other books associated with this period are Jonah and Malachi. Despite the fish story in Jonah, Jonah is primarily a proclamation that God loves the whole world and is seeking the salvation of the whole world. Malachi is a book in the tradition of the earlier Old Testament prophets that calls the people back to faithful adherence to the Law. It also contains a prophecy of a “messenger” who will prepare the way for the coming of god. It is possible that John the Baptist viewed himself as this messenger.

The Maccabean Jews overthrew the Greeks around 163 BCE and Jewish rule of Palestine continued until 63 BCE when the Roman General Pompey conquered much of the region. Roman rule continued through the Fourth Century but was still relatively new when Jesus was born.

(Next week: Psalms and Proverbs [Final entry in the series])

Children's Church/Nursery

Sunday School and Nursery care is available every Sunday during the Sunday school hour. Children from birth through the 6th grade are welcome. Children's Church and Nursery care are available for Children from birth through pre-k after the Children's Time in worship. We encourage parents to keep their children of Kindergarten age and up in the sanctuary during worship. It's important that our children experience the worship of the Church community from an early age.

Lesson plans are currently available that volunteers can use to lead Children's Church during worship. These lesson plans (almost 100 separate plans) do not require any preparation or pre-planning. Each lesson includes a short Bible Story to be read to the children as well as a corresponding craft project. All supplies for the crafts are on hand in the Nursery.

We need two volunteers each Sunday to provide Children's Church during worship. With enough volunteers it shouldn't be necessary for any adult to miss worship more than one Sunday every two months. If you would be willing to volunteer to help with the Children's Church ministry please see Jeanne Rybolt, Julia Moore, Dawn Stevens or Dana Bauguess to learn more.

Halloween Trunk or Treat Event at Trinity

From Jeanne Rybolt

For the uninitiated, think of Trunk or Treat as tailgating for Halloween. We'll have cars placed in the parking lot with their trunks decorated and the kids go from car trunk to car trunk to trick or treat. Beyond that, events are still in the planning stage. The *almost firm* date for the event is Saturday October 29th. Possible events include contests (best costume, best decorated trunk, most original, etc.), hot dog supper inside, movie night, the ever-popular bounce house, games, entertainment, crafts, photo booth, etc.– whatever we feel we'd like to include in our event. You can find loads of ideas for trunk decorations on-line. I encourage the adults to come in costumes as well as the kids (a certain preacher and I would be dressing up as a couple of dwarves). Selfishly, I think it important to have family friendly decorations and costumes only – I get "spooked" very easily and will want to be able to sleep at night..... I'm proposing having the event on Saturday, October 29 beginning at 4 or 4:30 PM (the cars with decorated trunks would need to be in place earlier). We already have nine trunks promised but there is room for more. Please e-mail me to let me know if you would be willing to participate and would be able to help with games and food.

Jeanne.Rybolt@gmail.com

Preacher, What Does the Bible Say about ...?

From the time I came to Trinity I have stated on numerous occasions that I am willing to consider a sermon, or sermon series, on any subject that is of concern. If there is a subject upon which you would like me

to preach I will consider it. If I do not think it appropriate for a sermon I will explain why. It might also be appropriate to address some issues as part of a Newsletter article or series or as part of the Sunday School curriculum. But, if at all possible, I will seek to speak to these issues that are of interest on Sunday morning. One purpose of worship is to contemplate our relationship with God and if something is bothering you it is likely bothering others as well.

Thursday Morning Bible Study

The Thursday Morning Bible Study Group meets weekly on Thursdays at 10:00 AM. This week we will continue with Paul's Letter to the Romans.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons are part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Rachel Newman	Sam Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Leslie Eastwood	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson

The members of the prayer ministry of Trinity United Methodist church covenant with one another to pray daily for:

- Those concerns on the prayer list of the Church and for healing of body and spirit for all persons listed;
- For each ministry of the church that each ministry would work to bring the Gospel to those within our community and most especially to bring the Gospel to those who have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- For all the members of the Trinity UMC community that they be led and enabled to live as the Body of Christ;
- For our local community and all its needs, especially for those who are struggling with the burden of poverty;
- For our nation and our world that God help lead the people of the world to live in peace with God's Kingdom.

If you would like to be a part of this ministry (or if you have already spoken to me about it and were inadvertently left off the list) please let me know and I will see that you are added.

Up-Coming Sermons

October 9th: Sermon: Worship is a Verb. Someone once told me that a worship service had not "rung their bell." I suggested to them that the purpose of worship was not to ring their bells but to give them an

opportunity to ring bells; to praise God and to acknowledge God. My texts are 2 Timothy 2:8–15 and Luke 17:11–19.

October 16th: Sermon: Persistent Prayer. Many of Jesus' parables are puzzling, and none more so than the Crooked Judge and the persistent widow. She continues to demand justice even when she knows her case is hopeless. What is Jesus trying to say about God and what is Jesus saying about prayer? My texts are Jeremiah 31:27-34 and Luke 18:1–8.

Worship Leaders

October 9

Julia Moore, **Liturgist**

Tommy and Jo Cotton, **Greeters**

Marty and Dana Bauguess, **Ushers**

October 16

Stacy Bell, **Liturgist**

Dorise and Bill LeCates, **Greeters**

Ken and Jan Strait, **Ushers**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please plan to attend the **Administrative Council Meeting this Saturday, October 8 at 9:00 AM.** Important information will be discussed. All church members are members of the Administrative Council.

GraceWorks has a shortage on many items in our food pantry, and we need your help restocking it! Here is a list of some very critical items needed in our food pantry: **Critical Needs:** Canned green vegetables (not green beans), Canned beans, Canned meat (not tuna), Cereal, Hamburger Helper type boxed meals, Soup. Please support this important ministry with your regular donations. The box is located beside the side door.

Parents Night Out: Parents Night Out takes place October 14th from 5:30 – 9:00 PM. (This is a deviation from the usual schedule which is the first Friday of the month). If you can help, or simply wish to become familiar with this new ministry, please come out. Please make your friends and neighbors aware of this opportunity for children of all ages.

Hosts and Hostesses for First Sunday Lunch: Please see the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board. Please add your name to host this occasion for the coming months.

The Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ Sunday School Class is both learning and enjoying a series of videos, narrated by Ray Vanderlann. The videos as well as the narration take place in ancient lands described in the Old Testament. We enjoy discussion about what we are learning and the application of the lessons to our lives. We enjoy fellowship beginning at 9:45 with our study beginning at 10:00. All are welcome to join us as we pursue Biblical truths and the application for our lives.

Birthdays in October

Elaine Rohrig, David Stafford, Julia Moore, Jan Strait, Reba Collier

Happy Birthday to each of you!