

# Bible Challenge 2017

Week 23: June 4 – 10

## **Prayers: Psalm 69-72**

We begin our readings with another Messianic Psalm of David. One of the things that you ought to notice is the language of water and God's use of water in judgment. In many ways this looks back to the Red Sea crossing and the nature of that crossing being a significant theme of God's preservation of his people in the midst of great judgment — a theme that is picked up by Jonah as well, which ought not be any great surprise (see Jonah 2). We even see verse 9 picked up by the Apostle Paul when he speaks of Jesus' acceptance of the reproach of his people.

One of my favorite lines, though, of Psalm 69 is that praising God with song and thanksgiving will "please the Lord more than an ox or bull with horns and hoofs. If the analogy is not clear, one of the themes we see in the scriptures is that our job — our calling — our work (service) to God is to worship him. Thus, as oxen and bulls labor hard and when properly yoked in the field, we are to labor hard and long in our worship of God.

Some scholars hold that psalms 70 and 71 are one psalm together. Psalm 71 does not have a superscript and is thought to share the superscript of its predecessor. Further, it shares the same theme of seeking and finding refuge in our God and in his strength.

Psalm 72 is attributed to David's son, Solomon, though based on the closing words of the psalm, many have suggested that perhaps it is still a Psalm that David wrote and dedicated to his son, Solomon. At the same time, those who claim Solomonic authorship would argue that the wording, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended," speaks of the ending to book 2 of the Psalms.

## **Gospel: Mark 3**

We began looking at Mark 3 last week, but it seems worth exploring this chapter once again for two reasons. The first is Jesus' election of the twelve. Notice that Jesus chose these men, they did not happen to be followers already and he is honoring them with another level of authority, but Jesus chose each one of these men based entirely on Jesus' plan, not on the character of these men themselves.

In fact, the character of these men is interesting. We know that Peter, James, John, and Andrew were fishermen — "self-employed" businessmen. Matthew was a Tax collector, one who would have been viewed as a traitor to the Romans. Judas was a thief...though some argue that perhaps he was an Essene hoping to instigate the revolution against Rome. There was Simon the Zealot...perhaps a reference to an Essene group as well. Since Philip was a friend of Peter and Andrew from their hometown of Bethsaida...yet also living by the Sea of Galilee, many have considered him to be a fisherman as well. The others, we do not know for sure, but it is certainly a diverse group of people...yet no more diverse than the church itself is — and is meant to be.

The second item to note is the notion of the "Sin against the Holy Spirit." People have debated for ages as to what this is a reference to. For some, it is the denial that Christ is the Lord. Others argue that it is a matter of knowing what is right in God's eyes and choosing not to do it anyway...which is tied to the sin of those coming from Jerusalem. Others suggest it is confusing the work of God with the works of the devil. We are not explicitly told in this passage, simply the context is given. In any matter, it is language that we must take seriously as not all who cry out to Jesus, "Lord, Lord" will find themselves saved...some will find themselves under his boot.

## **Wisdom: Job 28-30**

Our text today contains a continuation of Job's speech to Bildad and is part of Job's longest single speech in this book. He begins with an analogy...just as silver can be mined or the beasts can gather their prey, there is a place where wisdom can be found. Wisdom cannot be bought with the valuable things of this life nor can they be found by taking surveys and polls of popular opinion. It is not even found amongst the dead (looking here may sound odd to us, but in ancient times, the practice of necromancy was a common way of seeking knowledge). It is found in God and it ultimately is found in the fear of the Lord.

Job then continues to recount his situation. He had sought to do the right thing in terms of caring for those in need, but now his fortune has changed and instead of rallying around him, the people that had benefited from his generosity now look upon him as a "byword" (30:9). How often, because we do not know what to say, the people of God ignore or avoid those who are suffering when it is those who are suffering that most need the love and care of God's people.

## **History: 1 Samuel 9-16**

In this week's reading we have two kings anointed...first Saul, the people's king and then, David, the king after God's own heart. The first kingship is shorter and collapses in failure. The second kingship is longer, fraught with the effects of sin, but would become the model by which the Messiah's Kingship would be based. Such is what happens when we try and act in the place of God.

Rather than choosing a man of godly character and of the tribe of Judah (which must always hold the kingship), God gave the people a king of the tribe of Benjamin who was handsome, wealthy, and tall — a man that would fit a worldly paradigm of king — do not churches often fall into this trap as well? Saul is anointed king and then immediately leads the armies against Israel's enemies...an important role for any king (yet not the first thing that the King was supposed to do...read Deuteronomy 17:18-20).

Samuel steps down and Saul begins leading the people. Yet, Saul usurps the authority of Samuel (who is still a priest, though no longer the Judge) by offering a sacrifice before battle because Samuel was "late" (at least by Saul's timetable). To be fair, Saul was trying to appease the people who were grumbling. But a true leader leads the people in righteous actions, he does not appease them. From this point, Saul begins going downhill and no longer leading by righteous character, he leads by threatening the people and making oaths that are not well thought out — again, true leaders do not bully to bring people into compliance.

Finally, the Lord officially rejects Saul as king and commissions Samuel to seek out a king that will reflect God's heart — a man who is meek and who loves the Lord. And though he is smaller than his brothers, God identifies that which is in the heart, not that which men can view.

## **Prophets: Jeremiah 47-52**

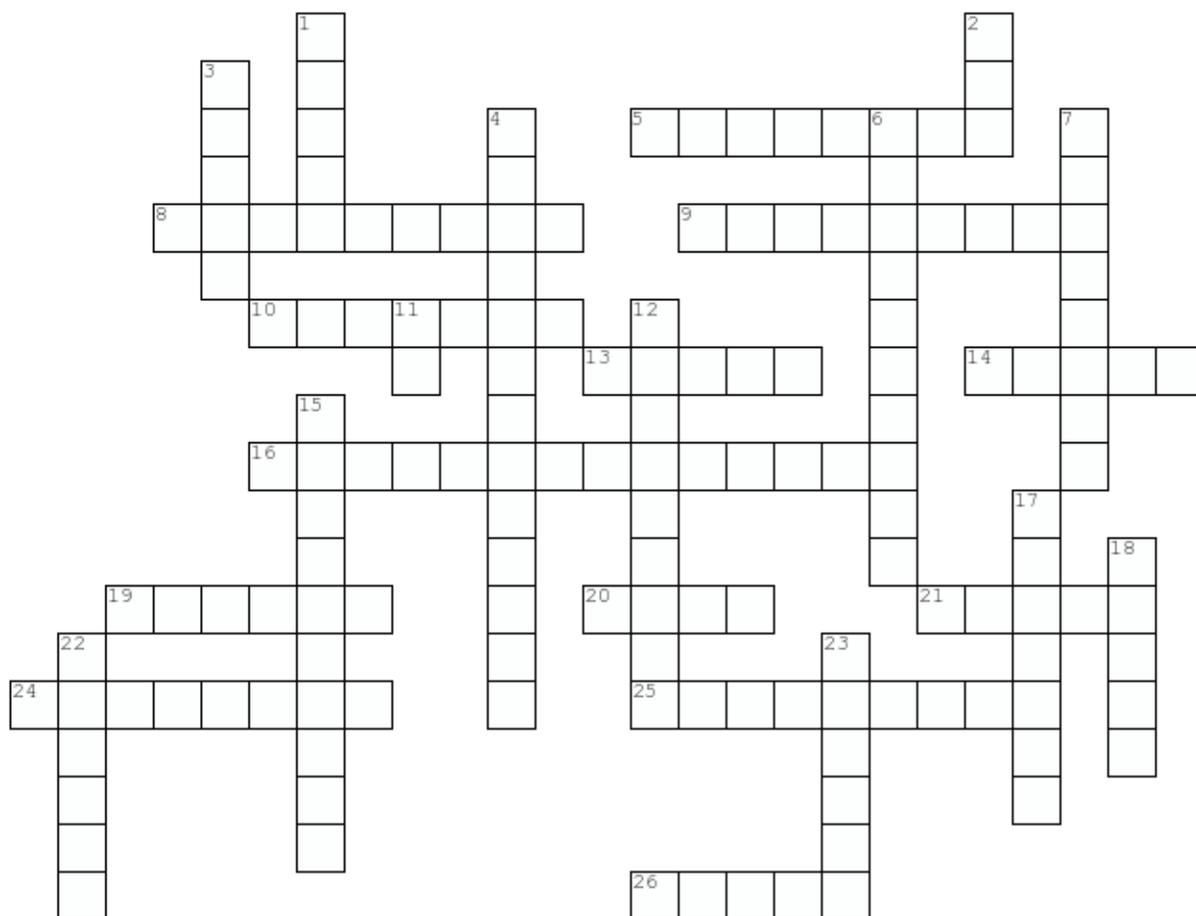
We have the final judgments written by Jeremiah and preserved by Baruch in these chapters along with Baruch's account of the fall of Jerusalem, the pillaging and the burning of the Temple, the blinding of Zedekiah (after the execution of his children), and the carrying of the people off into exile in Babylon. It is likely the saddest final chapter of any book of the Bible...with one little glimpse of hope, Jehoiachin is released from prison and given favor in the eyes of the Babylonian king.

## **Epistles: Ephesians 3-4**

We transition in these chapters between the more theological and the more practical. Chapter 3 focuses on the idea that the mystery of God, hidden through the generations is that the Gentiles are "fellow heirs" and partakers of the promise. He goes on to say that they are of "one body" with those who believed in Jerusalem. One of the reasons that I am so opposed to what is called "dispensational theology" is because they argue that the church and Israel are two distinct peoples. But that is not what the text plainly states as we read through these words of God.

Paul continues and speaks of the unity of the body of Christ (Jew and Gentile alike) and insists that the purpose that God has blessed the church with apostles, prophets, evangelists, an pastor-teachers is to grow this church to maturity. What does this maturity look like? The church does not sway to and fro following various trends in doctrine and the church is united in love, having put away that falsehood." Why is doctrine important to the church? It grounds us in the foundation established by the prophets and apostles, which is aligned to the cornerstone, who is Christ.

# Week 23



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

## Across

5. Saul's Son and David's friend.
8. Philip was probably this by trade.
9. This is like the sin of divination (in God's eyes).
10. This son of David wrote the last Psalm in Book 2 of the Psalms.
13. Job testifies to his own \_\_\_\_\_, reminding us of the utter bankruptcy of relying on such.
14. Moab shall wallow in this (hint: Peter makes the same analogy in his second letter).
16. This Babylonian king defeated Jerusalem and carried its inhabitants into exile.
19. This Judge from the tribe of Manasseh has a similar response to the call of God as did Saul — 'I am the least...'
20. Saul spared the life of this pagan king and displeased God.
21. David is the son of whom?
24. This king witnessed the death of his children before his eyes were plucked out.
25. Saul fell from favor by offering this in place of Samuel.
26. This prophet picks up on some of the 'water trial' language of Psalm 69.

## Down

1. David is of which tribe?
2. 'Be angry but do not \_\_\_\_\_.'
3. Many scholars think that Psalm 71 was written by whom.
4. This is wisdom (4 words).
6. This blasphemy will not be forgiven.
7. Saul was from this tribe.
11. Our praise pleases God more than this animal does.
12. James and John were given this name, meaning 'Sons of Thunder.'
15. This was popular in Job's day, making it important to point out that wisdom is not in death.
17. That the gentiles will be brought into the covenant is the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
18. Give no opportunity to this person who might use it to tempt you.
22. Simon the Cananean is also known as Simon the \_\_\_\_\_.
23. This is the location where the Spirit of God rushed on Saul and made him speak like the prophets.