

Bible Challenge 2017

Week 16: April 16-22

Prayers (Psalm 45-48)

We continue with psalms of the Sons of Korah in our readings for this week. The first of which is Messianic and anticipates the wedding feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19). As you read this, think of this as descriptive of your Savior and his relationship with us as his Church.

Many scholars believe that Psalm 46 is the psalm behind the prayer of Jehoshaphat that is spoken of in 2 Chronicles 20:1-30. At this point in time, they were on the verge of being attacked by Edom and their allies. Overwhelmed at the prospect of war, Jehoshaphat goes to his knees and commands all Judah to join him in prayer. The wisdom of the good king is clear in this, his action. The most difficult aspect of this is found in verse ten of the psalm — "Be still and wait upon the Lord." How we always desire to go, go, go and how rarely we be still and wait upon the hand of the Lord to move — especially when it seems that our enemies are gathering outside of our gates.

Psalms 47-48 focus on the glorious nature of our God and of his might. So, we say with the Psalmist, "Clap your hands, all you people, and sing loud songs of joy to God!" These psalms are great for worship.

Gospel (Matthew 22)

We continue with Jesus' teachings during his Passion Week. In each case, the Jewish officials are seeking to trap Jesus so they can have an excuse to arrest him. The Parable of the Wedding feast is important to note for several reasons. First, it is taught to condemn the chief priests who were seeking to arrest Jesus (note the context of the previous chapter). These would be the class of people who were invited but who paid no attention to the invitation, leading the servants to go out to the roads (the Gentiles) to gather people in.

Yet, there is still a guest who is thrown out because he is not wearing the proper apparel. In the Bible, clothing is often symbolic of one's good works (see Zechariah 3 & Revelation 19:8 for examples). Thus, this is arguably a picture of one whose works do not match his profession. This does not mean that we are saved by our works, but this means, as is taught by James, that faith without works is dead — it is not faith at all. Or, as the Heidelberg Catechism teaches, we demonstrate our faith in living a life of gratitude toward God. And thus, the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount ought to come to memory: "Get away from me, I never knew you."

Wisdom (Job 7-9)

We continue again in Job's defense against the criticism of Eliphaz. Job asserts that life is short and difficult and as a result, he will not restrain his mouth from crying out to God for justice. All the while, we can see a very darkened view of man — a weak thing that God has given great attention to and in need of forgiveness.

What follows is Bildad's challenge to Job. He charges that instead of rattling off his mouth, Job should focus on repentance. He goes on (7:13) to say that this is the way that people who forget God act but that their hope will perish for they are godless.

Job then begins his defense against Bildad's arguments. In his defense he appeals to the greatness of God (creator of the stars in their constellations) and we are not always going to understand his ways. God is just and destroys all evenly, Job argues, but he also argues that his days are short and he has no arbiter with God for his case. Indeed, there is but one arbiter between God and man and that is the man, Jesus Christ.

History (Numbers 34-36; Joshua 1-7)

Numbers closes with a series of civil laws for the people that we have largely seen before, which leads us to the people getting ready to enter the Promised Land. We will skip over Deuteronomy for now as it is as much a book of Law (and thus Wisdom) as it is history.

That leads us to Joshua and his leading the people into the Promised Land. The entrance begins with spies in the land once again, where they enter Jericho and meet Rahab, a woman who has given up the pagan ways of her ancestors and who has embraced the God of Israel. Not only will she be blessed by being saved, but her son, Boaz, will eventually marry Ruth, another convert from a pagan religion. And not just that, she then is in the line of King David and of King Jesus!

What follows is another water crossing, much like that of the Red Sea, God opens the waters for the people to walk through on dry

ground. We know the account of Joshua marching the people around the city of Jericho and its walls tumbling down. Interestingly enough, the first major archaeological dig of this area was led by John Garstang from 1930-1936. When they dug down he found evidence of collapsed walls and of a massive fire, all dating back to the Biblical era in the mid 1400's BC. While more modern archaeologists snub their noses at Garstang's conclusion that the collapse and fire were due to Joshua's conquest of the area, typically trying to date the city's destruction earlier than the Biblical chronology allows it, there is still no evidence that has been found that can truly refute the findings of Garstang that what is found in the archaeological digs is consistent with the Biblical story.

What is often rather unsettling about this account is that God commands that all life in the city be destroyed — even children and defenseless people (and animals). This is meant as a picture of judgment. The same thing happened when the flood of Noah came. The same thing happened to all of the inhabitants of the valley around Sodom and Gomorrah; the same thing happens here. And, when the end time judgment comes, once again, all of the wicked — all of those who are not of God's elect — they will be judged.

Sadly, in this case, one family takes personal possessions and hides them under the floor of his tent. Sadly, this brought defeat before the armies of Ai, the death of 36 Israelite soldiers, and it would bring capital punishment for the thief and his family. This is just one more reminder of how seriously God takes our obedience to his word.

Prophecy (Jeremiah 11-15)

Chapter 11 begins with some very strong words that must be understood as Jeremiah's audience would have understood them. God says (verse 3) "Cursed be the man who does not hear the words of this covenant..." To our ears, this may sound strange, but in Hebrew, the verb, "to hear" implies not just hearing but heeding. So these words could be translated: "Cursed be the man who does not obey the words of this covenant..." and that would make a whole lot more sense to our ears and it fits much better with the context of the passage. In the end, God expects us to hear and then heed his word, not to disregard it. And indeed, judgment follows when we are intentionally disobedient. God is so intent on judgment, that he commands Jeremiah (verse 14) not to pray for this people. Not to pray for them at all? I thought we ought to pray for all people, aren't we? The Apostle John doesn't seem to agree, for he writes that we are not to pray for those who are guilty of sin that leads to death (1 John 5:16). So, to borrow and adapt the words of Solomon: there is a time to pray and a time to cease praying for one.

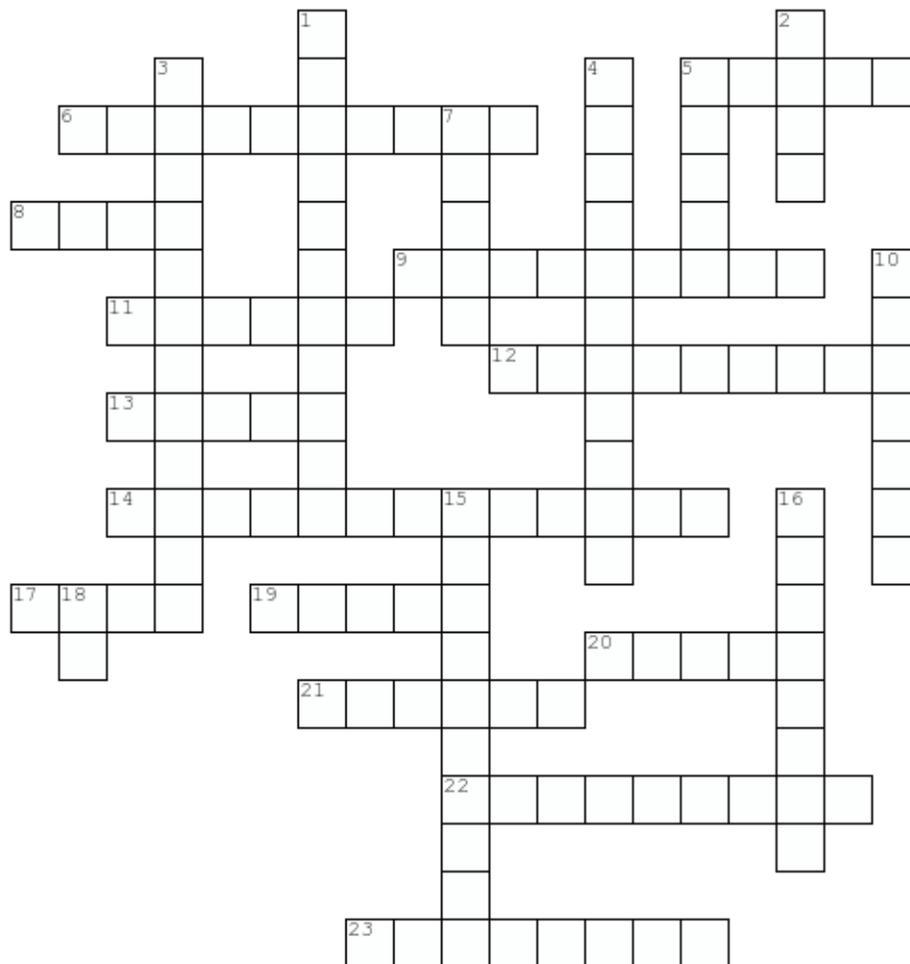
Chapter 12 introduces us to a lament of Jeremiah and a response by God...not unlike what we see in the prophet Habakkuk. The question that Jeremiah is essentially asking is why good things are happening to bad people...probably the most common lament that is known to the believer. God's response? Essentially God tells Jeremiah to be at peace because he just does not understand the ways of God. This is not unlike the words that God spoke to Job when Job posed the same question.

Chapter 13 begins with the kind of visual illustrations that makes being a prophet challenging — taking the tunic and hiding it under a rock for a long period of time and then breaking jars of wine. The words that complete our reading are largely judgment against Israel, though there is one more lament of Jeremiah before our reading closes out. Oh, to be amongst the wicked when God's judgment is poured out.

Epistles (2 Corinthians 6-7)

We begin to see Paul defending his work as an Apostle in these chapters, something that will develop further into the letter. The heart of his words is that his role and job is to do battle with those who would stand against God and God's wisdom — with weapons of righteousness in both hands (6:7). This is gladiatorial language with a picture of a weapon for attack in the right hand and a weapon for defense in the left. Given how common the gladiatorial games were during the lifetime of Paul, his use of this language ought not surprise us. It should challenge us, though, to think of ourselves differently than we ordinarily do. We ought think of ourselves like gladiators in the ring, with the Gospel in one hand and apologetics in the other, ready for battle due to constant training with the weapons at our disposal. How different our culture would be were all Christians to take such an attitude?

Week 16



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

Across

5. Job speaks of God making this constellation.
6. This man's daughters were given an inheritance in the land.
8. David calls the Messiah by this title.
9. These Jewish leaders did not believe in a resurrection.
11. Jesus says to pay taxes to this person if owed.
12. Paul writes that even as he came into this region he was afflicted.
13. The book of the Law shall not depart from your _____, but meditate on it day and night.
14. We are given this kind of weapon.
17. Even in Jerusalem people set up altars to this pagan god.
19. This prostitute shelters the spies in Jericho
20. In Hebrew, to 'hear' means one also '_____.'
21. This many memorial stones were placed at the edge of the Jordan as a memorial.
22. Jeremiah is to hide his loincloth near this river.
23. This archaeologist discovered the ruins of Jericho in the 1930's.

Down

1. Psalm 46 is likely the basis for this king's prayer.
2. God is angry because false prophets are prophesying this in His name.
3. Paul uses this kind of language when he speaks of his task.
4. After passing over the Jordan, the men had to be _____.
5. God once called Judah this kind of tree.
7. He and his family were executed because he took goods from Jericho and hid them under their tent.
10. This is the color of the cord that was to be in the prostitute's window so she and her family would be rescued.
15. What portion does a believer share with an _____?
16. Before the people attacked Jericho, they celebrated this festival.
18. Because the people did not destroy everything in Jericho, they lost their first battle against this city.