

# Bible Challenge 2017

## Week 22: May 28-June 3

### **Prayers: Psalm 66-68**

While Psalm 68 is attributed to David, Psalms 66 and 67 remain anonymous, though tradition ascribes them to David as well. Psalm 66 is a psalm of pure worship for the people of God, singing God's praise for his character and for his faithfulness. Similarly, Psalm 67 speaks of praise, though with more of a focus on thankfulness than outright adoration. And Psalm 68 stands as a proclamation of the greatness of God and declares that those who stand against Him will perish under His wrath.

### **Gospel: Mark 2-3**

Mark 2 and 3 gives us a taste of what Jesus' public ministry is going to look like. He begins in Capernaum healing a paralytic while essentially declaring that he is God because he forgives the man's sins (something that only God can do...the healing becoming the testimony that the first (forgiveness) was fully accomplished. We should maybe note also that the house Jesus was in was likely that of Peter and his family and here they are seeking to be good hosts and someone knocks a hole in their roof big enough to lower the man into Jesus' presence. Yikes!!!

Then we find record of the call of Levi, better known to us as Matthew. And then there are challenges to Jesus' authority, culminating on a challenge about Jesus allowing his disciples to eat grain on the Sabbath. At his statement that he is Lord of the Sabbath and his willingness to heal on the Sabbath, the Pharisees and Herodians begin planning to destroy Jesus.

In the middle portion of chapter 3 we find the twelve apostles listed (noting that Peter is always first and Judas is always last in lists such as these). And finally we have a statement about those who are Jesus' true relatives — relationship based on faith and obedience to God and not on genetics.

### **Wisdom: Job 25-27**

We find Bildad once again offering his faulty counsel to Job, but this time Bildad resorts to an *ad hominem* argument...an attack against Job's person. Such seems to be the approach that dominates society today as well. Two people find themselves in disagreement and when one realizes that he is out of reasonable arguments to make, he attacks the person, accuses him of sexism, racism, fascism, or of some other "ism" that is meant to look bad. "You just argue that way because you are a white man!" people proclaim. Or they say, "You are just an uneducated and unscientific person!" And so the arguments go. One needs no facts, only a lying tongue, to succeed in argumentation such as this.

Thus, Bildad accuses Job of being a maggot and not a man — a worm even — because Job resists Bildad's counsel. All the while, Bildad presents himself as fearing God and showing him reverence while correcting the vainglory of Job.

Job responds essentially by insisting that Bildad is full of himself. Of course Job knows and understands the bigness of God and his incomprehensibility. Even so, Job insists that he is resting in God's justice and propriety all the while offering a warning to Bildad that God judges the wicked and there is no escaping the punishment of God.

### **History: Ruth 4 — 1 Samuel 1,3-8**

Ruth closes with the marriage of Ruth and Boaz as well as the birth of their son, Obed. In Hebrew, Obed means "He Works" or in some cases, "He worships" — recognizing that worship is a form of service before God. And indeed, how appropriate this name is given that he is the work of God's providence in bringing Ruth into the land.

We will skip over 1 Samuel 2, containing Hannah's song, until later in the month and we will treat it as the poetic song or prayer that it is meant to be. Our text in Samuel, then, contains the birth of the Judge as well as the circumstances behind the birth and the call of Samuel to serve in the place of Eli. As we see Samuel rise to prominence, we see Eli and his sons sinking into obscurity all due to Samuel's unfaithfulness in raising his sons and in teaching them to honor God.

One of the more interesting events contained in our text is that of the capture of the Ark of the Covenant. This is just one more illustration of men doing what they think is right in their own eyes and not what was right in the eyes of God. They treated the Ark more as a lucky rabbit's-foot and thought just because they had the Ark in battle, the enemy

would be defeated. God does not tolerate those who would treat him with superstition, and so, the Ark was captured by the Philistines and taken back to Philistia.

Of course, I am not sure which God hates more...when his covenant people worship and engage him based on their own imaginations or on the traditions of the culture around them or when pagans make light of his name. This is not a question that one wants to discover an answer to the hard way!

So, the Philistines take the Ark back and place it in the temple of Dagon as a trophy. It is not long before the idol of Dagon starts falling over, essentially bowing prostrate before the Ark. In addition, the people of the city started getting tumors all over their bodies. There is a great deal of linguistic debate as to the nature of these tumors, but one suggestion is that these were likely hemorrhoids of a sort. Others argue that the bumps may be connected to the Bubonic Plague, which might have been spread by the mice. Whatever they were, they were uncomfortable and humiliating. So, it was sent from Ashdod to Gath and then to Ekron. In Gath there were more of these tumors and in Ekron there was both tumors and death. The people cried that the Ark must be returned to Israel!

But the people did not know how to return it. So they sought out a diviner and returned it with five golden tumors (that had to be funny!) and five golden mice — five due to the number of Lords of Philistia and the items reflecting the kinds of plagues that were upon them. A note here should also be made in terms of parallels with the people of Israel being captured, held in Egypt, and then being led out by God in the midst of plagues that ravaged the land and the people. Further, Israel left Egypt with Egypt's wealth in tow, much as the Ark left Philistia with a mark of their wealth. Why is this significant? It is because God will be honored and because it illustrates that God's hand and God's hand alone is responsible both for the delivery of his people from captivity and again he delivers his Ark from captivity as well. The Ark would return to the nation of Israel, but would not be fully restored to its prominence until David and then Samuel.

Our reading ends on a low note, though. The people are demanding that Samuel will anoint a king over Israel like that of their surrounding nations. Now, God had always promised the people a king (Deuteronomy 17:14-20), but one after his own making, not after the style of the pagans.

### **Prophecy: Jeremiah 41-46**

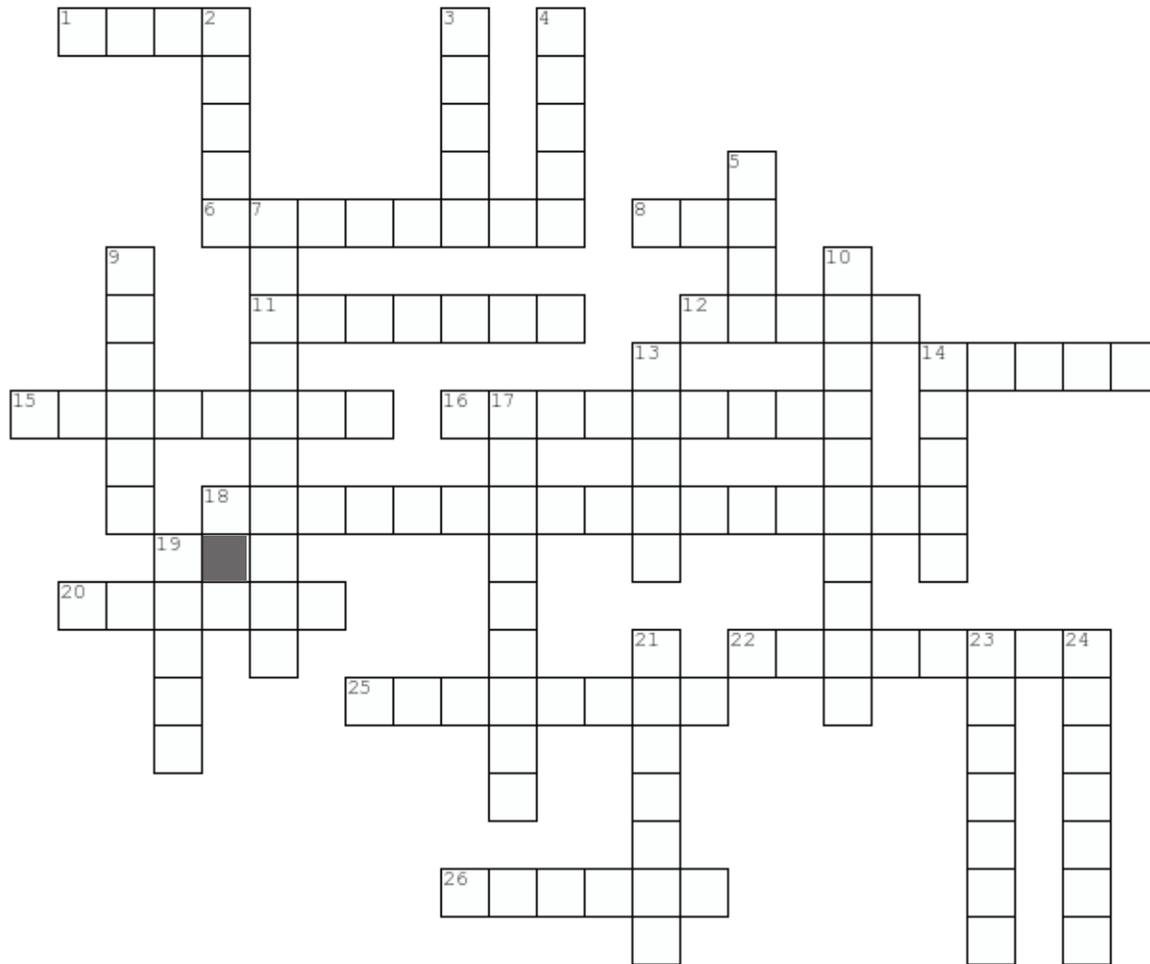
We bring a close (mostly) to Jeremiah's text. In chapters 41-44 we have the capture of Jeremiah by men who were seemingly repentant, but when they heard news they did not want to hear (stay in the Land) they fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them. When we arrive at chapter 45, we shift gears and go backwards a few years and find Baruch appending a letter that had been given to him that was from Jeremiah and that contains God's judgment against the wicked nations. Such begins the language of chapter 46.

### **Epistles: Ephesians 1-2**

The letter to the Ephesians is one of the great, short theological but practical books in the Pauline Corpus. You can essentially split the book in half, beginning with a theology of salvation and ending with a theology of living a Christian life...all compacted into six chapters.

So, as we begin, what we see is the language of God's sovereign election of a people from before the foundations of the earth (1:4) and all by the counsel of his own will (1:11). Paul then moves on not only to our praise of God for this work but also of the kingship of Christ over all of the creation (1:20-23). Paul goes on to remind his readers that we all were born dead in our trespasses, serving the "prince of the power of the air" (Satan) and thus are all in need of saving. But it is not a saving by works or merit or by anything within us either actual or foreseen...it is by Grace and for God's glory. Thus God prepared work beforehand for us to do (read — before the foundations of the earth) and he is binding us together to be one body with Christ as its head. Such is the nature of the church. True believers are bound together but we move and are moved only by the will of Christ to Christ's ultimate glory. If we try and do our own thing we will find ourselves disciplined and drug away from that which is sin and human invention.

# Week 22



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## Across

1. Israel demands one of these like the other nations.
6. Samuel sets up a stone and calls it this, meaning 'stone of help.'
8. He was the priest at Shiloh before Samuel was born.
11. This man murdered Gedaliah and stuffed his body in a cistern.
12. 'We have been brought near by the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ.'
14. Azariah and Johanan take Jeremiah to this land.
15. Baruch relates a book of \_\_\_\_\_ against the nations that Jeremiah had written.
16. 'Our God is a God of \_\_\_\_\_.'
18. Israel takes this into battle and loses control of it. (4 words)
20. Bildad says that Job is lower than one of these.
22. The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and whom?
25. The Ark was kept in this man's house with his son as attending priest.
26. 'Blessed be God because he has not rejected my \_\_\_\_\_.'

## Down

2. 'By \_\_\_\_\_ you have been saved.'
3. Boaz descends from this son of Judah.
4. Whose family probably owned the house that the men tore a hole in the roof?
5. 'Whoever does the \_\_\_\_\_ of God is my mother and brother and sister.'
7. Jesus compares himself to this when he speaks about not fasting.
9. When Boaz gets the right to be Naomi's Kinsman Redeemer, this is exchanged.
10. 'he chose us in him before the \_\_\_\_\_ of the world.'
13. This pagan idol bowed before the Ark.
14. 'Shout for joy to God, all the \_\_\_\_\_.'
17. Bildad's argument is this kind of fallacious argument. (2 words)
19. God warns the people not to flee to this nation.
21. This is the name we know Levi by.
23. The father of Samuel.
24. Jesus is Lord of this.