

Bible Challenge 2017

Week 15: April 9-15

Prayers (Psalm 42-44)

We begin "Book 2" of the psalms and we are introduced to a series of Psalms by the "Sons of Korah." This is one of my favorite groupings of psalms not specifically because of the content but because of the grace these psalms represent. If you remember back to the book of Numbers, chapter 16, Korah was one of the men who rebelled against the authority of Moses and God brought him into judgment by consuming him with fire and swallowing his family into the ground. Yet, we are told that the Sons of Korah did not die (Numbers 26:11). Later, those who descended from the Sons of Korah were appointed as guards of the threshold of the Tabernacle (1 Chronicles 9:19). Thus, these psalms capture a bit of the thankfulness of deliverance and a gratitude that God did not destroy them, when they ought to have been destroyed.

Psalm 42 provides the words of my favorite praise song: "As the deer panteth for the water, so my soul longeth after thee." How that always ought to be the prayer of our heart. The psalms that follow carry with them the notion of desiring to draw close to God during times of distress; the response of a believer and clearly the response of the Sons of Korah who were delivered from death despite their father's impudence.

Gospel (Matthew 21)

How appropriate it is that we are reflecting on the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem the day after we celebrated it in church. Jesus' entry initiates the Passion Week of our Lord which is the event that Passover ultimately points toward. For the rest I will leave you to my sermon.

Matthew also records several other events that take place within this chapter. There is the second cleansing of the Temple from those who would defile its nature. The courts were meant to be a place of prayer and the outer courts belonged to the gentiles. The presence of these sellers was not only a distraction to those there for prayer, but it also crowded out those who desired to come before God in prayer. It should be stated for the record that these outer courts covered about 46 acres of land; in other words, this was no small feat.

One of the more controversial passages in the Gospels is also found in this chapter. Why is it that Jesus is cursing a fig tree for not bearing fruit out of season? Didn't Jesus know that it was out of season for figs? The answer is that anyone in ancient Israel would have known the season for figs and Jesus was no exception...plus, as God he knows the seasons. Yet, he is using the tree as an example. Jerusalem was often symbolized as the fig or a fig tree. The stewards of Jerusalem were not bearing the fruit of repentance or faith, hence his condemnation was a condemnation against the city and its representatives.

Beyond that, we have Jesus teaching and being challenged as to his credentials. In ancient Judea, as with the church in our modern day, one must have a license of sorts to preach. The real question that is being asked is from whom did Jesus gain his license. The Priests and Rabbis of the day gained their license from other men; Jesus had his from God. Which is the greater authority? The answer is obvious...or at least, should have been.

Wisdom (Job 4-6)

Job's "friend" Eliphaz begins speaking in our passage today. What you will find with each of these counselors is that they all bring a slightly different perspective to the table and they all work on the general assumption that God is punishing Job for some secret sin.

The view that Eliphaz purports is called "Fatalism." This is the view that God is in control and that man has absolutely no freedom or liberty to choose one thing or another. Thus, when things happen, bad or good, they are in many ways out of our

control. Job 4:17 captures the heart of Eliphaz's worldview: "Can mortal man be right in the eyes of God; can a man be pure before his maker?" And since the answer is no, why bother?

In Chapter 6, Job begins his response to Eliphaz; he insists on his innocence and declares that he would prefer God to crush him than to suffer this torment.

History (Numbers 26-33)

Numbers 26 begins with a Census of the people and once again we find lists of names that are foreign to our ears as well as numbers. We have talked at length about the significance of names being "signed on the dotted line" as part of the covenant, and this chapter is no exception to that rule.

The daughters of Zelophad mark a remarkable departure from normal practice in the ancient world. In most cases, were a man to die with no son to whom he might give his inheritance, the inheritance would either go to the husbands of his daughters or to one of the man's brothers. Rarely in the ancient middle-east were women considered to be able to hold property. Yet, in the case where a man would die with only daughters, they would become the inheritors of his estate (not their husbands). People often claim that ancient Jewish law was anti-woman, but those who do, know little of ancient Jewish law.

Chapters 28-30 deal largely with offerings and religious practices of the people. When we arrive at chapter 31, we have the vengeance of Israel on Midian...duly exacted because of Balaam's instruction to Balak to engage the people in sexual sin. And finally, as we arrive in chapter 33, we are nearing the Promised land and the initial tribes are allotted their inheritance in the land and the people are reminded of their journey — to ensure it is fresh in people's minds. We fall into sin when we forget the great things that God has done in our life.

Prophets (Jeremiah 6-10)

Jeremiah mixes laments with judgment on the people for their idolatry and sin. And while the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC is ancient history to us, the principles of what God hates and and upon what he brings his wrath is instructive to us even today.

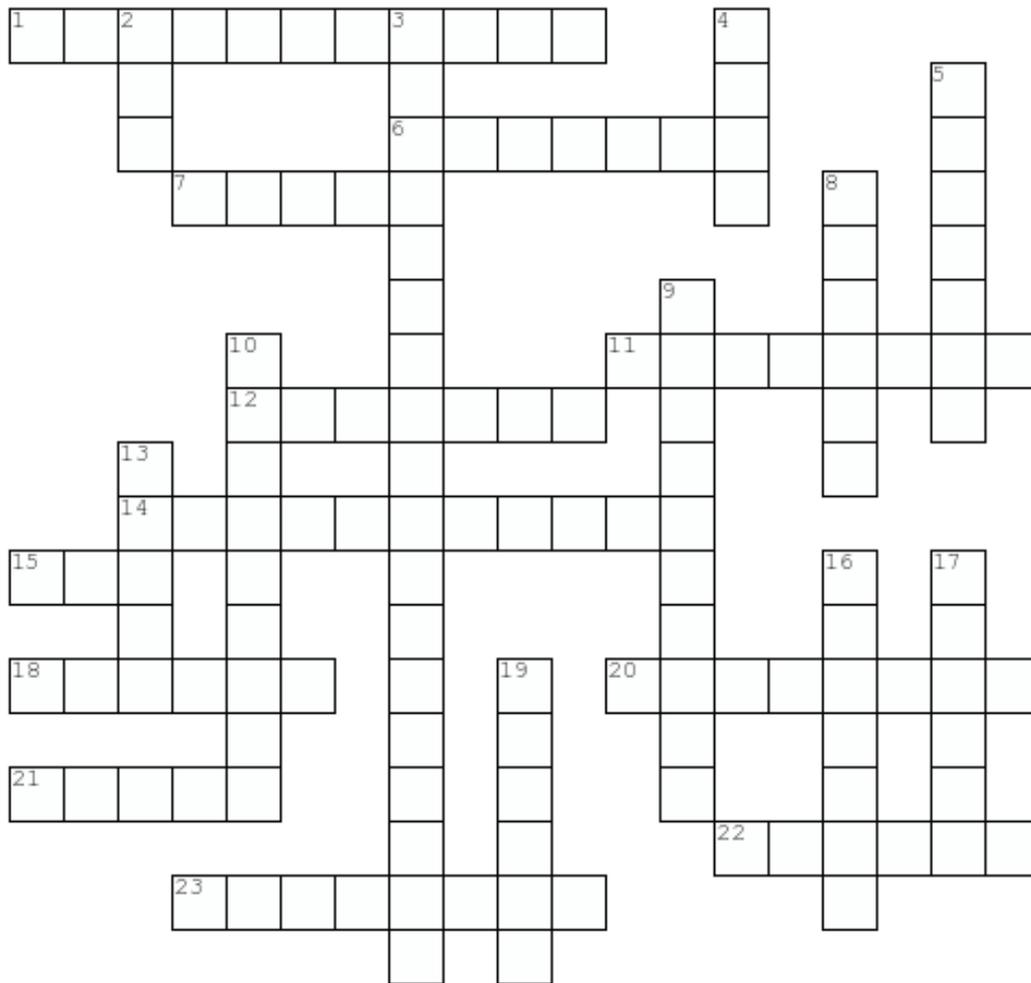
God condemns the people for loving the things of this earth and clinging to them, for being greedy for gain, for not listening to the Scriptures, and for idolatry. How that applies to us in America today! Even in the evangelical Christian church.

In Jeremiah 7:30 and following, we are introduced to the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom, or "Gehenna" in Greek. It is a place of making human sacrifices to idols and an abomination before the Lord. Yet, the people go and murder their children there. Chapter 8 continues the condemnation and then moves into a lament over the people. How the pastor of God's sheep is called to lead God's people in paths that honor him and to act righteously. Yet, they do not. Chapter 10 goes on to an extensive lament about the nature of idolatry and how those who bow to idols are destroyed by that which they have made with their hands.

Epistles (2 Corinthians 4-5)

Chapters 4 and 5 of 2nd Corinthians contain some of the most memorable language in this book — the notion that the revelation of Christ, who is the light and the glory of God is entrusted into the hands of we who are nothing but clay vessels and that though we suffer "momentarily" in this life, that suffering is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory without measure. Further, this Gospel is a ministry of reconciliation — reconciliation between God and man and in turn man and man. And how is that reconciliation worked? It is Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin so that we sinners might become the righteousness of God.

Week 15



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

Across

1. 'For we proclaim not ourselves but _____ as Lord...!' (2 words)
6. The Valley of the Sons of Hinnom is known as this in Greek.
7. The psalms this week were by the Sons of whom?
11. The daughters of this man petitioned that they be given their father's inheritance.
12. Man is born to this, says Eliphaz.
14. Though our outer nature is decaying, this is being renewed every day (2 words).
15. Aaron died on this mountain.
18. If a young woman wishes to make a vow she had to have this person's permission.
20. Eliphaz's worldview can be called a form of this.
21. We should do this in the knowledge of God, not in our might.
22. This man taught Balak how to lure Israel to their destruction.
23. 'Blessed is the one that God _____'

Down

2. Jesus was made sin for man
3. Man was made this by Jesus (3 words).
4. The treasure of the Gospel is held in jars made of this.
5. This son of Aaron in charge of the Census.
8. In our reading, Jesus cleansed this for the second time.
9. Jeremiah says that people say this when there is none of it. (2 words)
10. At this celebration, seven male lambs were traditionally sacrificed.
13. Which of the two sons did his father's bidding.
16. 'From prophet to priest, everyone deals _____.'
17. This man is chosen to succeed Moses.
19. His tribe is permitted to settle in Gilead.