

Bible Challenge 2017

Week 34: August 20-26

Prayers: Psalm 98-101

We continue in the psalms with a series of fairly short songs of praise and adoration. We begin with the common phrase, "Sing to the Lord a new song" (a reminder of the importance of constantly writing words of praise to our God), and we continue with a psalm about the might and power of God, a psalm of thanksgiving, and a song of David about God's love and justice. What could be a better way of beginning the week?

Gospel: Luke 5-6

Luke begins with the account of Jesus' call to his first disciples. What follows are several passages that we ought be familiar with from our readings of Matthew and Mark. While Matthew refers to the tax collector as Matthew, both Mark and Luke refer to him as Levi. Same man, but two different names for different contexts. What is interesting about Levi/Matthew is his knowledge of the Jewish law and Messianic promises given that he would have been viewed as a turncoat by his people (collecting taxes for the Romans). Clearly this man's heart was not in his work. Interestingly too, Jesus did not give Matthew the group's money-purse, but gave it to Judas instead. Some of that may have been to distance Matthew from his history as a tax collector.

Chapter six contains a sermon that echoes the Sermon on the Mount in many ways, though it takes place on a plain and not on a mountain, thus we should see this as a different sermon where Jesus covers similar themes and uses similar language, something that should not be too difficult for people to grasp as any preacher worth his salt has preached many of the same themes more than once to different audiences (even sometimes to the same one — how we need to be reminded of truth!). Being a different sermon than the Sermon on the Mount, that eliminates any objections by people who object to differences between the two sermons.

Wisdom: Proverbs 14-15

We continue with Solomon's words of wisdom. One of the more striking phrases can be found in 14:5, which literally translates: "A witness of truth will not continually lie, but he who hisses lies is a witness of a lie." Apart from the idea that Christians are to "Witness" to others, which is a reference to our sharing our faith, we are reminded that we might also "witness to" something that is false if we are not living and acting in a way consistent with God's Word.

The Jewish audience understood lying not only to be a matter of bearing false witness, but it was also seen as a breach of faith or the deceitful breaking of a covenant (or one not intending to fulfill the covenant in question). How important our integrity must be to us as Christians, so we do not end up "hissing" as the serpent, the father of lies, does.

Similarly, the words of 14:34 must echo in our minds..."righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." How appropriate it is for us to hear this in America.

History: 2 Kings 23-25; 1 Chronicles 1-5

We bring the books of Kings to a close this week with the fall of Judah and then the fall of Jerusalem. As sad as these final chapters are, we are yet given a glimpse of hope at the end of the book with the promise that Jehoiachin, the king of Judah in exile, was freed from his imprisonment and seated at the king's table — a sign of grace and a hint of the coming re-establishment of the nation of Judah.

We should not end the book of Kings without mentioning once again the reforms of Josiah. Not only was the Temple restored and the Law taught to the people, but he also destroyed many of the altars on high places (which predecessors had not done) and he celebrated the full Passover festival for the first time since the time of the Judges (Joshua 5:11 is the last time the festival is mentioned in Scripture). He was a reformer of reformers, unlike his fathers and unlike those who followed. And, if we wish to see revival in our land, many of the reforms we find

in this book must happen here. Sadly, Josiah was killed at the battle of Megiddo by King Necco of Egypt.

The first five chapters of 1 Chronicles are purely genealogies. This traces the people of God from Adam and Eve in the garden until that present day. Often people in modern America wonder why there is so much attention to lists and genealogies in the Bible; surely they must be more important than just providing a family tree. And indeed, they are. The genealogies in the Bible form a kind of membership roll for the early church, listed by family and by the heads of household.

It is on the basis of this model that the Christian church has practiced membership rolls — people listed by family in the life of the church body. The sad thing is that after all of these years, many modern churches are electing to do away with membership in the church, not simply neglecting 6000 years of church tradition, but emphasizing the idea that church attendance can be done anonymously and is passive entertainment rather than being a practice of actual service.

Prophets: Daniel 7-12

As we begin again in Daniel, we find ourselves with visions of four beasts...one like a lion, one like a bear, one like a Leopard, and one that is a terrible beast with iron teeth and ten horns. Soon, as we arrive in chapter 8 we find a similar dream with a horned ram, and a he-goat with horns. Again, it is typically agreed that the four beasts represent the same divisions as did the statue with the four types of metal...these representing Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome respectively. We are further told (8:20) that the ram and the goat are the kings of Media/Persia and Greece respectively.

In each of these cases, God is giving Daniel a prophetic vision that will anticipate the coming of the Messiah. Here is a people in exile, desperate to know that all is not lost, thus these words, though cryptic, are meant as a sign of comfort during these dark hours.

In dealing with chapter seven, though, we must not miss the opportunity to speak of the vision of the Son of Man who comes to the Ancient of Days and who was given dominion and glory and a kingdom of all peoples, nations, and languages; this should sound like the way the New Testament talks about Jesus and is a reminder as to why Jesus' favorite title for himself was "Son of Man."

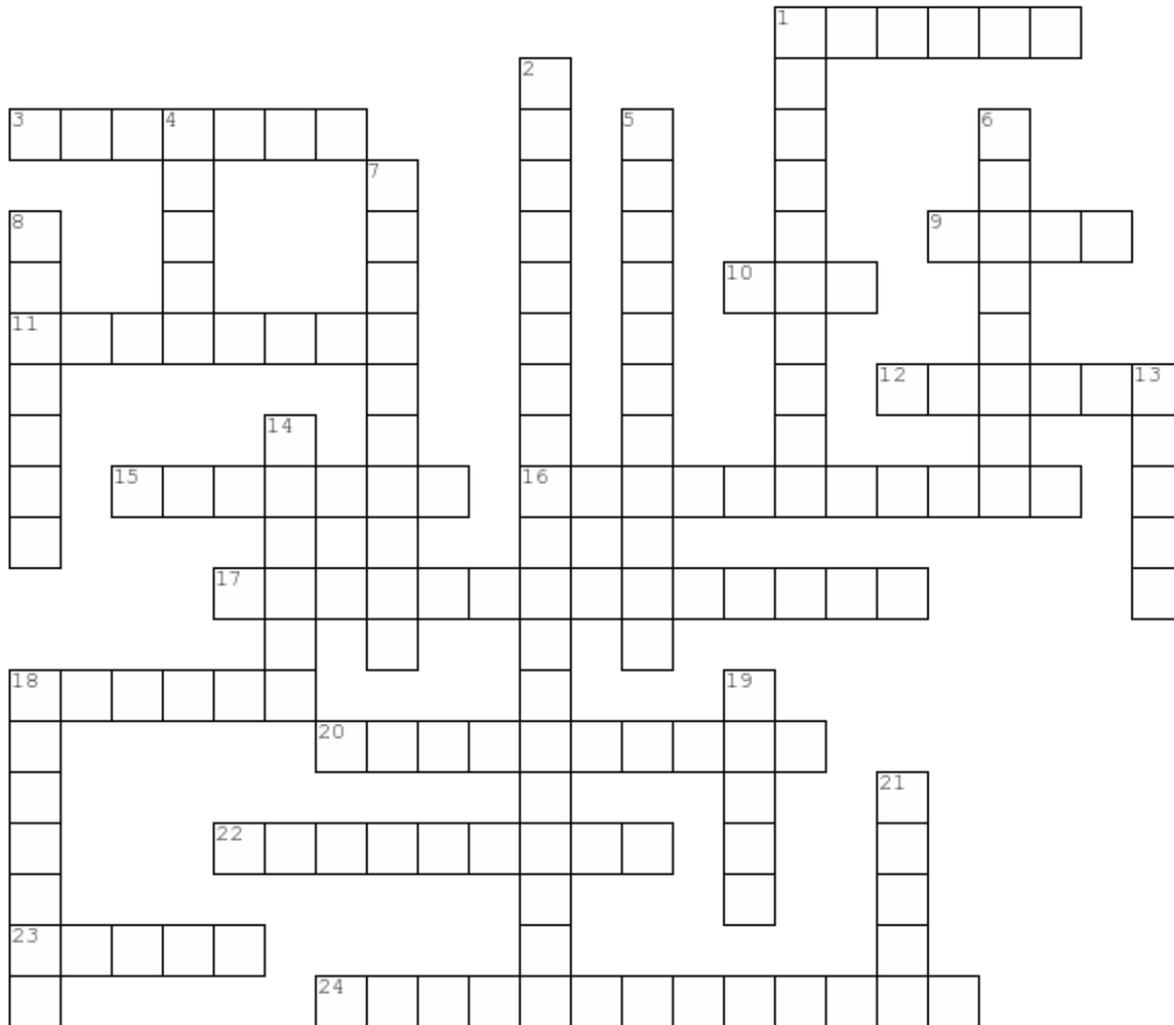
Daniel 9 also brings to bear a message of "seventy weeks." There is a tremendous amount of speculation about what these represent. Most will take these weeks to be a measure of time between the prophesy of Daniel and the coming of Christ followed by a period of time before the return of Christ. To make these numbers work, one needs to make a number of assumptions, like that of a week being a year, and then do some fancy math to make the calculations work out. Others suggest that it refers to the seventy years of exile in Babylon. On some level, we must be careful not to run amok in speculation, but staying focused on a clear understanding of the text.

Epistles: 1 Timothy 5-6

Chapters 5 and 6 contain a series of instructions to which the church is called to pay attention. Honor is to be given to older men by younger men and older women are to be treated as if they were mothers. Widows, if they are young enough, should remarry, but the elderly that have good character should be cared for by the church for the work of teaching younger women and in works of mercy (exemplified in the washing of feet). Elders should be honored and not burdened with frivolous accusations and all ought to be engaged in doing good works.

Paul closes to Timothy with an encouragement to labor on and not grow weary or discouraged, guarding the faith from those who would seek to pervert the Gospel's teachings.

Week 34



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

Across

1. This king brought great reforms.
3. Jesus is Lord of this.
9. This makes the bones rot.
10. The Horn in Daniel's vision had eyes like a _____.
11. Most importantly, Josiah brought a return to this festival.
12. This kind of person believes everything they hear.
15. He comes to interpret Daniel's dreams for him.
16. Paul tells Timothy to keep this unstained and free from reproach.
17. This Babylonian king sacked Jerusalem.
18. You shall not do this to an ox when he is treading grain.
20. The Genealogies in Chronicles are the basis of our _____ rolls.
22. His name would be changed to Zedekiah.
23. 'Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the _____.'
24. This exalts a nation.

Down

1. This Judean King was eventually freed from captivity and given rest at the king's table.
2. Paul writes that Jesus dwells in this (2 words).
4. In Daniel's vision, the Ancient of Days opened these for judgment.
5. There is great gain in godliness with this.
6. Jesus' favorite title for himself.
7. God is kind to the _____ and evil.
8. Timothy is to guard this.
13. The Lion in Daniel's vision had wings like this bird.
14. The goat in Daniel's vision represented the kings of this nation.
18. This is Levi's other name.
19. Paul says widows under this age should remarry rather than being supported by the church.
21. Who was king of Persia at the end of Daniel's life (meaning he saw the end of exile).