

Bible Challenge 2017

Week 6: February 12-18

Poetry (Psalm 21-24)

Across the board, I think that it is safe to say that Psalm 23 is both the most well-known psalm in the Bible and people's favorite. Even those who do not regularly attend a church seem to be familiar with this psalm and appreciate the comfort it offers. Truly, who better to have as your shepherd (your pastor, given that the word "pastor" comes from the Latin word for "shepherd"). Yet, we must be reminded that not all have the Lord as their Shepherd. He is the shepherd to those who are his — believers in Jesus Christ only — and all others are treated as wolves.

Psalm 22 is an equally if not more important psalm, though, for this is the psalm that Jesus had on his lips while he was in the cross. Sadly, too many people think that Jesus only had the first verse in mind, when he cried out, *Eloi, Eloi, Lamach, Sabachthani!* — "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!" Sadly, when one reads the crucifixion narrative in this way, one sees Jesus dying more or less in despair. Yet, to think this way, misunderstands how the Jews understood the psalm. The psalm itself is Messianic in nature and anticipates the Messiah's crucifixion a thousand years before the Romans were practicing crucifixion. While the psalm begins on a very dismal note, it ends in triumph with the victory of God and his anointed. When we understand Jesus' cry in this way, we recognize that Jesus is not only pointing to his own Messiahship but that he is declaring even from the cross that the victory had been won.

Psalms 21 and 24 may not be as familiar as the other two we are reading on this day, but they are also of great value and both are Messianic in nature. The first deals with the establishment of the Messiah's kingship and that it would be a blessing to the peoples forever. And the latter tells of the Messiah ascending the hill to the temple and entering into the Holy Place and into the Holy of Holies...something that Jesus did in completion in his resurrection.

Gospel (Matthew 10)

Chapter 10 contains both a calling and a sending out. The calling is that the twelve would serve as his Apostles. In Biblical times, an Apostle was a kind of envoy of the king. He went out with the authority of the one sending him. Thus, when the Apostles went out with the authority of Christ to preach, cast out demons, and to heal diseases. Further, when they spoke, like their Master, they spoke with authority and it is under that authority that the New Testament was written. Sometimes it is suggested that maybe God spoke through other books than just those included in the New Testament. Yet, with the death of the apostles (the last of whom to die was John, probably in the late 90's AD), scripture was closed.

In Roman Catholic circles it is claimed that the Pope also has Apostolic authority. Thus, when the Pope speaks *ex cathedra*, he is considered to be speaking with the same apostolic authority as was had by the Apostle Peter. The problem with this view is that there is no evidence that Peter "handed down" his apostolic authority (if he even could, which I would hold, it was not his to pass along). And further, the Roman church did not start calling the Bishop of Rome a Pope until the 5th century AD, long after Peter was dead and in the grave.

In the rest of Matthew 10, you see Jesus commissioning his disciples to send them out in pairs to preach, giving them instructions to guide their labors.

Wisdom (Leviticus 19-21)

Leviticus 19 is probably the most practical chapter in the whole book. It is from here that Jesus quotes when he summarizes the last half of the Ten Commandments as, "love your neighbor as yourself." Yet, in case one might be concerned about how one goes about loving one's neighbor or about why we must love our neighbors, this chapter addresses that matter as well.

To begin with, we do all we do because and precisely because God is holy and he calls us to be holy as he is holy (19:2). Notice the refrain that continues through these lessons..."for I am the Lord!" The who (in terms of neighbors) includes not just those in your family or who are located nearby to you, but also it speaks of those who are poor, disadvantaged, and who are traveling through your land. To all of these you must work justice and offer provision where needed. What follows in the chapter are various rules and guidelines that reflect the nature of God's pure holiness and of our calling to follow in His footsteps.

Chapter 20 follows in the spirit of chapter 19, returning back to the importance of being holy (set apart for God's purposes). And thus it offers punishments for those who defile themselves with immoral behavior (including sacrificing your child to Molech). Chapter 21 begins to narrow the instructions down from those things that apply to all people to those which apply to the priesthood. But since all Christians are part of a priesthood of all believers, the insistence toward holiness applies to us as well as it did to the Levitical priests.

History (Genesis 49-50; Exodus 1-6)

Genesis closes with a series of blessings and then the death of Jacob and then Joseph. The blessings, though, are hardly blessings in many cases and it establishes the place of Judah as king over the land and foretells the downfall of the tribes of Dan and Benjamin.

After the death of Jacob, the brothers fear Joseph's revenge for their crime, yet Joseph chastises them for thinking this way, reminding them that though their action was evil, God superintended their action for good purposes...a reminder of God's sovereignty. Joseph, being an Egyptian official, is even mummified before he is laid to rest...yet still with the promise that Israel would take him into the promised land when they left Egypt.

Exodus begins pretty close to 400 years after Genesis ends. During that 400 year timespan, Israel has grown into a nation. Further, the Hyksos dynasty has fallen from power and there is no one who "remembers" the things of the previous generation, namely the things of Joseph.

Our readings in Exodus take us from the birth of Moses, the covenant mediator, his upbringing in Pharaoh's household and his flight from Egypt because he tried to become the deliverer on his own terms and ended up wanted for murder. We have the account of his marriage to Zipporah in Midian and his 40 years as a shepherd for his father-in-law. Note, Moses' life can be divided in to 3 "40's" — he was 40 when he fled Egypt, spent 40 years in the wilderness and thus was 80 when he went back to Egypt as a redeemer. Then, dying at the end of 40 years in the wilderness, he is 120 years old when God lays him to rest.

Most of us know the account of Moses' call at the burning bush and how the Angel of Yahweh appeared to him from within the bush. Remember, the Angel of Yahweh is the Second Person of the Trinity, the Pre-incarnate Son of God, who interacts with the lives of his people. Perhaps what is most important about the call of Moses is that it is in this context that God reveals his covenant name: Yahweh. Older books and hymns use the term, "Jehovah" instead of "Yahweh" due to the influence of German scholarship, but the consensus today amongst scholars is that Yahweh is most accurate. If you are curious about how this works, catch me sometime and I will walk you through that one. But it is in the name of Yahweh that we are to know and call upon God for all generations and it is in His name that we are to take oaths.

Moses returns to Egypt and initially, Pharaoh is not overly impressed. Yet, this too, is for God's purpose as God is getting ready to judge Egypt with plagues because of their treatment of his people and because of their idolatry.

Prophets (Isaiah 31-35)

In the context of when Isaiah is writing, Israel is facing destruction by the Assyrians. As a result, the people are wanting to appeal to the Egyptians for assistance. In the midst of all of this, God is stating through Isaiah, "don't go to Egypt for help, trust me to be your deliverer." Chapter 31, thus, begins with God's warning to those who would appeal to the Egyptians.

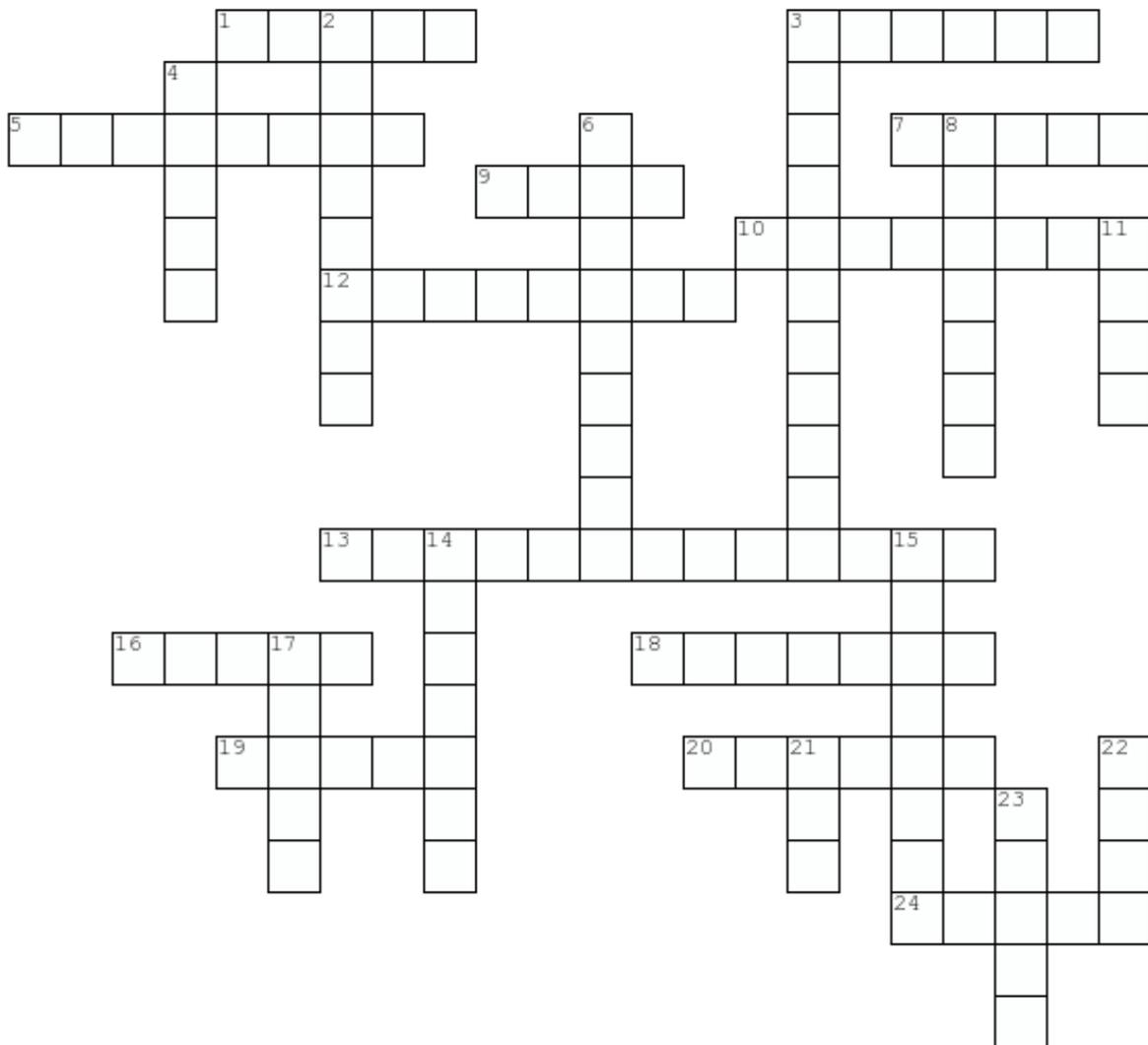
Yet, with the warning against help from the Egyptians behind us, Isaiah moves to a promise that takes us back to 2 Samuel 7:12 and God's promise to raise up a glorious king from David's line. Both of these statements, of course, are fulfilled in Christ, who is the great king in the line of David and the prince who reigns in righteousness. The stunning language, though, comes in chapter 35, where we are given a snapshot of the healing that comes from God for those who had been trapped in the spiritual desert of this world. For here, the ransomed of the Lord will be brought to Zion with singing and with celebration. Ransomed, you say? Ransomed from sin and death by the completed work of Christ (Revelation 5:9).

Epistles (Romans 15-16)

As we finish up the book of Romans, again, I will remind you of Paul's emphasis on the practical application of the Bible's theology, specifically in terms of following the example of Jesus Christ in all we do.

One of the interesting questions that the book of Romans leaves us with is whether or not Paul ever made it to Spain as was his desire (Romans 15:24). We do not have any scriptural reference to him actually traveling there, but it is not entirely impossible that Paul might have made such a trip during that period of time before his final trial before Caesar. 1 Clement, chapter 5, one of the early Christian non-canonical documents (Clement is mentioned as a fellow worker of Paul's in Philippians 4:3) speaks of Paul "having reached the furthest reaches of the west." This might seem to imply that Paul had made it to Spain at some point after writing the Epistle to the Romans, though the scriptures remain silent on the matter.

Week 7



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

Across

1. One must have clean _____ to ascend the hill of the Lord.
3. In redemption, the desert will bloom like this flower.
5. This belongs to the Lord.
7. Who will God crush under your feet?
9. You are to be this because God is this.
10. The name of Moses' wife.
12. He is like a ravenous wolf.
13. God's anointed King will reign in this.
16. Jesus came to bring this, not peace.
18. An older version of the name, Yahweh.
19. The scepter will not depart from this tribe.
20. The first people that Moses and Aaron go to speak with are the _____ of Israel.
24. To what region did Paul desire to go after he visited with the church in Rome?

Down

2. This could include the poor and sojourner in the land.
3. The 22nd Psalm describes this before it was even practiced.
4. To whom did God instruct his people NOT to go to for help.
6. God will stretch this over the land, which brings both confusion and emptiness (2 words).
8. This is an emissary sent out with the authority of the sender.
11. 'By the power of the Holy Spirit, may you abound in _____'
14. The name of Moses' oldest son.
15. Two of these are sold for a penny.
17. Jethro is also known by this name.
21. He is like a serpent in the way.
22. This is the mountain of the appointed feasts.
23. This is the punishment for a medium of a wizard in Israel.