

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Read the Bible in a Year Challenge

Week 14

Monday	Judges 13-15	Psalm 77	John 11
Tuesday	Judges 16-18	Psalm 78.1-39	John 12
Wednesday	Judges 19-21	Psalm 78.40-72	John 13
Thursday	Ruth 1-4	Psalm 79	John 14
Friday	1 Samuel 1-3	Psalm 80	John 15
Saturday	1 Samuel 4-6	Psalm 81	John 16

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 Judges readings:

1. See the summary for week 13 for an introduction to Judges.
2. Chs. 13 through 16 include the story of Samson. Included are extended accounts of the hero’s birth and death, framing three stories involving Philistine women.
 - a. No Israelite apart from Samson has close dealings with the Philistines.
 - b. The first part of the story focuses on the annunciation of a child to Samson’s mother, (unnamed), and her husband, Manoah.
 - i. Samson’s mother is receptive to God’s word; Manoah not. These parental characteristics will be combined in Samson.
 - ii. The child is vowed as a Nazirite from the womb (*cf.* Num. 6.1-21). Hence, his hair may not be cut.
 - c. The story of Samson’s marriage is built around a riddle. The answer (never given in the text) is love. The tale includes an improbable story about single combat with a lion, the corpse of which attracts bees. This presages the third poetic fragment (14.18b*ff.*), which provides a vulgar counterpoint to the riddle. Samson’s subsequent actions speak of violence.
 - i. The Samson saga appears to be an allegory on Israel: Samson is the people of Israel. His Nazirite state is the covenant between the people and the LORD.
 1. The hero is not faithful, and is therefore destroyed, albeit taking with him many who oppose God.
 2. The story of Samson’s captivity emphasizes that he is treated as a child.
3. The remaining chapters in Judges comprise a sort of epilogue series, as a narrative meditation on leadership linked by a refrain, “In those days there was no king in Israel; people did what was right in their own eyes.”
 - a. The vagueness of the story in ch. 17 is brought into better focus in ch. 18, reflecting that Dan is a landless tribe.
 - b. The story of the Levite and his concubine in chs. 19-21 is shocking. Note that when the householder allows the sexual outrage, he tells the attackers, “Ravish them and do with

them what seems good to you ... "(19.24). This reflects the refrain in the narrative of what is wrong in Israel!

- c. The assembly at Mizpah (20.1-48) and the rape at Jabesh-Gilead (21.1-25) reflect that Israel is broken. Having taken an oath not to supply wives to the Benjamites (because of their crimes), the leaders seek to circumvent their oaths, seeking to preserve tribal unity. Again, by questioning their oath, they are "doing what seems right in their eyes".

The Ruth readings:

1. Ruth is essentially a short story told as history. However, even if the work is essentially literary, this does not mean that it is not based on fact.
 - a. For example, Ruth is identified at Mtt. 1.5-6 as the great grandmother of David, and an ancestor in the line of Jesus' step-father.
 - i. Ruth's seduction of Boaz (3.9-13) serves as an example (in Mtt. 1), therefore, of how God will use all means to further His purpose.
2. Ruth is a post-exilic work (*i.e.*, later than the sixth C., B.C.), and so relating events from a long-ago history. A minority of scholars would date the work to the period of the monarchy after David.
 - a. The canon places the book before 1 Samuel, *i.e.*, chronologically pre-dating the monarchy.
 - b. The dominant message of Ruth is that of fidelity, of loyalty born of covenant binding.
 - i. The name of Ruth's father, Elimelech ("my God is king") foreshadows Ruth's eventual commitment to the LORD, despite her foreign origin.

The 1 Samuel readings:

1. In the books of Samuel we encounter two prominent figures in the history and life of Israel: that of the prophet and that of the king.
 - a. In 1 Sam., Samuel emerges as prophet to all of Israel.
 - b. The books were written beginning at the rise of the monarchy in Israel, and continuing through the post-exilic period. Much of them reflect, therefore, an idealized reportage covering the ninth through the sixth centuries, B.C.
2. The first four chapters of 1 Sam. include intimations of change in the life of the nation, and the story of the birth of the prophet.
 - a. The first intimation of change is the emergence of a prophet.
 - i. The story of the prophet's birth is skillfully told, culminating in the Song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2.1-10), which serves as a model for the *Magnificat* of Mary (Lk. 1.46b-55).
 - ii. The text juxtaposes accounts of the Elides and those of Samuel.
 1. In contrast to the stories of the sins of the Elides, and their refusal to accept reproof, the stories of Samuel are those of the growth of the child in the favor of the LORD, to the point where he can receive and deliver the LORD's judgment.
3. Chs. 4 through 7 are a narrative of the travels of the Ark of the Covenant. This narrative probably represents one particular theological interpretation of history, as put forward in the era of the writing of 1 Sam. (*i.e.*, about the time of the kingships of David and Solomon).
 - a. An epoch in the history of Israel is depicted as ending at Shiloh, with the departure of the Ark, with a new epoch arising with the coming of the Ark to Jerusalem.

- i. The “programmatically verse” for this section is found at 4.3, when the defeated Israelites ask, “Why has the LORD put us to rout today before the Philistines?”
 - 1. The rest of the story provides the answer: God is inaugurating a new age in the history of His people.

The psalms: *The psalm numbering and versification system used throughout these study summaries is that found in The Book of Common Prayer (1979).*

1. The psalms encountered this week include:
 - a. 77: An individual lament followed by a hymn recalling the events of the exodus (vv. 13-20).
 - i. The speaker is identified as an individual, but given the exodus recitation should be understood to be the community of Israel.
 1. Vv. 8-9 references to God’s care for His people reflect the creedal statement found at Exod. 34.6.
 - b. 78.1-39: An historical psalm, reciting the story of Israel from the exodus to the rise of the monarchy.
 - i. Thematic elements include the teaching of fidelity, and the justification of the rejection of worship in the northern kingdom (*i.e.*, at Shiloh).
 1. The LORD’s chosen dwelling place is in Judah.
 - c. 78.40-72: *See above.* Vv. 67-71 refer to the rejection of the northern kingdom (“Ephraim”).
 - i. “He” shepherded them (v. 72) is a reference to David, not God.
 - d. 79: A communal lament. Like Ps. 74 it refers to the sack of the Temple (probably to the siege by Babylon in the 6th C.. B.C.)
 - i. *Compare* vv. 4 and 12. The “reproach” (laughing stock) of Judah is a reproach of the LORD. Cf. Ps. 44.14.
 - e. 80: A communal lament. This psalm may have originated in the northern kingdom.
 - i. The plea to “restore us” (v. 3) should be compared to Jer. 15.19.
 - ii. The vine is Israel (*cf.* Isa. 5.1-7, *but see* Ps. 89.41-42, in which the vine is the king).
 - iii. The v. 13 reference to “the wild boar of the forest” is invoked in *Exsurge Domine*, the 1520 bull of Pope Leo X condemning the teachings of Martin Luther.
 - f. 81: A prophetic liturgy (*cf.* Ps. 50) probably associated with the feast of Tabernacles. Noteworthy is the presence of an oracle uttered by a cultic official (*cf.* Pss. 2.7; 12.5; 32.9-10).

The Gospel readings:

1. *See* the summary for week 12 for an introduction to John.
2. The “Book of Signs” (*see* week 12) culminates with the raising of Lazarus, which is accompanied by the “I AM” saying, “I am the resurrection and the life” (Jn. 11.25).
 - a. Jesus’ crowning miracle draws many to Him (11.45), leading to further opposition from the authorities.
 - i. Caiaphas’ statement that it is “expedient ... that one should die for the people” (11.49) is a grim mirror image of what Jesus will actually accomplish in His death.

1. This mirroring is seen further at 12.19 (that “the world has gone after him”) and 12.20-26 (that Gentiles wish to see Jesus).
 - a. As He gives life, He receives a sentence of death.
 - b. Throughout the Gospel Jesus has declared that His “hour is not at hand”. Now, in ch. 12, He declares that His hour is come. He is to be lifted up (12.27-36). His hour is when God’s glory is revealed, in the crucifixion.
 - i. Unlike in the synoptic gospels Jesus does not pray that this “cup” might pass from Him, but states that it is for this purpose (sacrifice) that He has come to this hour (12.27).
3. The overriding narrative of the “Book of Glory” (12.37-20.31) is that Jesus gives power to His disciples, that they may become children of God.
 - a. The balance of the readings this week come from the discourses of Jesus given at the Last Supper. (This discourse continues through 17.26).
4. In ch. 13 Jesus washes His disciples feet, as an example of discipleship, and predicts His betrayal. Again, an ominous mirroring is seen between the nature and actions of God, and human nature and actions.
 - a. It is in the context of His prediction of His betrayal and death that Jesus gives His “new commandment” (the origin of Maundy Thursday, from the Middle English reference to *mandatum*, the Latin term for commandment), that the disciples are to love one another (13.34).
5. In ch. 14 Jesus makes clear that He returns to the Father, and that He is the only way to the Father. In 14.6, the Greek definite article *hé* may be translated as exclusive, *i.e.*, “the one and only way, and the one and only truth, and the one and only life”.
 - a. This is the “scandal of particularity” of salvation by Jesus Christ alone.
 - b. The Holy Spirit is promised (14.15), with the keeping of Jesus’ commandments as evidence of the love of God, and thus openness to the Spirit.
6. In ch. 15, Jesus teaches of how He and the disciples are to abide in each other, with believers as branches of the true vine which He is. *Compare* this imagery to the imagery of the vine seen in Ps. 80.
 - a. Those who abide in Christ are His friends, not servants only. For this they will be hated by the world, and will be persecuted.
 - i. As believers, disciples will receive the witness (to Christ) of the Holy Spirit (15.26-27). Those who do not believe will not receive the Spirit.
7. Teachings about the Holy Spirit dominate in ch. 16. The Spirit (Counselor, Comforter) will console the disciples while He convicts the world of unbelief.
 - a. The Spirit will guide believers into all truth (16.12-15).
 - b. Jesus will depart and return (16.16-24).
 - i. He has overcome the world (16.25-33).