

# Bible Challenge 2017

## Week 6: February 5-11

### **Prayers (Psalm 18-20)**

Up until this point, most of the psalms we have encountered have been relatively short, but here, in Psalm 18, we discover a longer one. It is also a psalm that you find largely recorded in 2 Samuel 22, where, as the superscript states, David celebrates God's deliverance from his enemies. As you read through this psalm, pay careful attention to the many attributes of God which are mentioned within the text. It should also be noted that verses 4-7 contain language that Jonah alludes to in his prayer for deliverance, found in Jonah 2. While many verses from the psalms are used as bases for many hymns and songs of praise, verse 46 frames one of my favorite praise songs from years gone past (thanks to Petra) — "The Lord liveth, and blessed be the rock, let the God of my salvation be exalted!"

Psalm 19 continues with the spirit of worship, reminding us that the creation all around points to God and worships Him. Verses 7-11 contain wisdom, though, that all of us ought to keep clearly before us. God's law is perfect and it is His testimony that makes us wise. How often we do not look at the rules of God in this way, but see them as nothing but negatives and codes we must begrudgingly obey. How different is the view of King David...and more importantly, of King Jesus?

In many ways, Psalm 20 is the sequel to Psalm 19. Psalm 19 ends with a statement that God is his redeemer — in Hebrew, our *Goel*, which refers to a kinsman redeemer as was Boaz to Ruth. Then, Psalm 20 teaches us what that redemption looks like.

### **Gospel (Matthew 8-9)**

Matthew 8-9 contains a series of miracles that Jesus works: healings, calming a storm, and raising a girl from the dead. Up until this point, we have focused more on the introduction to Jesus and to his teaching. Now, we see that the character of his ministry is more than just being a wise teacher, but that it is supernatural. Jesus is not merely a prophet as many false religions teach, but he is God in the flesh.

We also see that Jesus calls Matthew to follow him, a forerunner of the 12 called to be Apostles in the following chapter. We also have teachings pointing out that we are called to sacrifice anything to follow Jesus, he is challenged on his disciples not fasting, and of the need to evangelize the world around us.

### **Wisdom (Leviticus 16-18)**

More sacrifices! Our reading begins with the Day of Atonement, or in Hebrew, *Yom Kippur*. Recognizing that Jesus is our sacrifice that makes atonement for us with God, this chapter wholeheartedly points to Christ in many ways. First, note that the priests are required to make a sin offering for themselves before they approach the throne of God. Then two goats are chosen...the first as sacrifice and the second as a scape-goat, where the sins of the people are confessed on the head of the goat and it is driven into the wilderness. If you remember back to Jesus' baptism, where he identified with us as his people "to fulfill all righteousness" and was then led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, away from the covenant land. In this way, Jesus is our scape-goat as well as our sacrifice.

In the sacrifice of the Atonement, the High Priest is given permission to enter the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle (just once per year) to offer sacrifice for his people — a definite body of people (not all people in the world, just for the people of God). By Christ's sacrifice, he entered the Holy of Holy place on our behalf (Hebrews 9:12), leaving even the Temple curtain rent that his own definite people may follow (Matthew 27:51; Ephesians 4:8).

Leviticus 17 contains an interesting restriction regarding the eating of meat with the blood still within it. The reason is that "life is in the blood" and that blood is for the sacrifice of one's sins (a reference again found in Hebrews 9:22). What makes this item of particular interest is in Acts 15:20 the Gentiles are forbidden this as well, thus giving an exception to the eat anything you want rule that is found in Scripture (Romans 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 10:25; 1 Timothy 4:4-5). Some would argue that the prohibition in Acts is in terms of those Gentiles who live in close proximity with Jewish believers and who do not wish to be a stumbling block with others. And that argument has some value except in that is the only prohibition mentioned that one would not consider absolute. It seems better to me to understand the prohibition in Acts as not one of a law against certain kinds of food, but whatever food you eat, make sure the blood is drained out as blood is meant for sacrifice and in

Christ there is never again a need to sacrifice the blood of animals for our sin.

Chapter 18 changes gears from that of sacrifice to that of sexual morality. In this, we move away from civil and ceremonial laws to moral laws which explain the Seventh Commandment. The chapter begins with the idea that these are things that the Egyptians did and thus God is punishing them and ends with the same notion, but with respect to the Canaanites. Sandwiched between these two bookends is a list of sexually immoral behaviors that were and are still forbidden to believers lest they face the wrath of God. For those in our culture today who argue that homosexual behavior is morally acceptable to God, we find here that God refers to such as an abomination (18:22), just a step above bestiality.

### **History (Genesis 41-48)**

As we continue in the account of Joseph, we read of his rise to power, God's bringing his family to Egypt (as well as Joseph's forgiveness of them), and their settlement in the land of Goshen, given charge of the Pharaoh's livestock.

We are also given the account of Joseph's handling of the time of plenty and the time of famine, wherein he consolidated all power under Pharaoh. We find that in the years of plenty, Joseph taxed the people at a rate of 20% (Genesis 41:34). This food all came into the Pharaoh's storehouses. Then, when the land went lean, Joseph sold the food to the people on behalf of Pharaoh (Genesis 47:14). Then, when the money ran out, he took their livestock and then he took their land for pharaoh, making them servants of the king and allowing them to function more or less like share-croppers on the land that Pharaoh owned. Essentially, he established a totalitarian Socialist state in Egypt. Why would he do this? To provide a safe place for God's covenant people to dwell and to begin punishing Egypt for their idolatry.

### **Prophecy (Isaiah 26-30)**

Chapter 26 continues the praise to God for his redemption, even employing the imagery of Ezekiel's valley of dry bones at the end of the chapter. Here we also find the phrase, "In that day" setting off the beginning of the chapter, a reference to the "day of the Lord" where the Messiah shall come. Recognizing this is significant because as we move into the following chapter, it begins with the destruction of Leviathan... who is also called the serpent (think Genesis 3:1) and the dragon (think Revelation 12:3), connecting the ideas together which identify Satan as the serpent of Genesis 3 while also giving a description of his form when he met with Eve...not a cute boa-constrictor as is typically shown in illustrated children's books, but of a fierce, dragon-like creature.

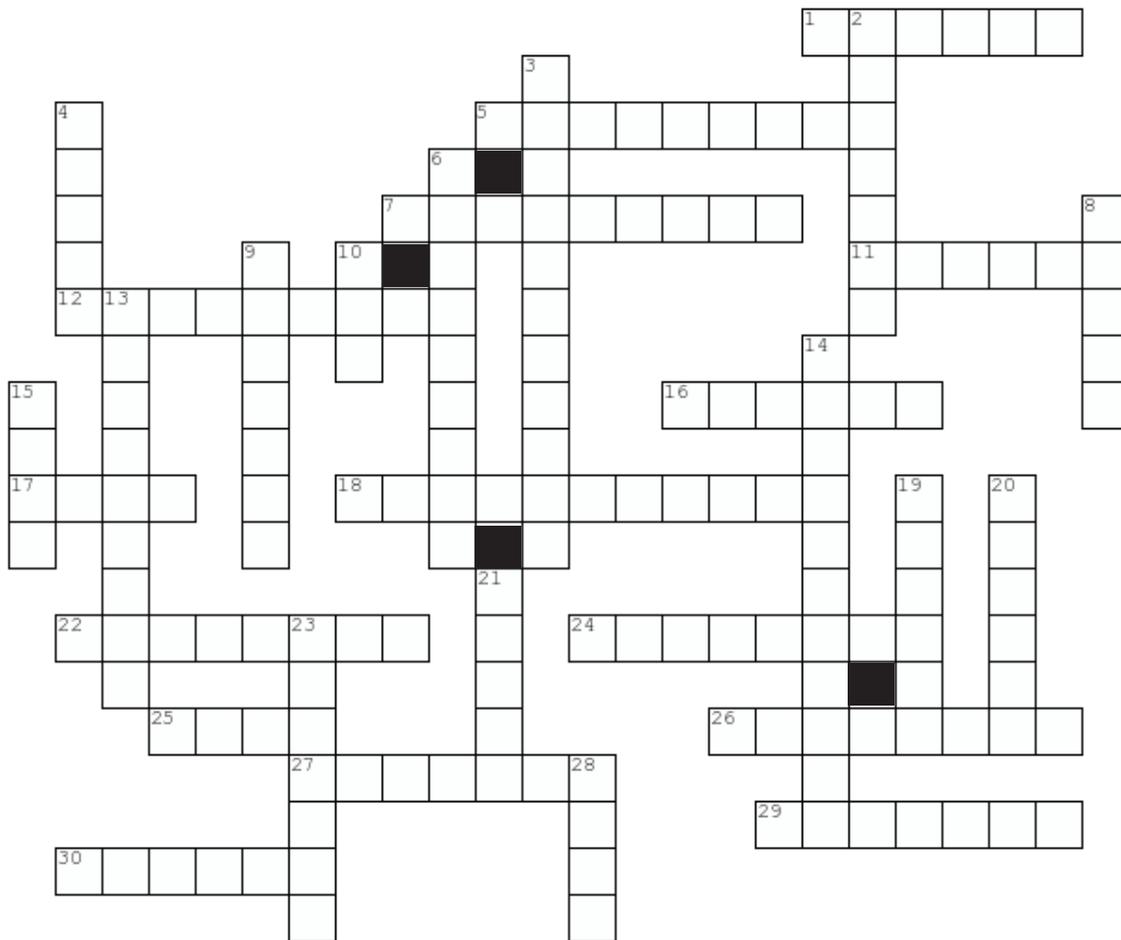
As this reading closes in chapter 30, pay special attention to a contrast that is found between the people of God who are being liberated and the enemies of God. The enemies are described as terror-stricken, something we should not be surprised at, particularly as their destination is the fiery pit that has been prepared long ago. And, in the midst of their destruction, the people of God are celebrating. We forget sometimes, that there will come a time when we will rejoice in the destruction of God's enemies — even of those who were once dear to us in this life. The fact that Christ is being glorified will then influence us more heavily than the agony in which the wicked will find themselves.

### **Epistles (Romans 13-14)**

Paul continues with matters of application as he writes to the Roman church. Probably the language that we least like is how Paul begins this section — with submission to authorities and pay your taxes. Some have said that this language only applies if there is a good government over you, but remember who was over Paul and his audience when he was writing. Rome ruled and Nero was the Caesar. While world history is filled with wicked and ruthless rulers, Nero is clearly amongst the worst of the worst, and Paul still said, submit. There, of course, is one exception — where that submission would cause you to sin, then we must obey God and not man (Acts 5:29).

Chapter 13:11-14 is a classic passage for evangelism purposes and happens to be the verse that God used to convert St. Augustine to the Christian faith. Then, as we move into chapter 14, one principle is taught throughout — do not use your freedom in such a way that would cause a brother or sister in the faith to stumble...that would be unloving, not proceeding from genuine faith, and thus sin.

# Week 6



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## Across

1. Joseph was this old when he began to serve the Pharaoh.
5. The Hebrew term for the Day of Atonement (2 words).
7. The Dragon whose head is crushed by the Messiah.
11. The majority of Psalm 18 is found in the second volume of this Old Testament book.
12. Jesus is our \_\_\_\_\_.
16. God surrounded himself with this, made up of darkness and thick clouds.
17. The Hebrew word for a 'kinsman redeemer'.
18. God refers to homosexual acts as an \_\_\_\_\_.
22. This brother was left in Egypt as a test.
24. Joseph's firstborn son.
25. Jesus' disciples did not do this while they were with him.
26. 'The Lord saves his \_\_\_\_\_.'
27. Isaiah declares that at the coming of the Messiah, we will see our \_\_\_\_\_.
29. The Law of the Lord is this.
30. God used this to relocate Jacob and his sons in Egypt.

## Down

2. We are called to send out laborers to this.
3. Joseph established this kind of monarchy in Egypt.
4. We are to pay this.
6. Jesus found no one in Israel with the faith of this man.
8. We are not permitted to eat this.
9. This declares the glory of God.
10. It is he who gives dreams and their interpretations.
13. This servant of Pharaoh told him about Joseph.
14. God has laid a precious \_\_\_\_\_ in Zion, which is Christ.
15. Jesus cast the demons of two men into this animal.
19. This is where Jacob and his sons lived out their days.
20. 'God is my rock, in whom I will take \_\_\_\_\_'
21. God honors his people when we draw near with our \_\_\_\_\_.
23. This was a tax collector Jesus called to follow him. Hint, we also know him as Levi.
28. 'The Lord liveth, and blessed be the \_\_\_\_\_.'