

Bible Challenge 2017

Week 33: August 13-19

Prayers: Psalm 90-93

We enter into Book 4 of the Psalms with our readings this week, and that with a Psalm of Moses (the only one we have preserved in the Book of Psalms). The main theme of this psalm is that of the contrast between the greatness and holiness of God and of the humble and wretched state of man — we cannot even give God thanks for the good things He brings unless God works us to praise Him. As Psalm 91 carries with it the same themes and does not have a superscript, this too may be of Moses and on the deliverance that God brings to his people.

Psalm 92 is a psalm for worship as it prepares us to think of and to approach the Sabbath in a way that is reverent and honoring to His name and character. Indeed, the Psalmist reminds us that those who do wicked are doomed to destruction. As Jesus, himself, said, "they are condemned already because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. Finally, Psalm 93, once again, does not have a superscript, leading some to believe this to share the superscript with the psalm before it. At the same time, the next several psalms do not have superscripts, so if it is the case that such "superscript-less" psalms share the preceding superscript, then we have entered into a series of psalms revolving around the celebration of the Sabbath day.

Gospel: Luke 3

Luke moves from the account of Jesus at his youth to the rise of John the baptist (remember that John is only 6 months older than Jesus, so at this point, John is about 30 years old (the age in which you could originally be ordained a priest (Numbers 4:3)). We even are given a little taste of what John's sermon was like — the heart of which was "repent and believe," a message no different than that which the Apostles would use at Pentecost. Today, many have moved away from the "repent" part of "repent and believe," nevertheless, to move away from that is to move away from what the scriptures present as a model of evangelism.

In verse 19 we are given a sneak peak at John's demise. As part of his preaching, he had also been preaching against Herod's marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife (with whom he had had an affair). To silence John, Herod would end up having John imprisoned for his preaching — a reminder once again that genuine preaching carries with it a call to repentance and an exhortation to live differently than the world happens to live.

Luke closes this chapter with a genealogy of Jesus, one that works all of the way back to Adam. Some skeptics make a point of this because the genealogies, while similar in some areas is different than that of Matthew. Is this the sign of an error? No, of course not. It is a reminder that as Jesus had two earthly parents (a mom and a step-dad), and thus many have suggested that these two genealogies represent Joseph and Mary respectively. Others would argue that Matthew provides a theological or a spiritual genealogy while Luke provides a biological one. It should more importantly be noted that in Luke's gospel, he traces Jesus' line all of the way back to Adam, a reminder that Jesus is not just the Savior of the Jews, but of all mankind — for all descend from Adam.

Wisdom: Proverbs 12-13

Chapter 12 begins with words that represent a Christian worldview that runs quite counter to the culture: "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge but he who hates reproof is stupid." How often we work to avoid discipline at all costs. How often the church falls short in its obligation to offer discipline to its members. How often we act more like the fool than the wise man who loves knowledge.

What follows is a series of short remarks largely revolving around the contrast between the wise and the foolish and the righteous and the evil. He essentially lays out a plan of life...one road leads to a life of integrity and the other leads to a train wreck. Take your pick. The highpoint of these words can be found in chapter 13, verses 13-14, where Solomon writes that those who despise the Word will bring destruction upon themselves, but that the teaching of the wise is a fountain of life...words that we have seen already in the Proverbs.

History: 2 Kings 15-22

Once again, this week we cover quite a few years of history, beginning with the rise of Azariah (about 766 BC) and continuing through the fall of the northern Kingdom of Israel, all of the way down to the rise of good king Josiah (640 BC). In this list of Kings, Hezekiah, Jotham, and Uzziah were all considered "good" kings on the basis of their seeking reforms.

Initially, after Assyria conquers the northern kingdom, it looks like they will continue their march south and destroy Judah as well. The Assyrian general, Sennacherib, sought to do just that and king Hezekiah feared that Sennacherib might just be successful and thus commissioned an underground tunnel be built that directed the water from the Spring of Gehon into the city,

forming the Pool of Siloam (meaning "sent"). This tunnel was 1/3 of a mile long and was dug by hand with no surface holes to guide them (surface holes dug down would be seen by the Assyrian scouts). Thus, one team started at one side and another started at the other side and they met in the middle, being guided by people pounding on metal stakes on the surface, echoing down into the chamber. It was truly an engineering marvel of the ancient world.

Sennacherib would be turned back when the Angel of Yahweh entered his camp and slew 185,000 Assyrians in one night. This, by the way, is attested to in Assyrian artifacts, namely the Prism of Sennacherib, which speaks of him having Jerusalem "like a bird in a cage," yet inexplicably retreating back to Assyria (you don't expect them to admit their loss, do you?).

In our final chapter of this section, we are introduced to Josiah and the repairs he has done to the Temple and the discovery of the Law. The bottom line is that true reform always takes place around the Word of God, its reading and its preaching. This took place during Josiah's reign...

Prophets: Daniel 1-6

Both much-loved and misunderstood, the book of Daniel brings together both the narrative, the prophetic, and the apocalyptic in a way that few other books of the Bible do. Daniel was taken to Babylon somewhere around 605 BC, in the first of the groups of exiles. He was a young man, but exhibiting promise, ended up in a position of authority in the pagan King's court.

While we typically group the book of Daniel with the prophets, in the Jewish world, Daniel is considered one of the writings and is a companion work to the book of Esther...both addressing the question, how does a young man (or woman, respectively) live a faithful life in the court of a pagan king?

What is most curious to me is that we know Daniel by his Jewish name, not so much by his Babylonian name: Belteshazzar. Yet, we know Daniel's three friends by their Babylonian names: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego...not by their Jewish names: Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. I am sure that there is an answer to that question out there, it just seems to me that our knowledge of the names would be consistently Hebrew or consistently Babylonian. Things to make you go "hmmm..."

Ultimately, Daniel's rise to influence would be in the role of interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream...much like that of Joseph, his forebear. Here we begin with a dream of empires, represented by a great statue of many different kinds of metal. The sections of the statue are generally understood to represent Babylon (gold), Persia (Silver), Greece (Bronze), and Rome (Iron). The mixture of Iron and Clay can arguably be seen as the transition from the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire...all powers that were raised up between Daniel's day and the birth of Jesus. The stone cut out by no human hand is the church (built on the "rock" of the Gospel — Matthew 16:18), and the church will destroy the Roman Empire. In chapter 7, we will come back to this prediction of the coming of Christ, though represented in the four beasts.

Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar was inspired by the idea of Babylon being the golden portion of the statue, so he will then construct a statue of God of himself, and demanded people to bow. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are found not bowing and as a result, were thrown into the fiery furnace. While it would have been miracle enough for God to preserve these men alive, he sent his angel (arguably the Angel of Yahweh...the pre-incarnate Christ!) to deliver these men.

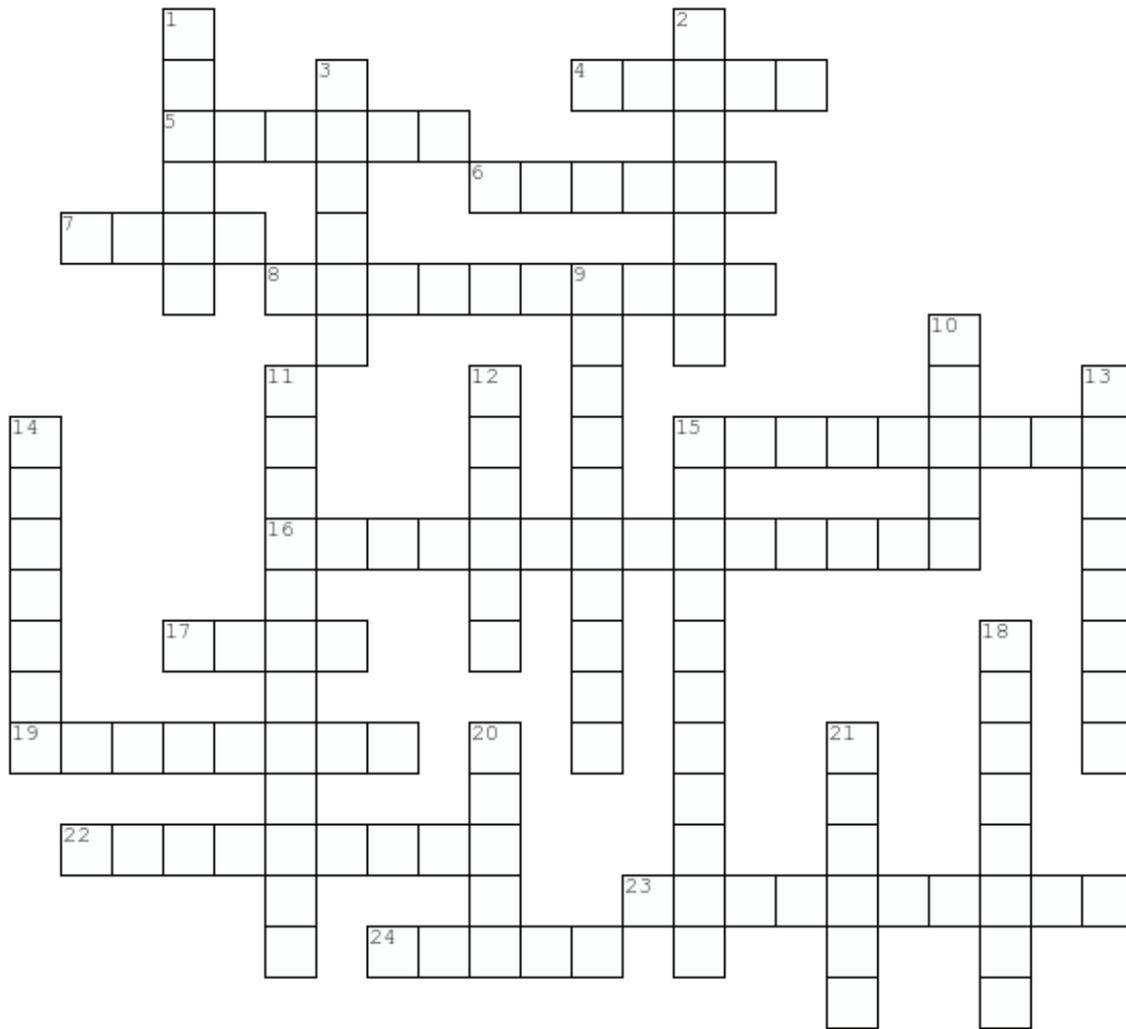
Unlike Esther, Daniel ends up serving under several different pagan kings. After Nebuchadnezzar came Belshazzar, who arrogantly summoned the utensils and bowls out of the Jewish temple to be his serving dishes. And again, we find a king in need of godly counsel. Darius, similarly, in his arrogance, is convinced by Daniel's enemies to demand Daniel do that which he could never do — bow before a human king. For his faithfulness to God, Daniel is thrown into the lion's den, and like with his three friends, the Angel comes and preserves him through the night. And, presuming this is THE Angel of Yahweh, the pre-incarnate Christ, what a blessed night that must have been for the old saint.

A final comment on the book of Daniel. This past year's elections have been the most divided elections that I have seen in my lifetime. And even though the elections are over, there are many people challenging our President's right to hold office and who are refusing to serve as an advisor to him. Regardless of your view of our president, as Christians we have a model in Joseph, Daniel, and Esther...all who faithfully and wisely served even the most pagan of kings.

Epistles: 1 Timothy 3-4

Space does not permit much detail here, simply to say that here we have guidelines for those serving as Elders and as Deacons, we have a fragment of an early Christian creed, and we have a warning against those who will leave the faith for false teachings with an exhortation to stay true to the word, no matter what the pressure.

Week 33



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

Across

4. 'He was manifested in the _____'.
5. Meaning 'sent,' this pool in Jerusalem is fed freshwater from the Spring of Gihon.
6. This was the son of King Uzziah.
7. Luke records Jesus' genealogy back to whom?
8. Daniel and his friends ate only these for ten days.
15. Timothy is to devote himself to the public reading of this until Paul comes.
16. This Babylonian king was reduced to living like an animal to teach him humility.
17. 'A _____ son hears his father's instruction.'
19. This king is responsible for a massive tunneling project.
22. 'While bodily training is of some value, _____ is of value in every way.'
23. Whoever loves this loves knowledge.
24. This man is responsible for one psalm in the book of Psalms.

Down

1. This king had the Temple rebuilt and the Law was rediscovered.
2. He put Shallum, the king of Israel to death.
3. This king of Assyria captured Samaria.
9. This wicked king faced a disembodied hand writing on the wall.
10. John baptized with this, but he promised that Jesus would baptize with the Spirit.
11. 'Everything created by God is good and should not be rejected if received with _____.'
12. Paul gives Timothy qualifications for the offices of Elder and _____.
13. Herod's brother's wife whom he took as his own.
14. The day of rest and worship.
15. This Assyrian General had 185,000 of his troops slaughtered by the Angel of the Lord.
18. The first of Daniel's three friends.
20. 'The teaching of the wise is like a fountain of life.' Who is the true fountain of life?
21. This king tried to execute Daniel in a lion's den.