

Bible Challenge 2017

Week 35: August 27-September 2

Prayers: Psalms 94-97

Yes, if you are following along closely, I skipped a week in the psalms. No, that was not intentional, it was simply an "oops." So, if you read this week's section last week, we will read last week's section this week so as to not miss any of the beauty of God's Word.

Much like last week, these are psalms of praise to God, largely surrounding his character and his rulership over all of creation. He will put the evil-doers in their place, He will reign over his creation, and it is in Him that we will find our joy and can rejoice. Thus, as the psalmist says, "Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!" (Psalm 96:7).

Gospel: Luke 7-8

These chapters contain a sampling of Jesus' activities — healing, teaching, raising the dead, forgiving people's sins, casting out demons, and even calming a storm. Luke is covering a good period of time by giving these representative samples of Jesus' work.

Probably one of the more significant passages here, though, is the conversation that Jesus has with John's disciples. At this stage, John is sitting in Herod's prison and is asking himself the question, "Did I get it right — is Jesus really the Messiah?" It is a perfectly human question in the midst of a time of trial. So, John sends his servants to Jesus with that question. What makes this significant for us is the way in which Jesus answered. He does not say, "Yes." Instead, he says, "Look at my works — let a tree be judged by its fruit."

Why is this of particular importance to us? Many today would claim that Jesus is not the Messiah and our response oftentimes is to say, "Of course he is, the Bible says so." Yet, that is not how Jesus answered the question. Jesus' answer pointed John's disciples back to the Old Testament, asking, what does the Bible say about the Messiah and then pointing out that these things were being fulfilled. By the way, this is how the Apostle Paul preached as well. He would go into the synagogue and reason with them from the Scriptures (Old Testament) that Jesus was the Messiah. Ought not we be prepared to do the same?

Wisdom: Proverbs 16-17

Solomon begins with a profound statement... "The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer from the tongue is from the Lord." In other words, oh how we like to plan out our lives, but just because we may plan to do this or that does not mean that will be God's will for us, nor does it mean that our plan is what is best for us. Thus James will later say that when we make plans to do this or that we ought to say, "Lord willing," otherwise he is speaking from arrogance which is sin (James 4:13-17).

What kinds of things does God govern? Just big things? Does God even ordain those events that seem random to us? If we move to the end of chapter 16, we discover the answer to that question. Yes, he does. He even ordains the decisions that are made when the lot is cast (the ancient equivalent of rolling dice) — even those events that seem random to us at the time, are not.

One of the most well known Biblical statements also comes from within our reading of Proverbs this week, Proverbs 16:18 — "pride goes before the fall."

History: 1 Chronicles 6-13

The first part of our reading is dominantly genealogies...again, reminding us of the importance of publicly being identified as part of God's family. What follows, though, are some very significant matters.

Chapter 10 focuses on the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. What we should note carefully is that we are also told why Saul was killed...it was because he broke faith with the Lord and did not keep the command of God. Further, it plainly states that for consulting a medium and not seeking guidance from the Lord, God put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David, the son of Jesse. These should be sobering words to anyone entrusted with authority over God's people.

What follows is the account of David taking the city of Jerusalem to become his capitol city, referring to it as the "City of David," from that point forth. We also have a run down of David's "Mighty Men" — a group of soldiers that traveled with, fought with, and defended David. These

were men of legendary skill in battle and military prowess.

Stories around these mighty men make great places to preach or inspire people to living boldly in their faith. It is with these men that David won his great victories and their accounts remind us that while it is not in the strength of men, but of God, that we will prevail over our foes, that God often works through the prowess of men to bring about his will.

What follows the account of the Mighty Men is the account of the leaders of the tribes joining with David rather than supporting Saul's line. And here it is the people of Issachar that stand out. They are one of the smallest tribes of Israel and did not have the armies of their neighbors, but the text states of them that they "had an understanding of the times and thus knew what Israel ought to do." In the most immediate sense, we would say that their leaders had the wisdom to join with God's anointed king (David) rather than trying to hold onto a human kingly line (Saul's). In the broader scheme, they had what we would refer to as Biblical discernment. How valuable this is when it comes to the governing of the people of the Lord.

The final account in this week's reading is that of Uzzah's being struck dead by God for touching the Ark as David is having it moved into Jerusalem. The problem is clear...the people were moving it uncovered and on a cart when it was supposed to always be covered when outside and carried on poles. Further, it was never to be touched and Uzzah knew better. Yet, when God tested them by making the ark slip, Uzzah reached out to steady it with his hands. For that, God struck him down...which defiles more? The hand of a sinner or dirt? Indeed, it is the former and not the latter.

Prophets: Hosea 1-5

We move from Daniel into the prophet Hosea, one of the more beautiful of the minor prophets. God often calls his prophets to do things that symbolize his relationship with his people and Hosea's life is no exception to that rule. God calls Hosea to go and marry a prostitute...yes, you read that correctly, a prostitute. She is the picture of the idolatrous Israel who is constantly seeking to worship other God's than their God (not unlike the church).

Hosea is faithful to God's calling and makes the prostitute, Gomer, the first lady of the church parsonage. They have three children with rather odd names, though the names have a redemptive significance. Yet, Gomer, it seems, is unsatisfied with life in the church body and returns to her prostitution. Soon afterwards, God instructs Hosea to go and buy her back. At this point, she is up on the auction block, being bid upon to become a slave. You can only imagine what must have been going through her head when she saw her husband in the crowd...and he was bidding on her.

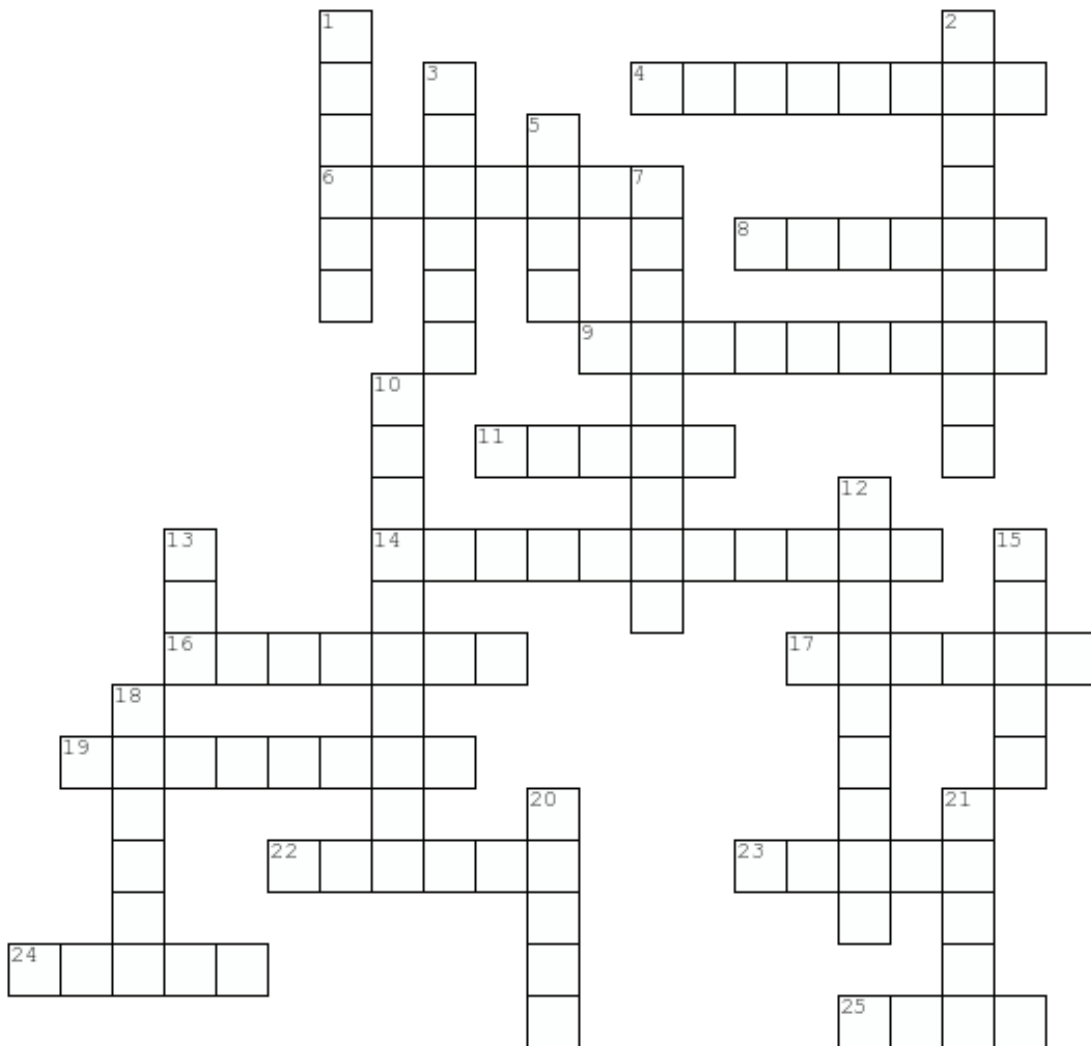
This is the work of God in our life as a church. He is a redeemer and even when we were still immersed in our sins, he died for us to pay our price of sin (Romans 5:8). This, Paul explains in detail and Hosea lives out in his life. This is a book that is ultimately about God's redemption of his people from Israel, and we see this promise at the end of chapter 2 when the children are renamed. Much of what follows chapter 3, then, is God demonstrating to the people that they (by their actions) are more like Gomer than they like the godly bride of Proverbs 31.

Epistles: 2 Timothy 1-2

We move now into Paul's second letter to Timothy. While the first is much earlier on in Timothy's ministry, and written to his young apprentice, now we see the apprentice having matured into his role, concerned about his teacher and mentor, and Paul giving his final words of guidance as he expects that his execution will soon be forthcoming.

Paul begins with a reminder of Timothy's roots and his instruction in the faith by his mother and grandmother...which becomes the basis for the instruction he gives in chapter two that Timothy take the things he learned from Paul and that he teach them to capable men who will in turn teach those things to others. Why is this the case? If we are to not be ashamed before God, we must demonstrate ourselves to be able to rightly handle the word of truth — that means not only studying it, but we are to handle it — and that implies applying it to life and teaching it to others...so that others may not fall into the devil's snares — and the snares are many.

Week 35



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

Across

4. The men of this tribe are said to have understood the times.
6. He struck down a lion in a pit on a snowy day.
8. The name of a host of demons inhabiting a gentile man.
9. 'The City of David.'
11. He was struck dead for touching the Ark.
14. 'Pride goes before _____'
16. Hosea and Homer's daughter's name. (2 words)
17. Saul sought guidance from a _____ rather than seeking it from God.
19. 'I am not ashamed for I know whom I have _____.'
22. Paul tells Timothy he was in chains because of this.
23. Hosea's prostitute wife.
24. 'It is an abomination to _____ to do evil.'
25. 'Amongst those born of women, none is greater than _____.'

Down

1. Saul was slain on this mountain.
2. The leader of 'The Three' of David's mighty men.
3. Timothy's mother.
5. 'Even a fool who keeps silent is considered _____.'
7. One of those who opposed Paul and his teachings.
10. God desires to lure his people back here, where they relied on him.
12. Gracious words are like this.
13. The plans of the heart belong to whom.
15. 'Present yourself as one unashamed, rightly handling the Word of _____.'
18. The location were Israel swore allegiance to David.
20. 'Ascribe to the Lord _____ due his name.'
21. This Hittite was amongst David's mighty men and was murdered by David.