

Bible Challenge 2017

Week 20: May 14-20

Poetry (Psalm 59-61)

The first two of our psalms for today are psalms of deliverance from one's enemies. In both cases we also have the historical circumstances that were behind David's authorship of them. In the case of the first, you can find this in 1 Samuel 19. In the case of the second, you can find it in 2 Samuel 8. And all three psalms cite David as their author.

Psalm 61 is a song designed to be accompanied by stringed instruments, and though it is also a psalm that cries out to God for deliverance, this one has more of the feel of worship to it, fleeing to God as our strong tower. How this should be the cry of our hearts and souls. How we should yearn, in the midst of the trials of the week, for the respite that comes in the Lord's Day worship. How our desire and intent should be, as David closes his psalm, to fulfill our vows to the Lord. Sadly, too many Christians pursue their own ends first and see their vows before God as optional.

Gospel (Matthew 27-28)

These two chapters contain Matthew's account of the final trials, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because there is so much overlap between the four gospel-writers on these events, it is sometimes hard to read one without also reading the others in parallel. Yet, reading them in isolation from one another helps to bring out what the individual writers wanted their audience to best understand.

In the case of Matthew, writing to a Jewish audience, he spends a great deal of time emphasizing that Jesus is the sinless Christ who is being sacrificed in fulfillment of prophesy. These prophesies, his Jewish audience would have known well.

What we find as Matthew ends his gospel account is what we know as "The Great Commission," the command of Christ to go and make disciples of the nations. Notice that Jesus did not say, "convert" the nations, he said, "make disciples." What is a disciple? Jesus goes on to say that it is one who is baptized (made part of the covenant community) and is being taught to observe everything that Jesus commanded (note the significance of obedience).

I also want you to note that what we know as the Great Commission is a re-framing of the Dominion Mandate from Genesis 1:26. In Genesis, God states that Adam and Eve will be vice-regents of the creation, taking responsibility to order the creation in such a way as it honors God. Here, in the Great Commission, Christ has been given all authority and now commands believers to be vice-regents of the Gospel as it were, teaching the peoples to live their lives in such a way as to glorify God.

Wisdom (Job 19-21)

As we continue the second cycle of discussions, we once again see Job concluding his remarks toward Bildad and we see Zophar for a second time along with Job's response to Zophar.

Probably the most beloved lines of this book are found here as Job concludes his discussion with Bildad. Job states: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the dust; after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold no other. My heart faints within me!" (Job 19:25-27) This, of course, is the basis for the old Easter hymn, *I know that My Redeemer Liveth* by Jesse Pounds along with being the basis for the perhaps better known (today) praise song by Nicole C. Mullins, *Redeemer*.

In the case of Job, this statement is a statement of confidence that God will bring justice either in this life or in the next. It is also prophetic in nature as it speaks to the coming notion that the Redeemer of God will stand upon the earth, anticipating the incarnation.

History (Judges 9-16)

Yikes. While we have not yet arrived at the lowest part of the book of Judges (wait until next week!), we are sinking pretty low. And what we find here are the deliverances of the final judges in this book — yet there will be one more to come in Samuel!

Abimelech seeks to fill his father's shoes both as a Judge and as a self-styled king. In fact, Abimelech's name means, "My Father is King." Yet, for this to happen, as Abimelech was neither the oldest nor a legitimate heir (he was the child of a concubine), Abimelech has to orchestrate the murder of all of his brothers — and there were a lot,

seventy in fact. And Abimelech is very nearly successful, yet one of his brothers, Jotham, escapes, and curses the people who are supporting Abimelech through a parable about trees seeking a ruler. God would eventually bring Abimelech's downfall through a woman in a tower and a falling millstone...ouch.

We know little of Tola and Jair, though Jair's sons are described as being rather pompous. That leads us to the next cycle of sin and redemption, but in this case, God essentially says, "Go find your own deliverer." The deliverer that they find is Jephthah, the son of a prostitute who was raised outside of the promised land amongst the pagans. But he is a good warrior. Now, hopefully, as you are reading this, your mind is beginning to scream out that everything about this man is all wrong. What makes matters worse is that as we see Jephthah confronting Israel's enemies, it is clear that Jephthah knows Israel's history better than the people knew their own history...how important it is that we know and understand the plans of God through the ages and do not forget from where we have come.

What Jephthah is best remembered for is the sacrifice of his daughter due to his unwise vow. Even so, Jephthah is found in chapter 11 of the book of Hebrews amongst the other men and women of faith. That reality has caused great debate over whether perhaps what was done is that Jephthah's daughter was confined to serving at the Temple for the rest of her life. We don't have space here to develop the arguments on both sides, though I would suggest that the most natural reading of the text would be that she was sacrificed, a practice that was not uncommon in the pagan culture in which Jephthah would have been raised, yet at the same time, Hebrews reminds us that we are all sinners and saved by grace — even Jephthah.

Jephthah is followed by Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. Again, we know little about these men apart from the fact that like Jair before them, there seems to be some pompous personalities at least amongst Abdon's children.

The final Judge is the best known... Samson...or Sampson (if you are reading the Greek translation). Books have been written about this man and his tangles with the Philistines and with Delilah. As space is limited, let me simply state that Samson had one primary job as Judge: crush the Philistines. This, Samson did and did well.

Prophets (Jeremiah 31-35)

We begin with likely the most well-known chapter in the book of Jeremiah. It is here that God declares that he will make a new covenant with the people in the last days, which is different than the covenant he made before, writing the covenant on their hearts, circumcising them in the spirit and not in the flesh (as Paul would later write). This chapter also contains a promise to the people that they would not be in exile forever and that though the mothers would weep and mourn over their lost sons, there is still hope as all is not lost and as God's hand is upon even his people who are taken into captivity. These words would be quoted in Matthew 2, when the Gospel writer speaks of the mothers of the dead babies weeping...yet promising that hope still remains as the Messiah was delivered from the slaughter.

Chapter 35 we find a lived-out parable found in the obedience of the sons of Jonadab (the Rechabites). Their father had instructed them to drink no wine, to live in tents, and to not plant crops (a sign of lamentation for Jerusalem was about to fall). These men were obedient to their father's instructions in contrast to the inhabitants of Jerusalem who had heard the commands of God and yet been unfaithful. This chapter stands as a warning to all Christians, even today, that we must live in obedience to God in all things lest we face His judgment.

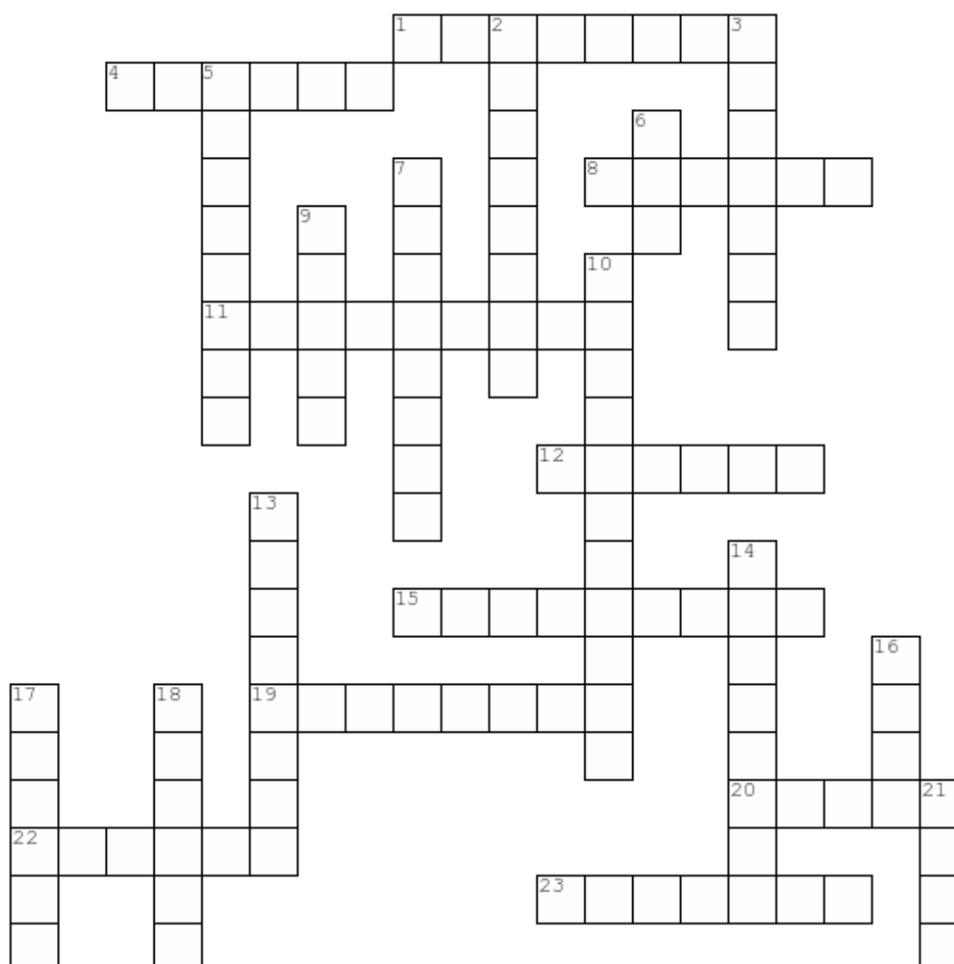
Epistles (Galatians 3-4)

Galatians 3-4 ought to sound much like the book of Romans. The main themes are salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, those who have faith are sons of Abraham, and we have become sons and heirs, adopted children of God.

The passage that often causes people to struggle is that of Hagar and Sarah being allegorized to represent the law at Mount Sinai and grace at Mount Zion of God. The key though is found in the contrast and in the reality that Paul is warning people that if they cling to the legalism of the Judaizers, they belong to the Jerusalem below — a Jerusalem slated for destruction.

Week 20

Complete the crossword below



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

Across

1. 'O my Strength, I will watch for you, for you, O God, are my _____.'
4. This is the father of Jonadab who commanded his sons to obedience.
8. In the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom (later known as Gehenna) people sacrificed their children to this pagan god.
11. This man's name means, 'My Father is King.'
12. Job laments that this group of people often seem to find success in life.
15. We are to make this of the nations.
19. Samson was dedicated to these vows from birth.
20. Paul says that she represents Mount Sinai.
22. God Sent the Spirit of _____ into our hearts, crying out 'Abba, Father.' (2 words)
23. In Christ, we are this person's offspring.

Down

2. Job declares that he knows his _____ lives.
3. Gideon had this many sons.
5. 'Behold, the days are coming declares the Lord when I will make a new _____ with the house of Israel.
6. Jeremiah promises that God will turn our mourning into this.
7. This Hebrew king would die in Babylon.
9. The righteous shall live by _____.
10. Samson's primary job as a Judge was to kill whom?
13. Jesus modifies this mandate when he utters the Great Commission.
14. This Judge was the son of a prostitute.
16. Samson carried off the gate of this city.
17. This woman, who is the symbol of all Jewish women, is described as weeping for her lost children.
18. '_____ is anyone who is hanged on a tree.'
21. 'Lead me to the _____ that is higher than I.'