

Bible Challenge 2017

Week 14: April 2-8

Prayers (Deuteronomy 32-33)

Moses is better known as a prophet and a preacher than as a poet...that title typically falls to David. Yet, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we do have several songs and poems from the mouth of Moses that have been preserved in scripture. As Deuteronomy is brought to a close, we find two — a song and then a blessing over the people.

There are two themes that Moses brings together in his song. The first is the sovereignty and the majesty of God. He sings of the character of the one whom we worship in the hopes of reminding the people not to neglect His worship. The second major theme is that of God's deliverance of his people. When God's people forget the goodness of God's character and the good things that He has done, then they drift into sin. How we need to be reminded of this over and over and over so that we do not lose perspective on our lives.

The most significant statement (regarding the song) comes at the end. Moses states: "Take to heart all of the words by which I am testifying to you today, that you may command them to your children that they may be careful to do all of the words of this Law. For it is no vain word for you, but by this word you must live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess." The word of God is our very life-blood as a Christian. If we do not have our Bible's we know nothing of faith and God. If we neglect our Bibles we will be tossed to and fro in the sea of human invention and whimsy. Even today, if we wish this not to be our fate, we must carefully attend to the study of the Word. Moses closes with a blessing upon the various tribes, committing them into God's hand as the baton is passed from Moses' hand into the hand of Joshua.

Gospel (Matthew 19-20)

We begin our Gospel reading with a question posed to Jesus on divorce. The context of this passage comes from Deuteronomy 24:1-4, where Moses permits divorce if the husband finds some "indecency" (ESV) within her. The Hebrew phrase used here for "indecency" is literally "a nakedness of thing." When the Jews translated it into Greek, about 300 years before the birth of Christ, they translated the phrase as "a shameful thing."

The question that theologians have wrestled with over the years is what constitutes "a shameful thing" in the context of marriage that the husband would be willing to give the wife a bill of divorce (note that this written paper was a protection for the woman because without that, she could never remarry because the new marriage would be treated as adultery — which is one more example of how the Mosaic law was far more equitable than other ancient legal codes).

Liberal Rabbi's would take the language of "a shameful thing" and interpret it to mean anything that was displeasing to the husband. One rabbinical scholar went as far as to say that if the wife consistently burned her husband's breakfast, he could divorce her on these grounds. More conservative scholars argued that this was a reference to those actions that may not literally be adultery (because adultery was not grounds for divorce, it was punishable by death), but that did the same kind of damage as adultery would do. This might include things like abuse, excessively flirtatious behavior, and the like.

Jesus, then, is being asked to comment on this reading of Deuteronomy 24 as would any Rabbi of his day. Where did he fall? Was he conservative or liberal? These were questions that the people as well as the Jewish leaders would have of any rabbi, and so they asked Jesus, but with a twist...they removed the condition, saying, is it lawful to divorce without cause?

Jesus interprets the language narrowly, then, reminding the people that even though God does give permission to divorce because of the sinfulness of Man's heart. And the cause for a divorce? Sexual Immorality. Jesus (no big surprise) sides with the more conservative rabbis in interpreting the language of Deuteronomy 24, but he adds in one essential point of clarification...divorce is not to be desired, God hates it, and we should always seek to avoid it. That means reconciliation ought to be our goal in all of the cases with which we are presented — remember Jesus' language about reconciliation found in the last chapter...there is no coincidence that they are side by side.

So, what does that mean for us? First, in a society where on average 50% of marriages end in divorce, it means we need to do a better job not only of teaching covenant marriage in church, but that we also ought to take the vows we make much more seriously. Covenants are meant to last a lifetime — hence the "death do us part" language. Second, in a society where the pornographic is everywhere in the media, we need to do a better job of keeping ourselves from those things that will lead us into divorce.

The passages that follow lead us up to the Triumphant Entry of

Jesus, which we will read next week (about a week before Palm Sunday this year!).

Wisdom (Job 1-3)

Job can be a book that bogs people down a bit as they read through it. Take the book in bite-sized bits, knowing that it will be only on Tuesdays that the readings are assigned, and look for places to hang your hat, because there are riches in this book that are essential to the Christian life and worldview.

Chapters 1 and 2 set the stage for the dialogues that will follow. Satan challenges God that the only reason that Job is faithful is that Job has been blessed with material blessings. Thus, Satan asks permission to remove those things and to see if Job would not curse God and die. In many ways, this is the simple way to refute a health-wealth gospel. Health and wealth preachers teach that if you have faith, God will bless you richly. Yet, Job's account is one that teaches that if you have faith you will be tested severely.

Often we get caught up in debates around technical issues and we miss the significance of some of these arguments. Don't misunderstand me, the technical details like "when was Job written" are important, but let us not lose sight of the purpose of the book, which is to encourage us in our trials and to remind us that God is sovereign over our lives, so, as the old hymn goes, "Whatever my God does ordain is right."

Chapter 3 begins with a lament over the day that Job was born. Do not take these words lightly. What he is saying is not that he wishes he were dead, but that the world would be better off not to watch the suffering of this pitiful man under the hand of God. But, no matter how much we might at times sympathize with this sentiment, it is not true. We are far better off today as a result of Job's witness; there was just no way he could understand God's ultimate plan for his suffering or how it would affect the generations that follow.

History (Numbers 16-22,25)

Numbers 16 begins with Korah's rebellion and what follows is a challenge to Aaron's authority as a High Priest. We also find the complaining of the people and the fiery serpents as well as the introduction of Balaam, the false prophet who prophesies blessing on Israel and the coming of Jesus. Space here does not permit us to go into depth on any of these accounts, but I will point out that it was Balaam who taught Balak how to tempt Israel and we see that playing out in the final chapter of our readings (see also Numbers 31:16).

Prophets (Jeremiah 1-5)

I think that Jeremiah might be one of the more well-known prophet but also one of the least read due to his many laments regarding the destruction of Judah. He began prophesying in the southern kingdom of Judah 1 year after Josiah begins his reforms and then served all of the way until the fall of Jerusalem (and beyond as he was taken to Egypt, too). Thus, he served under Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. Yet, his message was the same: repent and submit to God's judgment. Chapters 1-3 focus on the reasons why God is bringing judgment, then in chapter 4, Jeremiah begins to tell us what that judgment will look like. Yet, (chapter 5), Jerusalem refuses to repent. How similar to the church in history!

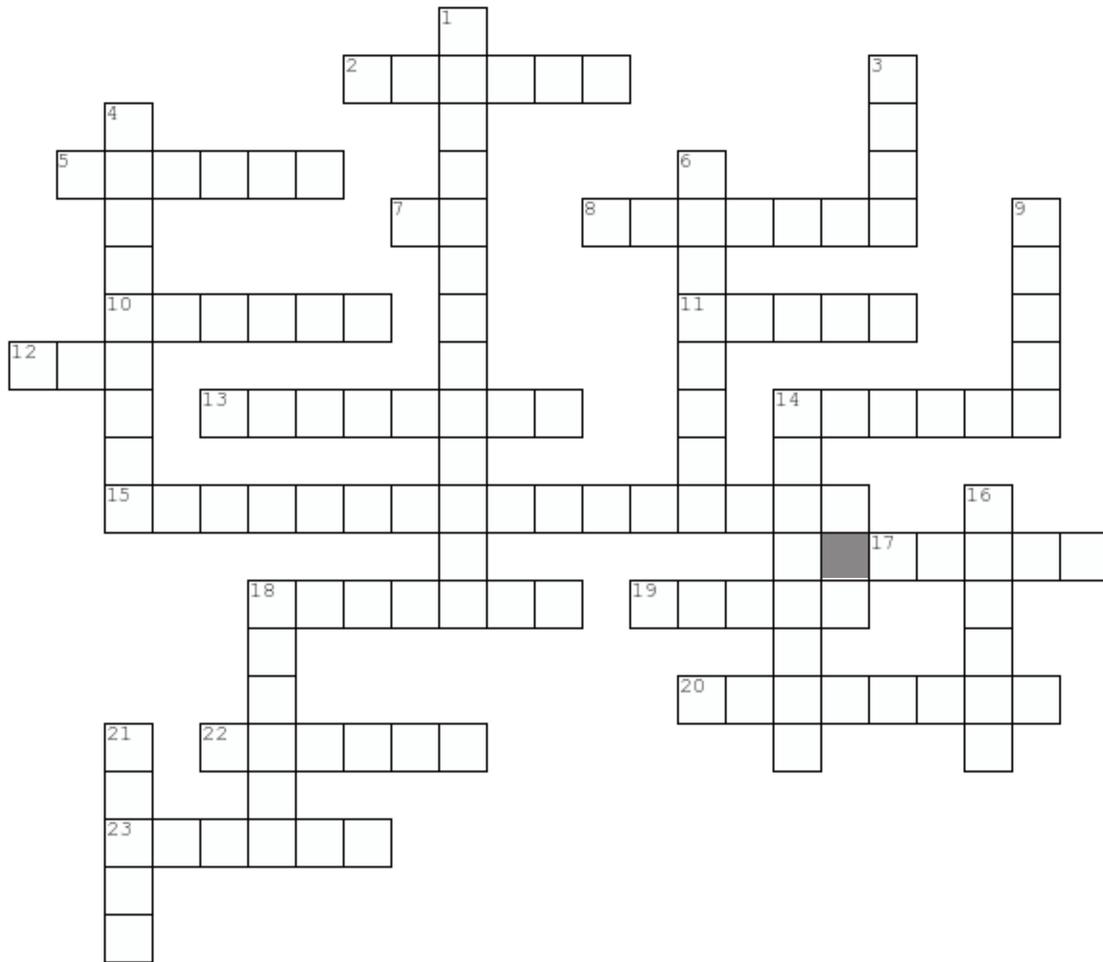
Epistles (2 Corinthians 1-3)

We are introduced to Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth. There is lots of linguistic evidence that Paul probably did write additional letters to Corinth, but these two are the ones that the Holy Spirit has preserved for us as Canon. In a large portion of this letter we find Paul defending his Apostleship against others who would like to make a name for themselves rather than glorifying Christ.

There are two passages, though, that are essential for us to understand. The first is found in 2 Corinthians 1:20, where Paul makes it clear that as there is one God and Savior in Jesus Christ and that all of the promises that God made to national Israel in the Old Testament find their meaning and their "Amen" in Christ — thus, Jews, rejecting Christ, reject those promises. And thus, those who reject the Old Testament rob themselves of the blessings (and continuity of the faith!) that God has meant for us as the church.

Secondly, Paul closes out chapter 2 with a question that Christians often raise. "Am I sufficient to do these things?" "Am I qualified for this task?" The answer that Paul gives is "no", none of us are. But we serve a God who delights to work through weak and broken vessels. How does that happen? We sincerely speak Christ. We do not "peddle" God's word like a salesman trying to make a buck. We proclaim it and teach it to those who will listen.

Week 14



Created with TheTeachersCorner.net [Crossword Puzzle Generator](http://www.theteacherscorner.net)

Across

2. Moses is not permitted into the promised land because he did this to a rock.
5. This is where Miriam is buried.
7. This is the region that Job is from.
8. We do this so that we are not outwitted by Satan.
10. Balaam was rebuked by this animal.
11. We are the '_____ of Christ' among those being saved.
12. Through Josiah, God says that his people have committed this many evils.
13. To such as these belongs the Kingdom of Heaven
14. This friend of Job was a Shuhite.
15. Jeremiah predicts that this will be lost and forgotten in Judah. (4 words)
17. We are being transformed from one degree of this to another.
18. When Paul greets the Corinthian church, he has his apprentice _____ with him.
19. This person was swallowed by the earth due to his rebellion
20. He witnessed an Israelite bring back a daughter of Moab and slew them.
22. A person remains unclean if the water of impurity is not _____ on him.
23. The Son of Man came to serve and be a _____ for many

Down

1. Moses made this to protect the people from the fiery serpents if they would look to it.
3. As a believer, the Word of God is your very _____.
4. Paul desired to visit Corinth on his way to Macedonia
6. In Jeremiah 4, he uses language that is reminiscent of _____.
9. I came from my mother's womb in this way and in this way I will return.
14. Jeremiah grew up in this region of Israel.
16. Jeremiah began his ministry one year after the beginning of this man's reforms.
18. These largely went to the Levites for their support.
21. This man's staff produced blossoms to show that he was the rightful High Priest.