

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Read the Bible in a Year Challenge

Week 51

Monday	Zechariah 3-4	Psalm 135	Mark 13
Tuesday	Zechariah 5-6	Psalm 136	Mark 14
Wednesday	Zechariah 7-8	Psalm 137	Mark 15
Thursday	Zechariah 9	Psalm 138	Mark 16
Friday	Zechariah 10	Psalm 139	Luke 1
Saturday	Zechariah 11	Psalm 140	Luke 2

Sunday: *Enjoy the lessons from Scripture as they are read aloud in Sunday worship. The Bible study summary for each Sunday of the year is found as a separate document on the parish website, under "Adult Education, Bible Study".*

The readings from Zechariah:

1. See the study summary for week 50 for an introduction to Zechariah.
2. The series of eight visions continues until the end of ch. 6.
 - a. Joshua the High Priest (3.1-10): The visions now move from the rebuilt city and the presence of God to the sacramental leadership of the people.
 - i. The scene is set as in the divine council. Cf. 1 Kgs. 22.19-22; Job 1.6-12.
 - ii. An angel of the LORD presides, with an accuser (*šātān*) present.
 1. The adversary accuses the High Priest falsely, and is rebuked, and any guilt in Joshua is removed.
 - b. The Lampstand (4.1-14): The meaning is obscure and has been obscured by what appears as editing of the text. The message focuses on the role of Zerubbabel in the rebuilding of the Temple.
 - c. The Flying Scroll (5.1-4): See the study summary for week 50, 1.a.2.
 - d. The Woman in the Ephah (5.5-11): The vision moves from focusing on the guilty in Judah to the removal of guilt from Judah as a whole.
 - i. An ephah was a unit of dry measure, and the container of the same size.
 - ii. The woman symbolizes wickedness as found in the Assyrian and Babylonian sex gods.
 - e. The Four Chariots (6.1-15): The colors referred to link this vision with the first (of horses and horsemen), found at 1.7-17. The number four probably refers to the four winds, for in this vision the horsemen set out, rather than return.
 - i. The cosmic messengers set out to all the earth. Where the message on return had been on of peace, now at outset it is one of coming unrest.
3. Chs. 7 and 8 contain various oracles which are not in the same series as the visions which preceded. The new section is set off by the specification of a date at 7.1 (7 December 518).
 - a. The oracles relate to an assessment of the past (7.1-14,) and promises for the future (8.1-23).

- i. The day of fasting and lamentation in the fifth month (v. 3) is probably a reference to the anniversary of the destruction of the first Temple (2 Kgs. 25.8-9). The people are instructed to avoid self-centeredness.
 - ii. For the future, the prosperity of the land relates to the rebuilding of the temple, *i.e.*, to the presence of the LORD in the midst of His people.
 - 1. Now the people are no longer to observe a fast in the fifth month, but to feast with gladness.
 - a. People from all the earth are now to flock to Zion as the seat of God, and it is through the Jews of the Diaspora that all the world will hear this good news of God's presence (8.23).
4. At ch. 9 the tone and style of the entire book shifts. The book assumes a literary character, in which evocations of past prophecies are stated in order to edify the people about God's overall plan. Prophecies that may have once been specific to a time and place are now referred to as examples of universal and eternal law.
- a. The second half of Zechariah assumes an eschatology (theology of end times) which is increasingly apocalyptic. The oracles are less concerned with contemporary historical reality and more focused on eternal purpose and plan.
 - i. God is depicted as a warrior who takes sides, on the side of Judah (9.1-8). The outcome of the battle is the reign of a king of peace (9.9-10).
 - 1. The king of peace is an earthly figure to come. He may inaugurate his reign because of the divine victory.
 - ii. A divine warrior brings victory (9.11-17), with the battle being waged in terms of a theophany (showing of God) in lightning and winds. The peace which follows is bucolic, linking it with what follows (an image of sheep and shepherd).
5. In ch. 10 the divine warrior becomes the divine provider. Both Judah and Israel are restored, linking the oracle to the past glory of the people.
- a. An oracle of the destruction of Lebanon and Bashan is stated (11.1-3), with a note of exultation for victory. The vanquished are mocked.
 - i. Despite this victory, the prophet is now depicted as shepherd. The background to this imagery is Jer. 23.1-4 and Ezek. 34.1-31. The flock is designated for killing.
 - 1. The staff of Grace is shattered, that the people may be killed (the covenant is annulled). Notably, the price paid is thirty shekels of silver (11.12-13). This is the price for a slave (Exod. 21.32) and the same price paid for the betrayal of Jesus Christ (Mtt. 26.15. As in Zechariah, the silver is subsequently "cast into the treasury," (*Compare* Zech. 11.13 and Mtt. 27.3-9.)
 - 2. It is against this backdrop that a worthy shepherd is raised up by God.

The psalms: N.B. *In The Bible Challenge the Psalter is read twice (once in each half year). We may all be led into new insights, particularly in focusing on praying each psalm (preferably aloud). See the summary for week 1 for a general introduction.*

- 1. See the study summaries for weeks 24 and 25 for a review of the psalms.

The Gospel according to St. Mark:

- 1. See the study summary for weeks 7 and 8 for a discussion of the readings from Mark.

The Gospel according to St. Luke:

1. *See* the study summary for weeks 8 and 9 for a discussion of the readings from Luke.