

Bible Challenge 2017

Week 28: July 9-15

Prayers: Psalm 79-82

We continue in our series of psalms of Asaph again this week. Psalms 80 and 81 give us a glimpse as to the tune to which it was sung, though those melodies have not survived the passage of time and thus we can only speculate as to what they might have sounded like when sung.

While there is much that can be said about each one of these psalms, I want to simply highlight Psalm 82:6 — "I said, 'You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.'" This verse, in its context, is not overly significant and might easily be glossed over. God is described, in this psalm, as a Judge who is judging judges that show partiality toward the wicked. Because a judge holds a man's (or woman's) life in the balance, they are like little gods at least in a sense. Here, God is calling them to judge righteously and though they might think of themselves like little gods, they will die like ordinary men under God's hand of justice. The analogy is fairly straight-forward and clear.

The reason that this passage becomes important is because Jesus cites it in John 10:34 when defending the fact that he called himself, "Son of God" (see John 10:36). At first, this seems sort of odd and there have been all sorts of answers to why Jesus used this particular phrase...many of which completely ignore the context of Psalm 82. Yet, when you remember that those accusing him were Jewish authorities and that they had unjustly accused him of blasphemy, getting ready to carry out the sentence of death, then it becomes clear as to why Jesus is using this reference from Psalm 82...not only does it address their obligation, but it more importantly accuses the Jewish leaders of injustice and warns them that God's judgment will follow unless they repent of their wicked ways. They too will die under God's wrath.

Gospel: Mark 11

We arrive, for a second time in this year's readings, at the account of Jesus' triumphal entry, the beginning of his Passion week. And, as we have previously pointed out, nearly 40% of Mark's Gospel deals with this one week of Jesus' life...that single fact ought to remind us of its significance and draw our attention to its importance.

The colt, which had been dedicated for the Lord's use was collected (see Deuteronomy 15:19 for further background on such dedicated animals), the crowds which were gathering for the Passover celebration sang in praise of God at the coming of Jesus. How did the crowds so easily get swayed between this first day (a Sunday) and the Friday they cried "crucify him!?" The simplest answer is that they got caught up in the fervor of the day, and in the case of many, they would speak truth but be held that much more accountable for it in judgment.

Sunday transitions to Monday with verse 12, the cursing of the Fig Tree and the cleansing of the temple, the second such cleansing in Jesus' public ministry. In the Jewish tradition of Passover, leaven was to be removed from the household for seven days...Jesus is in a sense removing the leaven of the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders, returning the temple to a place of prayer, not that of an open market.

Monday transitions to Tuesday with verse 20, with the discovery of the dead fig tree and that begins the testing of Jesus by those in authority, beginning with the chief priests and scribes interested in the credentials of Jesus. In the Jewish tradition, to preach, one had to have been licensed to do so by the school or the rabbi one studied under. They wanted to know who taught Jesus. Jesus is God and speaks with his own authority, but he challenged them with a riddle which they failed and thus Jesus denied to answer their probe.

Wisdom: Proverbs 1-3

The book of proverbs contains a series of wise statement, in most cases, in short, proverbial, sayings. There are several characters that are discovered in the book that are worth noting. The first is the

father figure who is giving counsel to his son. The second is Wisdom, personified by a woman and exemplified by the woman of noble character found in Proverbs 31. The third is the prostitute who seeks to lure young men away from the noble or wise path.

The most important thing to remember about the book of proverbs is that these are meant as "normative" statements, not guarantees that if you do this or that, the conclusion mentioned is guaranteed to follow. This is quite significant to remember because it is within the Proverbs that many of the prosperity gospel folks draw the verses to support their views. Yet, when these passages are properly understood in their context, they do not support the prosperity views.

The first seven verses of Proverbs form the introduction to the book. It exists for the purpose of giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young, and increased learning to the wise. And time after time, the appeal is that we listen to the words of Wisdom and not to the folly of the world.

History: 2 Samuel 19-21; 24; 1 Kings 1-4

We pick up after the death of Absalom and with the grief of David. And just when it seems that David is going to have rest and order restored to the kingdom, Sheba rises up and leads the ten northern tribes into rebellion against David (a foretaste of what will come after Solomon's death). Thus, once more David's armies are sent out to capture the rebel. In this case, it was a shorter campaign and those who were hiding him would give execute Sheba and give his head to Joab, David's general.

We skip chapters 22 and 23 as they contain a song of David (along with an account of his mighty men) and we will address them at the end of July. We then close out 2 Samuel with the census of Israel that David takes on his own discretion. This brings judgment on the nation, though David, given the option of punishments, wisely chooses to throw himself upon the mercy of the Lord.

First kings begins the transition from King David to King Solomon, with once again the expected court drama as people vie for power. Likely the most familiar passage from this section is the conversation between young King Solomon and the Lord, where Solomon asks for discernment so that he may govern well and God is pleased, giving Solomon life and wealth also. We close our reading in this section with an example of Solomon's wisdom as well as of his wealth...something that will, in time, get Solomon into trouble.

Prophets: Ezekiel 21-25

Judgment and more judgment is what we find in these words. Essentially what we have here is God making a legal case that he has been faithful to his covenant but the people and their leaders have not been faithful. We even see the parable of Oholah and Oholibah, one that is quite reminiscent of Hosea's prophesy with Gomer.

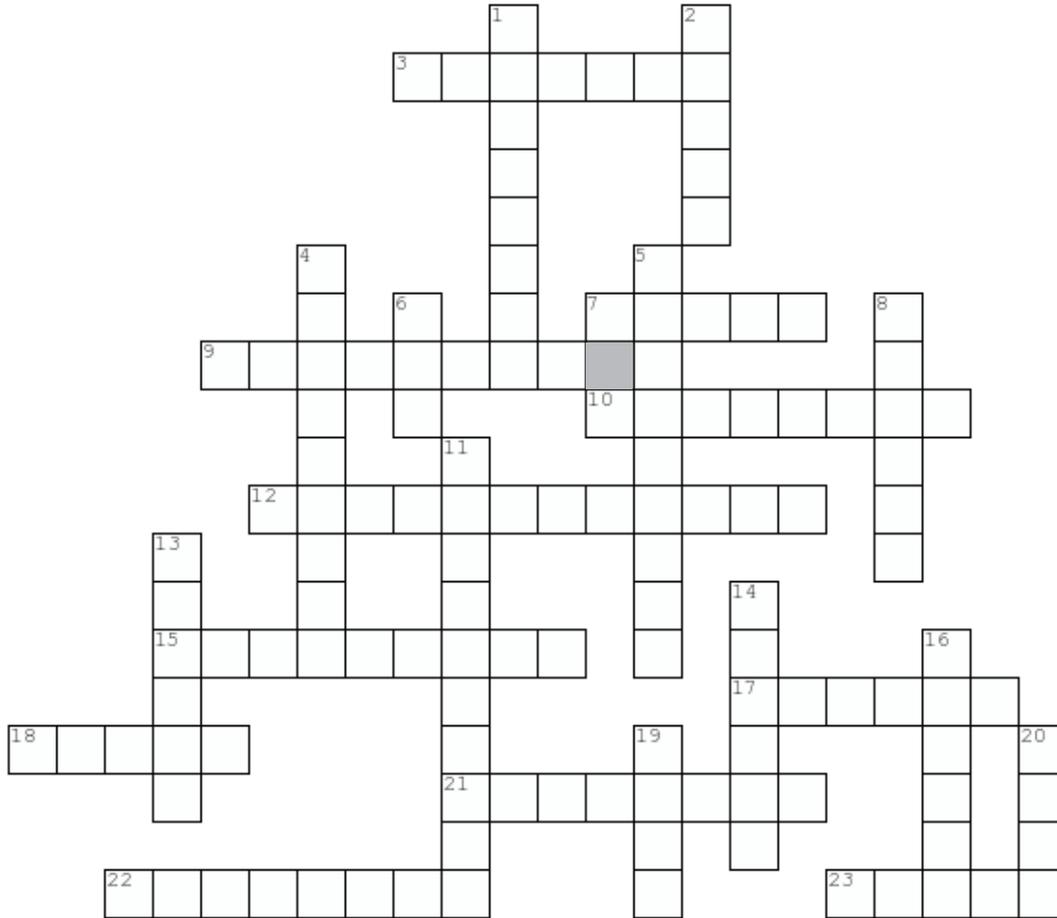
Ezekiel 24 brings with it an account of the fall of Jerusalem. Obviously Ezekiel is not there, but God is giving him a prophetic vision to relate to the people in exile. It is a vision of just punishment for repeated idolatry and an unrepentant nature...and it stands as a warning still today to nations, churches, denominations, and movements. If you dishonor God, he will bring you low. And Ezekiel is given a taste of the sadness of God as Ezekiel watches his wife die. Throughout the Bible there is an analogy of marriage that is used to describe Israel and Jerusalem as the Bride of God (or the Bride of Christ in the form of the church). Thus, as God lays low his bride, the Bride of Ezekiel is laid low as well.

Then, once again we enter into prophesies against the surrounding pagan nations.

Epistles: Colossians 3-4

Colossians closes with the practical and simple message: Live like a Christian. How does one do that? "Whatever you do in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Week 28



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

Across

- 3.** God tested the people with the waters of this location.
- 7.** Trust in the Lord with this and do not lean on your understanding.
- 9.** The Colossian letter was also to be shared with the people of this city.
- 10.** This prostitute represented Jerusalem.
- 12.** The son of Saul whom David took care of.
- 15.** God is asked to return the taunts against God's people this many times.
- 17.** If you seek out God's word like this metal, you will find wisdom.
- 18.** One of David's chief Priests.
- 21.** A faithful minister reporting to Colossae as to Paul's work.
- 22.** This is a cousin of Paul's fellow worker, Mark.
- 23.** God is often referred to as the 'Lord of Armies' but we know this better as 'Lord of ____'

Down

- 1.** Proverbs is meant to give this to the simple.
- 2.** He caused the northern nations to rebel against David.
- 4.** The fear of the Lord is the beginning of this.
- 5.** A small 'suburb' of Jerusalem.
- 6.** What kind of tree does Jesus curse?
- 8.** Continue steadfastly in this.
- 11.** A protected tribe from the book of Judges that Saul attacked.
- 13.** Blessed is the one who finds this.
- 14.** He is also called Jesus.
- 16.** David unwisely ordered one of these and found himself under God's judgment
- 19.** This relative of Ezekiel dies allowing Ezekiel to share God's grief.
- 20.** 'You are _____' in the psalms has been misunderstood, but is about people judging unjustly.