

# Bible Challenge 2017

## Week 26: June 25-July 1

### **Prayers: Psalm 73-76**

As we enter into book 3 of the Psalms, we also complete the first half of our reading for the year. Though we have been jumping around a bit, looking at various themes, we will have covered half of the Bible by the end of this week.

The psalms we will read today are all psalms of Asaph. We already saw a psalm of Asaph when we read Psalm 50. We noted then that there are twelve psalms by Asaph and that he ministered before the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 16:37). He was also a director of singers in the Temple (Nehemiah 12:46). For more, look back to week 17 where Psalm 50 was covered.

Psalm 73 is a psalm that parallels the book of Ecclesiastes in a variety of ways as it speaks about the follies of men and the incomprehensibility of God's plan at least according to human terms. Verses 16-17, though, give us the key to understanding both this psalm and the book of Ecclesiastes: go to the sanctuary... seek out God's will in the context of worship. How often we rob ourselves of understanding when we think of the sanctuary as a secondary (or optional) part of our lives.

Psalms 74 and 75 deal with a cry to God to rise up in judgment over his enemies and much of this language is picked up later in the book of Revelation. It speaks of God crushing the sea-monster, Leviathan (the great dragon of Revelation 12) and the foaming wine of God's wrath poured out in the bowl judgements of Revelation 16 amongst other things. In the end, truly there is a promise that God will cut off the wicked and restore the righteous to their place.

### **Gospel: Mark 8**

We are about to arrive at the central chapter to the book of Mark. It begins with a second feeding (this time, of 4000 men) and a challenge from the Pharisees over a sign...something that Jesus refuses to give (Matthew and Luke will add that the only sign to be given is the sign of Jonah — a reference to the Resurrection).

The highlight of this chapter, though, is Mark's record of Peter's profession that Jesus is the Christ. It also contains Jesus' rebuke of Peter when Peter seeks to talk Jesus out of dying on the cross...to which, Jesus utters the well-known words, "Get behind me, Satan!"

### **Wisdom: Job 37-39**

Our reading in Job brings to an end Elihu's words. And, like Elihu arose, he falls into the background once again and disappears. What follows Elihu is the arrival of God in a whirlwind — a demonstration of his power. For those who remember the tornado of 1985 in this region, you understand the might of a whirlwind. Though I grew up in Maryland, I spent ample time in the south to witness the damage caused by tornados that commonly passed through the region. They are immense and frightful and that is exactly God's point to Job.

God begins, "Who are you that darkens counsel by words without knowledge..." While Job and his friends have been bantering about, God puts an end to their speculations and bad ideas/partial truths. He essentially tells Job, "You have been asking for a trial, now I will give you a trial and you aren't going to like what I have to say...so stand up and take it like a man."

Then, in the two chapters that follow it, God poses the

questions to Job — "where were you when I created" and "are you able to understand and do all that I understand and do. The answer that he is giving is ultimately that God's ways are higher than our ways, so who are we to question God when we just do not and cannot understand. How often it is, though, when we face trials, that we expect God to be accountable unto us rather than the other way around.

### **History: 2 Samuel 3-10**

We follow the rise of David to power as King in the unified nation of Israel, particularly with Abner (the commander of Saul's army). Sadly, one of David's leaders did not trust the truce that David had made with Abner, so he set off and killed him. What follows is a great deal of chaos that also left Ish-Bosheth dead as well as Ish-Bosheth's murderers.

Once David consolidated his power and now was also anointed king over the northern tribes of Israel, he led a campaign to crush the Philistines and then sought to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, though David and his men did not look to the scriptures to discern the proper way of handling it (it was to be carried with poles and covered with a cloth). They put it on a cart and when the Ark slipped, Uzzah reached out to steady it and was struck down as no human hand was supposed to touch the Ark itself. Good intentions or no, God is holy and will be revered as such...and which defiles more, the hand of sinful man or the ground which God has made?

Three months later, after discerning God's way of moving the Ark, David returned to collect it and celebrated its coming into Jerusalem — David leading the procession with dancing, much to his wife Michal's disdain.

Chapter 7 is one of the more important chapters in the book of 2 Samuel as it records the promise that God made to David, that one in David's line would always be on the throne and that his kingdom will be eternal. This is ultimately fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

What follows are more victories of David over the enemies around Israel and the consolidation of his influence, even giving Mephibosheth grace and a place in his own household.

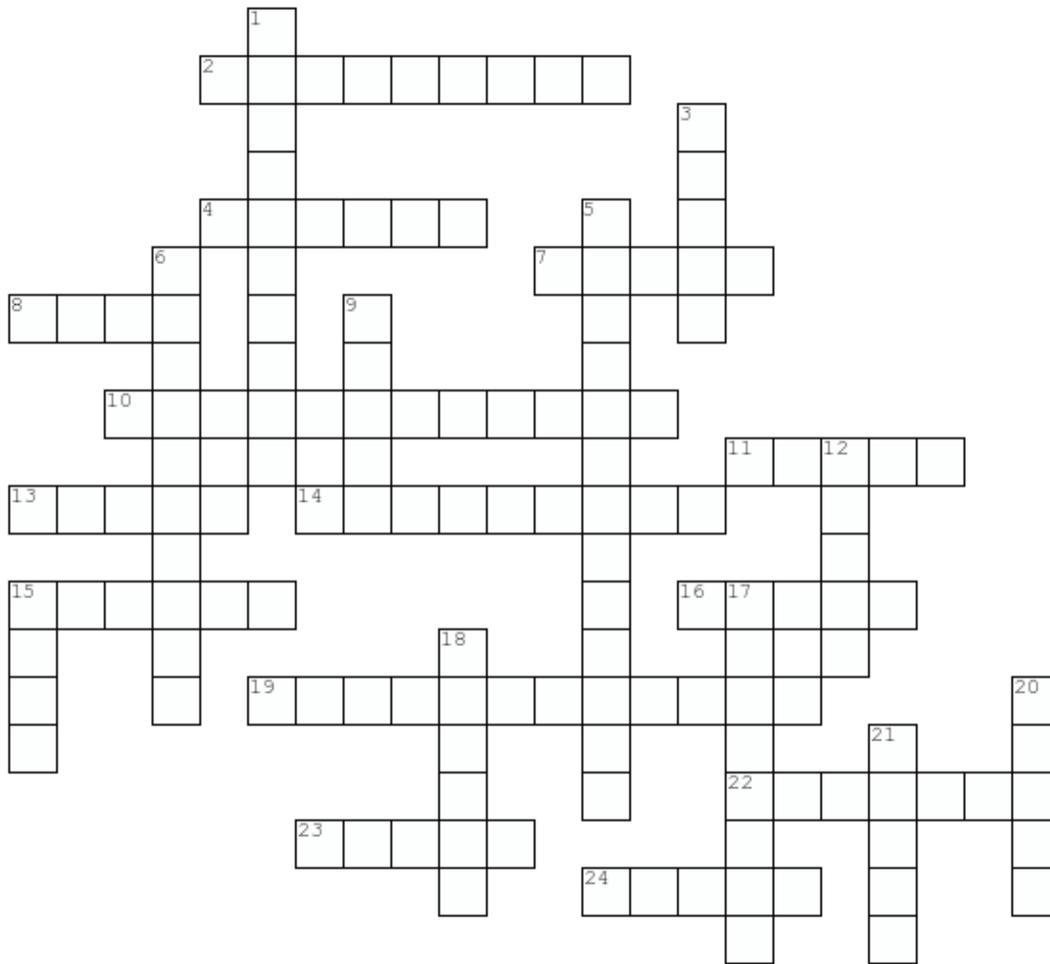
### **Prophets: Ezekiel 11-15**

While this may seem a bit redundant, we read a continued series of judgments against Jerusalem and its leaders and those loyal to Jerusalem. The punishment is final enough when God pronounces that even if Noah, Daniel, or Job were present, he would still overthrow the city — the people made themselves such enemies of God that the Godly mediators of the past would have been unable to mediate on their behalf.

### **Epistles: Philippians 3-4**

Paul closes out his letter to the Philippians with a focus on the righteous life as a Christian. Ultimately Paul argues that anything that he had of value is counted as loss and to be discarded for the case of Christ. How far we have fallen short from that mindset today. We pursue many of our own interests and then Christ is given whatever part of us that we happen to have left, much like the offering of Cain, that we give to Jesus. Finally, whatever is good and right and honorable, that is what we are to set our minds upon...not the many sinful things of this world.

# Week 26



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## Across

2. The king of Syria whom David defeated.
4. Through this prophet David was told he was not permitted to build the Temple.
7. The only sign the pharisees are given is this sign.
8. 'What does it profit a man to gain the world and lose his \_\_\_\_\_.'
10. Saul's disabled son.
11. 'And I will give them one \_\_\_\_\_ and a new spirit.'
13. This king of Tyre sent David assistance in his building projects.
14. God answers Job out of this force of nature.
15. Even if this person were in Jerusalem, God says it would not be spared.
16. 'The Almighty — we cannot find him; he is great in \_\_\_\_\_.'
19. Psalm 73 parallels this book of the Bible in terms of ideas.
22. One of the sons born to David in Jerusalem.
23. How many baskets full of bread were leftover after Jesus' miraculous feeding?
24. God speaks of loosing the cords of this constellation of stars.

## Down

1. Jesus went here after the 4000 were fed.
3. This man foolishly placed his hands on the Ark.
5. God challenges Job to tell him where this animal gives birth (2 words).
6. This book of the Bible picks up the language of psalms 74 and 75.
9. David hamstringed all of the chariot horses (except 100) that belonged to this nation.
12. The commander of Saul's Army (hint, murdered by Joab).
15. Paul writes that all of his works are this.
17. The Ark remained in his house for 3 months before it was brought to Jerusalem.
18. 'You are to be \_\_\_\_\_; who can stand before you?'
20. Peter rebuked Jesus for teaching about his \_\_\_\_\_.
21. This man was director of the singers in the Temple.