

# Bible Challenge 2017

## Week 1: January 1-7

### **Prayers (Psalm 1-4)**

It seems an appropriate place to begin the year with the first four psalms. The books of psalms ("books" because Psalms is broken into 5 smaller books) formed the hymnal and the prayerbook for God's people in the Old Testament. About half (73) of the Psalms are attributed to David in their superscripts and 116 of the psalms contain a superscript (the dark bold writing at the beginning of the psalm) that gives us information as to the authorship or context in which the psalm was written. These superscriptions are part of the original Hebrew text, thus are considered to be inspired, authoritative for the church, and inerrant.

The Hebrew word that we translate as "psalm" is *mizmor*. Literally this word refers to a song that is sung while accompanied by a stringed instrument (typically a lyre). The worship in the Temple was marked by singers and musicians and a great deal of pageantry. Worship in the synagogues was more basic, with a greater emphasis placed on reading and explaining the scriptures than on singing. Historically, the Christian church has followed the synagogue model, recognizing that the new Temple is Jesus Christ himself and he does not dwell in buildings made by the hands of man. Private worship, though, is broader and included personal expressions of joy, like dancing...something not witnessed either in the Temple or in the Synagogue, but very present in the lives of many of God's people in the Bible, including David.

Psalms 1 and 2 are usually considered a pair, with one flowing into the next. The first sets a contrast between the blessed man and the wicked man. The blessed man delights in the law of the Lord (verse 2) and will weather seasons of oppression. Psalm 2 finishes the contrast by speaking of how the wicked men rage against God and how God scoffs at them for their ignorance (verse 4). Ultimately, the psalmist makes it clear that God destroys the wicked and gives a warning to all, saying, "Kiss the Son lest he be angry and you perish in the way; blessed are all who take refuge in Him." Such is the heart of the Gospel...flee to Christ in repentance!

Psalm 3 we are given the context for: David's flight from his son, Absalom (see 2 Samuel 15:30-31). The theme of this psalm, along with many psalms, is God's defense of and provision for his own. That does not mean that all will always be well and comfortable in our lives, but that when one decides to harm a believer, one must deal with the wrath of their God as well. We also see the introduction of the word, *selah*. We do not know for sure what this word means. It seems to be a kind of liturgical or musical term. Some suggest that it indicates a pause in the singing, others suggest that it is a point where the singers raise their voices in a kind of crescendo, and still others suggest just the opposite. We just don't know, what we do know is that it is part of the Biblical text. Psalm 4 is again a psalm of David focused on God's protection and provision.

### **Gospel (Matthew 1)**

Matthew begins with Jesus' genealogy through Joseph. Though Joseph was Jesus' step-father, there is still a spiritual heritage that is found there, just as with those of us who were raised by adoptive or step-parents. What follows the genealogy is the record of the angel's visitation to Joseph in a dream, protecting Mary's integrity and fulfilling prophesy by assigning Jesus as the child's given name. Jesus is the Greek equivalent of Joshua (or Yeshuah as the Hebrews would pronounce it) and is derived from the Hebrew word meaning "he saves."

Matthew's genealogy, it should also be noted, is unusual as far as genealogies go, for it contains the names of 5 women, two of which were from outside of the Jewish people (Rahab was a Canaanite and Ruth was a Moabitess). His genealogy also contains both Ahaz and Manasseh, two wicked kings who were engaged in idol worship. Why is this significant? Jesus came to save sinners,

not just people who commit little sins, but people who commit the biggies as well. And as far as Ahaz and Manasseh, not only did they commit idol worship, but they even sacrificed their sons on the altars of idols...that's about as big as it gets.

### **Wisdom Literature (Leviticus 1-3)**

I've included Leviticus as part of the Wisdom Literature because it deals more with law than it does with history. Often, people get bogged down with Leviticus, but it should be noted that according to Jewish tradition, the first eight chapters of Leviticus were the first books that children would have read from. It reminds us of just how important it was to the early Jewish people that their children learn obedience to God.

There is yet a place for Leviticus for Christians today. There is no other book in the Bible that so clearly demonstrates God's dislike for our sin. The gore, the blood, the horror of some of these sacrifices is designed specifically to show us just how God looks upon us when we choose to sin. We may be disgusted by these sacrifices and the many sprinklings of blood, but God is even more disgusted with our sinful ways.

### **History (Genesis 1-8)**

Our reading this week takes us from the beginning of all things to the subsiding of the flood, a period of time spanning about 2,000 years (following Biblical chronologies, the creation is dated about 4,004 BC and the flood somewhere around 2,000 BC).

Here we have the initial creation in a period of six days while setting the seventh day to the side for rest and worship. We have the creation of Adam and Eve, the Dominion Mandate, and the first wedding. Here we also have the fall of man and then the first murder in the Bible, though also with the first promise of the Gospel (called the protoevangelion) — Genesis 3:15.

We watch as the descendants of Adam and Eve walk the world and see them in outright rebellion against God. And we see Noah, the man God chose, build an ark which delivered him and his family (8 persons in total) along with a sampling of the animals...this, according to Peter, was the first baptism (1 Peter 3:20-21). We see Noah and his families remain on the ark for a year before the land finally dries out enough for them to safely depart. And we also see God's covenant of promise with Noah, that never again will he destroy the earth with water.

### **Prophesy (Isaiah 1-5)**

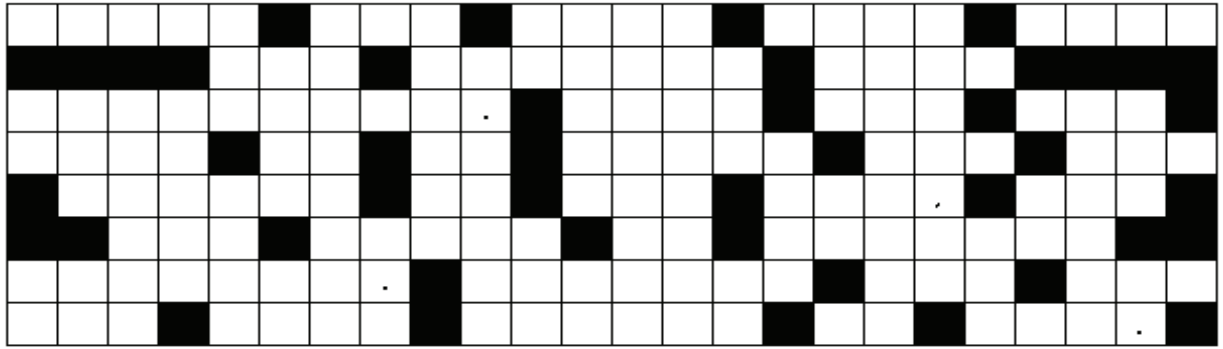
Isaiah is probably the most familiar of the major prophets with its 66 chapters speaking heavily of the coming "suffering servant," the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Isaiah 1 addresses the crisis that is still very present in much of the church today — people who go through the motions, do the right thing publicly, but who have no personal relationship with Jesus Christ. God pronounces woe against the many lost people of Israel and the nation that does not challenge her to live righteously.

### **Epistles (Romans 1-3)**

We wrap up week 1 with Romans 1-3. While Romans is clearly Paul's deepest and most theological letter, it is a good starting point for the new year. Chapter 1 lays out a clear reminder that it is upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not the ideas of men, that all Truth is based, which leads into the nature of the Law of God and how the law must be fulfilled. Then, chapter 3 focuses on our failure to keep the law and need for a redeemer. Much can be said and taught on Romans, so take your time reading these chapters and evaluating closely what it is that he has to say.

A Psalm...

Complete the phrase from the Psalms with the letters given...



D N G A  
 R L K K I E H M  
 E O R E N W E E O R S A Y E Y  
 W I N V B A T G E L E I S E D I I T H F A R  
 K E H M I H H H R N E T U D R Q W T H H F Y N  
 L H E T A L D E A B J A I G E W T N C D L O O U  
 S P S D S S I N B T L F S S E W U I N K I O A L  
 T R E I T E E R I R H O H C S Y I A R E S E L R

Word Search

N E Y V T H W P B R E H S C O F F S V B Z M S T D O P K A Z  
 X O Z T C R R X I Q T J S P G U B F S E A I O K O M W D J V  
 S R I E I I E G I I N O I T A V L A S G N H Z E G R L J F F  
 E A M S E M H E A M E T H U S E L A H I L M A E F F C D D H  
 Y A B S I T N F R M L G T B V E D J S N K C T R O U J Q A T  
 L E T B E C Y E X X Z K J I A O M Z B N W K W G S P P W R R  
 U S S O A B M B Z S M S Y V Z D P M Q I G X R N E E E B S P  
 F W U T E T G U I P A U B P E F A I H N S H E M L U A N E G  
 G S B V P T H W C T R X V R O G W N S G E G D K C S C S R O  
 C Z I C B X Z B I R Y O W F O E M G I I K G R Q A D E L P Z  
 J L T O A C Z V Q L I T A R Q J W J F M Z L U S R D J Y E N  
 S U S E J G Z O J R F C V D S U W T B U M J M G O T V K N X  
 S L H H O G K R A F X D S O X E R P E K Z A O P K A I L T S  
 D G F C W M M R J P I Q H V Z V I B P M F E E S B T U X P I  
 T V R Z M U U U T A B F Y H A G J Q K D Q I B C E K L T F Q  
 E U P U X V N O T B W A R F E D L S R W P P H M T P I T L D  
 O C R J N I I N G J M B B K E Q L F A N U G Y X L A H S M G  
 O R K T I A A L V B V D L J U V D H K C F Q V Y U A P X E G  
 A O V S L N L Z M E D V H V D J P N K U R H L C U B V T P W  
 I X O W E E X V A Y N M A H A R B A J N C P Y N C T H F A F  
 R D K V A L D M O I O S G P J J F G T D J S Y E N M B U H Y  
 V F O B V Y Z O P Z I N I M P W W F L N Q D L M C Y O T V J  
 T C C C X M C U V Z T C E H S Z Z X L Z L C I S K V K A X G  
 P F I E K F G B A E A H G D J P Y L R F U H B E C H P G D P  
 R J A L W V P D W I E G Y F M O A D S V G I P B D Y D Q C F  
 F G D W Z S O S K U R F J A M F S M J T J K E W R T J Q N B  
 H Q M M F K P Q Z C C F I O P Z I Z L M G L S T D T Y C N P  
 S Z I E J F K Z E K D X G U I O Q G N I R E F F O N I A R G  
 Y K W I F S W B C D U Y V D K L N U P S M A N A S S E H G D  
 F D N Y B Z A M J N O U E G E X J J S P Q S L H V N E D N V

- Abraham
- Amminadab
- Ark
- Beginning
- Circumcision
- Covenant
- Creation
- Enmity
- Fall
- GrainOffering
- Greek
- Jesus
- Joseph
- Lamech
- LiveByFaith
- Manasseh
- Mary
- Methuselah
- Murder
- OraclesOfGod
- Peace
- Priests
- Rahab
- Righteous
- Sabbath
- Salvation
- Scoffs
- Serpent
- Shem
- Sin
- Tree
- Turtledove
- Zadok