

Bible Challenge 2017

Week 21: May 21-26

Prayers (Psalm 62-65)

Psalm 62 begins with the words, "For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation." This is a statement of trust and it is the kind of statement that every Christian ought make as we struggle through life in this fallen world. How often we are so impatient that we are unwilling to wait upon the Lord for Him to do his work in his timing. Thus, I say with David, "Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

Psalm 63 is a psalm based on 1 Samuel 23 and 2 Samuel 16, but is also a psalm that the early church clung closely to. In fact, it was commonplace for the church to sing this psalm daily as it reminded them that they were in the wilderness and heading toward the promised land held in heaven. Thus, its themes are that of trusting in God and of silencing those who stand against God and His law.

Psalm 64 is a lament and Psalm 65 pretty much takes us back to where we began in Psalm 62. "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple." Finding our satisfaction in God is often a challenge, but it is always a blessing.

Gospel (Mark 1)

Mark is the shortest of the Gospel accounts and most likely the earliest. When you parallel Mark with Matthew and Luke, it quickly becomes clear that both of these other Gospel writers borrowed large sections of the text from Mark's account, though Luke's focus is to create a chronology of Jesus' life for a Greek audience and Matthew was seeking to create a theologically organized piece for a Jewish mind. It is unsure as to who Mark's primary audience is, but as tradition holds that Mark was Peter's secretary in Jerusalem, the most logical answer is that Mark was accounting the life of Jesus based on Peter's teachings to Jewish believers and laying things out simply and briefly so that any could understand. Most scholars would hold that Mark was likely written in the late 40's or early 50's, only about 20 years after the death of Jesus — a text arguably for a young, second-generation church.

Chapter 1 takes you from the forerunner, John the Baptist, through Jesus' Baptism, into the wilderness temptation, and into the beginning of his ministry. One of the words you will notice that occurs with frequency is the word, "immediately." Jesus "immediately" does this or that. He portrays Jesus as a man of action, taking on his Messianic role with zeal. There is another theme that you will see showing up in Mark's Gospel, and that is the theme of showing "proof" to the Jewish authorities that Jesus is the Son of God.

Wisdom (Job 22-24)

We continue in this cycle with the reproach of Eliphaz and Job's defense against him. Eliphaz remains convinced that Job is guilty of some great sin. He accuses him of depriving the poor, of not caring for widows, and blaspheming God by not submitting to his discipline. You can almost imagine Job wanting to smack Eliphaz for his caustic words, yet he stays his hand. Instead, he unleashes his tongue arguing that he has been looking for God in the hopes that God will explain why this event has taken place. It is not that Job is unwilling to repent; he would like to know what it is that he must repent of before he takes such an action. Job continues that if God is meeting out justice on him for doing wrong, then isn't it unjust of God to permit those who really are wicked to prosper.

Many Christians fall into the trap of being unwilling to forgive themselves for their sin even after they have repented. When they have fallen into sin, every time something bad happens, they see it as God's judgment on them because of said sin. The sad thing is that when people fall into this manner of thinking, they rob themselves of the grace that accompanies forgiveness and they fall into a kind of works-righteousness. Indeed, this is not to say that we ought not strive to be holy, but God is not a divine ogre seeking always to torment (that's the Devil!), he is a God of grace, seeking to redeem and to forgive his own. Eliphaz does not understand that; Job doesn't fully understand it either based on his words, but it is a lesson he soon will learn.

History (Judges 17-21; Ruth 1-3)

We bring the book of Judges to a close with chapters that simply make most people go, "huh? really!?!". There is a man named Micah who steals money from his mother and then confesses and then she gives him a portion of that money (which he originally stole) to make an idol and then everyone was satisfied...that is until there was a levite who was essentially doing free-lance work, looking to be a priest to the highest bidder. Micah hires the levite as his priest and that works out until the tribe of Dan decides that they need to find a new region of inheritance, so they leave the land appointed to them by God behind, and conquer a new land for themselves, but on the way, they hire the levite as their priest and this levite steals the household gods of his original employer to do so. And finally, we discover that while this priest was of the tribe of Levi, he was not of the line of Aaron and not even qualified to be a priest in the first place.

And as if that isn't bad enough...then there is this other levite whose concubine ran away. He goes and convinces her to come back, but on the way back, they stay overnight in the city of Gibeah with one of Ephraimites who lived there. The men of Gibeah wanted to gang-rape the levite, but his host pushed the levite's concubine out to the crowd and they gang-raped her instead. The next morning, the levite finds her near-dead on the doorstep, tosses her on the back of his donkey, and then proceeds home. Once there, he discovers she is dead, so he cuts up her body into 12 pieces and sends one piece to each of the tribes by courier.

Then, everyone in the nation gets mad and comes down and destroys Gibeah and the Benjaminites. Then they realize that there are not enough women left to preserve the tribe of Benjamin amongst the people of God, so they raid wives from the tribes that did not participate in the vengeance and then they kidnap pagans coming down for a festival, to provide wives for these Benjaminites. And in our amazement at the events taking place, we say with the author of the text, "every man did what was right in his own eyes." Indeed, this sets the stage for the final judge: Samuel.

Yet, before we move on to Samuel, we find the little book of Ruth tucked in after Judges. This is due to the fact that Ruth is set during the time of the Judges, though scholars debate exactly when.

At the heart of Ruth is a love story that prefigures the coming Messiah's redemption of his sinful people. Even in the genealogy, then, we find that Ruth's descendent is King David...and eventually King Jesus. The other aspect of the book of Ruth that is important to note is that it stands as a reminder that even in the midst of the depravity of the era of the Judges, there are still faithful people in Israel and that God was still at work on a personal level as well as in a national level.

Prophets (Jeremiah 36-40)

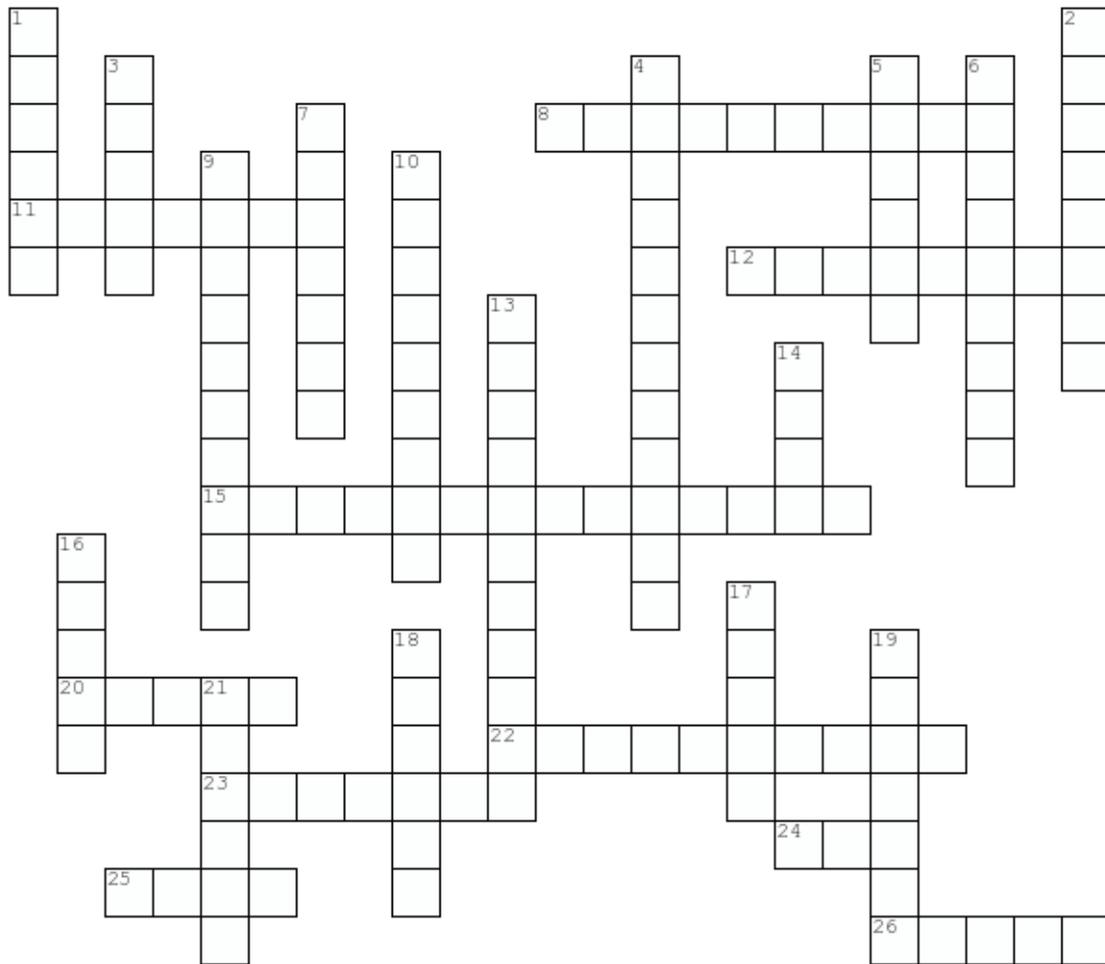
As the world of Jerusalem begins to unravel in these chapters of Jeremiah, the thing that we find is that of the king seeking to silence the word of God. He burns up the written testimony of Jeremiah and he ultimately has Jeremiah placed in a cistern for safe-keeping. Yet, the word of God goes out even so and the conclusion that the king hopes to avoid is not avoided by failing to listen to the prophet.

How little things have changed. Kings and powers have sought to prevent the Word of God from getting into the lives of the people. Some have published distorted Bibles, some have insisted that Bibles only be printed in arcane languages, and other nations have outright outlawed the preaching and teaching of Biblical truth, yet the word goes out, superintended by the Holy Spirit. And nations have crumbled because they stood in opposition to the spread of the Word of God. How we must heed it if we wish to preserve our own nation even today.

Epistles (Galatians 5-6)

We round out Galatians this week with an exhortation toward Godly living in gratitude for our salvation. Because God has done this for us, we must order our lives in accordance to God's Word and God's Word alone. Thus, we nurture the fruit of the Spirit, we walk alongside of those who are facing turmoil and we seek to show to others the kind of grace we have received by God.

Week 21



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

Across

8. Paul wishes that those who preach legalism would do this to themselves.
11. Jeremiah is placed here for safe-keeping.
12. This king had his eyes put out.
15. The name of the Babylonian King that controlled Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day.
20. The Canaanite city that the Sons of Dan resettled to.
22. What was unusual about the soldiers defending Benjamin? (2 words)
23. Paul indicates to the Galatians that he is writing his own text with large _____.
24. When deliverance is had, the power belongs to whom?
25. The people went wild in the book of Judges because they did not have this.
26. The Levite who joins up to serve Dan is the descendant of whom?

Down

1. The name of Jeremiah's secretary or scribe.
2. This is a kind of tune by which Psalm 62 would be sung.
3. Paul says that this is the only thing that he will boast in.
4. A fruit of the Spirit
5. When Ruth arrives in Boaz's fields, they are harvesting this.
6. This king burned the scroll with Jeremiah's words.
7. 'Like wild _____ in the desert the poor go out and toil seeking gain.
9. John's baptism was this kind of baptism.
10. Naomi's husband.
13. Jesus was with these after his 40 days of fasting and trial in the wilderness.
14. Naomi changed her name to this because it means 'bitter.'
16. The early church sang Psalm 63 how frequently?
17. This Levite stone 1,100 silver pieces from his mom.
18. In what city was the Levite's concubine raped and killed.
19. For this Christ has set us free.
21. When Jesus casts out demons he tells them to be _____.