

# Bible Challenge 2017

## Week 29: July 16-22

### **Poetry: Psalms 83-86**

We begin to transition from the Psalms of Asaph back to a psalm from David, with two psalms from the Sons of Korah in the middle. Psalm 83 focuses on God avenging his people against their enemies, Psalms 84-85 are psalms of praise for the worship of his people, and Psalm 86 is a psalm of devotion toward God.

Two things I would like to note about the language of these psalms: first, while we are often uncomfortable with psalms that speak of God destroying people, let psalms like this be a reminder that we can legitimately have righteous anger and we need to know how to express it Biblically. Psalms like this do so and they give us a chance to work through our anger in a holy and prayerful way. There is a time and place for such.

The second thing that I would like to note is verse 10 of Psalm 84. Not only is it one of my favorite verses of the psalms, there is at least one praise song based on this verse. More importantly, though, it conveys an attitude that we ought to strive to nurture in our lives as Christians. That attitude is that we should rightfully desire to be in the house of the Lord more than we want to be anywhere else. It is a special thing for God's people to gather and worship and oh how often we make excuses to be anywhere else.

### **Gospel: Mark 12-13**

In chapters 12 and 13 we continue with challenges to Jesus' authority as he teaches in the Temple courts. In the parable of the Tenants, Jesus condemns the Jewish leaders for abusing their stewardship of God's people. In the question about paying taxes, Jesus asserts that we must be faithful citizens of whatever government that God has placed over us while also committing the whole of our being to God...for as everything belongs to God, everything must be used for his glory. The Sadducees try and trip Jesus up with a question about the resurrection and he shows their foolishness and their ignorance of the scriptures.

Further, Jesus is challenged as to the Greatest Commandment, something Jesus addresses by summarizing the Moral Law in two statements, quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. There is a challenge as to the Christ being the Son of David, a warning about the legalistic Scribes, and then the example of the Widow's offering, a reminder once again that all belongs to God.

Chapter 13 records what is Mark's account of the Olivet Discourse. It is both a judgment against Jerusalem for their wickedness and it is a warning to those followers of Jesus who will be living at the time of Jerusalem's fall in 70 AD. While the final stage of this discourse points to the Second Coming of Jesus, most focuses on the fall of the city when the Roman armies will lay it flat.

### **Wisdom: Proverbs 4-5**

One of the challenges that people often find with reading the Proverbs straight through is that the proverbs are a series of inter-connected wisdom statements and it often seems that Solomon is just putting them down by free association without a great deal of organization.

While I would suggest that there is a structure to the book of Proverbs, I think one of the more valuable approaches to reading the book is that of taking small bits, reflecting on them, and also in terms of tracing a theme through the book. For example, chapter 4 begins with the language of listening to a father's instruction, a phrase that shows up five times in the book (1:8; 4:1; 6:20; 13:1; 15:5). So, what are the connections between these passages and the passages around each of these statements? Approaching the Proverbs in this way helps keep the wisdom from all running together and being forgotten. Thus, we say with Solomon, "Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure." (4:26).

### **History: 1 Kings 5-12**

Chapters 5 and 6 detail the building of Solomon's temple, a process that took 7 years (recognizing too that his father, David, had already begun the process of acquiring materials and drawing up plans!). This Solomon did with great ceremony and with the help of Hiram, the king of Tyre.

As we move to chapter 7, we discover that Solomon was in the process of building his own palace as well, a process that took twice as long as it did for the temple (are we seeing skewed priorities?!?!). Furnishings

for the Temple are also detailed in this chapter. Then, in chapter 8, we see the dedication of the Temple with a flood of sacrifices and prayer before the Lord. One thing to note here is the order of events. Solomon's prayers go first and then the sacrifices are made. In most ancient pagan cultures, the sacrifices were made first in the hopes of drawing their gods near, then prayers were offered. For the people of God, though, He is always near and hears our prayers; the sacrifices are meant to be a work of propitiation for our sins, not to try and attract God to our location. Such is a profound difference between ancient Israel and other cultures who made blood sacrifices.

Chapters 9 and 10 detail some of Solomon's other successes as king as well as his relationship with the Queen of the South (or the Queen of Sheba). And sadly, that leads into chapter 11, which begins Solomon's downfall with his many women and their leading him into idolatry. And thus we have in 1 Kings 11:6 the phrase that we see repeatedly in the book of Judges when the people fall away from faithful practice: "Solomon did THE Evil." We are even told that he built a high place for Chemosh and Molech, gods to whom child sacrifice was made.

What follows are troubles and we see a picture of the kingdom beginning to fall apart with the rise of Hadad, Rezon, and Jeroboam, the latter would end up receiving the northern ten tribes of Israel after Solomon's death. There is an interesting comment, though, that God makes at Solomon's death. You might remember back to 2 Samuel 7:12-13 that God promised David an eternal king. That would partly be fulfilled in Solomon, David's heir, but could not be fully fulfilled because of his sin. In 1 Kings 11:39, God states that he will cut off David's line (again, due to idolatry), "but not forever." When God makes a promise, he keeps it and does not repent of it, though his people may grieve him by their sin. So, though dark times are coming, they are not without the hope of a new king in the line of David: Jesus.

Rehoboam rises up and divides the nation with his pride and foolishness and Jeroboam establishes places of worship for the people in Samaria to prevent them from taking their taxes into Jerusalem and to give them a place to worship as they were often barred from entering Judah. Sin and Evil, Evil and Sin — this is what idolatry brings.

### **Prophecy: Ezekiel 26-30**

We continue with God's judgments against the pagan lands surrounding Israel, but something very interesting takes place as we move through chapter 28. There is a shift from speaking of the Prince of Tyre to the King of Tyre. Historically, Tyre was ruled by merchant princes, not kings as we would understand kingship. But if there is no king of Tyre, who is this prophecy in 28:11-19 against? It is against the true king of Tyre, Satan himself.

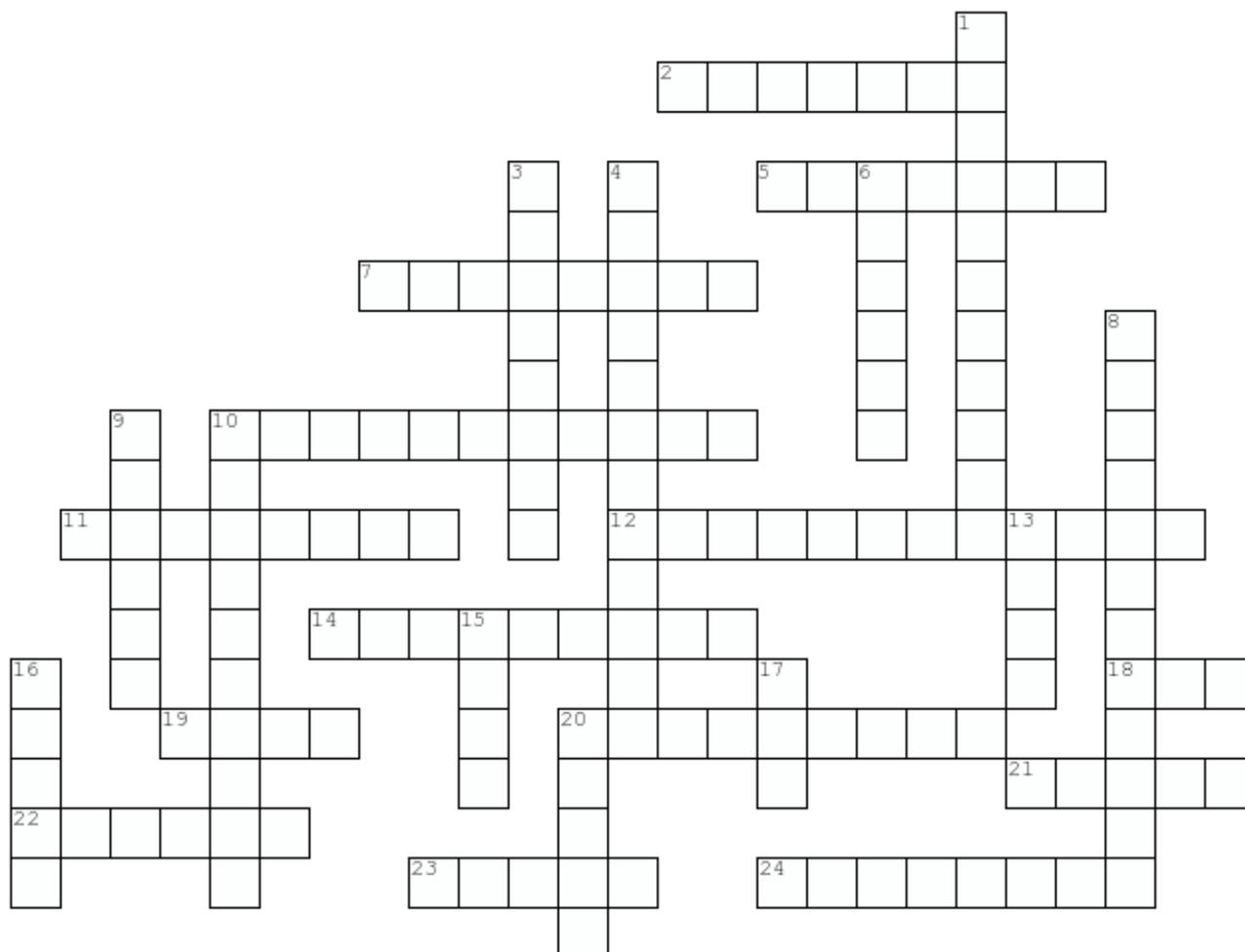
This can be discerned from the things that are stated about the "King of Tyre." It speaks of him being a guardian cherub in Eden, an angel on the holy mountain of God, but who became prideful and arrogant and filled with violence, corrupting himself. So God threw him from the mountain and humiliated him in front of kings of the earth, making him dreadful forever. This is where we learn much about the fall of Satan and the nature of his righteous judgment before God. Yet, after this vignette, we switch back to judgments against more earthly enemies of Israel: Sidon and Egypt.

### **Epistles: 1 Thessalonians 1-3**

This letter was written toward the middle of Paul's ministry (probably the early 50's). Paul visited Thessalonica (a major Roman city and the capitol of the Macedonian region) on his second missionary journey, though he was chased out by Jewish opposition.

Paul begins his letter with his usual affection for those churches he helped to give birth to and with a reminder of their relationship over the years. He also speaks of his hope and desire to travel to visit them once again and of Timothy's report to him of their wellbeing. In the following chapters he will begin focusing on practical matters, but I think that it is worth noting that more than half of this letter is relational in nature and not addressing their errors or teaching theology. The implication is that Thessalonica contains a mature church body, not overwhelmed with troubles, infighting, or false teachings. They still have some things that they are wrestling with, as we will see in next week's readings, but overall, this is a body of believers to be emulated.

# Week 29



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

## Across

2. Where did the Cedar trees come from?
5. Who reported to Paul about the faith of the church in Thessalonica.
7. How many years did it take to build Solomon's Palace?
10. Of the Greatest commandment, Jesus quotes from this Old Testament Book.
11. Solomon's son who would split the kingdom.
12. Solomon had this many wives...yikes!
14. These people asked Jesus about marriage in heaven.
18. This was brought into the Temple prior to its dedication.
19. Who hindered Paul's work in Thessalonica?
20. Solomon does this as a king, something ordinarily done by the Priests.
21. How many years did it take to build the Temple?
22. Jesus speaks of the fall of Jerusalem from this Mountain.
23. The king of Tyre in Solomon's day.
24. Also known as 'Silas', he was with Paul when Paul wrote to Thessalonica.

## Down

1. 'Hear, o sons, a father's \_\_\_\_\_'
3. Solomon's adversary who would take the northern Kingdoms.
4. God gave to this person all she desired (3 words).
6. Solomon sacrificed to this pagan god who demanded child sacrifice.
8. Jeroboam set up these for Israel's worship.
9. What kind of Angel was Satan?
10. 'I would rather be a \_\_\_\_\_ in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.'
13. 'The path of the righteous is like the light of \_\_\_\_\_.'
15. This happens to the wicked who is not disciplined.
16. She gave out of her poverty, not abundance, pleasing Jesus.
17. 'For there is no one who does not \_\_\_\_\_'
20. Who is the King of Tyre?