

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Read the Bible in a Year Challenge

Week 16

Monday	1 Samuel 25-27	Psalm 88	Acts 2
Tuesday	1 Samuel 28-30	Psalm 89.1-18	Acts 3
Wednesday	1 Samuel 31	Psalm 89.19-52	Acts 4
Thursday	2 Samuel 1-3	Psalm 90	Acts 5
Friday	2 Samuel 4-6	Psalm 91	Acts 6
Saturday	2 Samuel 7-9	Psalm 92	Acts 7

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 1 Samuel readings:

1. See the summary for week for an introduction to 1 Samuel.
2. The story of David's encounter with Nabal and Abigail (ch. 25) may be read as an example of what happens to those who befriend and those who oppose David. The story also portrays Abigail's prudence in preventing needless bloodshed.
 - a. Samuel's death is only noted in one verse preceding the story. This sets the stage, however, for Saul's encounter with Samuel's ghost in ch. 28.
 - b. Ch. 26 essentially repeats the story in ch. 24, evidence of more than one authorial or editorial hand. V. 25 is the last word passed between Saul and David, and it is a blessing from Saul.
 - i. The reconciliation is short-lived (and ch. 27 is a short chapter!)
3. Saul's ultimate failure is depicted at 28.1-31.13.
 - a. The stories are told in a way so as not to discredit David.
 - b. Saul is portrayed as fearful before the Philistines (as he was before Goliath, *cf.* ch. 17). He therefore consults a medium (one whom he has banned).
 - i. As Saul was unable to reach the LORD prior to battle with the Philistines and Goliath (16.14), so now he is unable to have access to God, and in desperation he turns to a necromancer to summon the spirit of the dead Samuel.
 1. Samuel's words justify Saul's despair. The LORD has turned against Saul. (The narrator thus justifies David.)
 - ii. Battle preparations are described in ch. 29. David has duped the Philistines, and departs the battle.
 - c. Ch. 30 is a long narrative which sets the scene for Saul's departure from the kingship by portraying David as turning to God for strength and guidance, and thereby succeeding in battle, rule, and diplomacy.
 - d. Ch. 31 is a brief account of the death of Saul and his sons in battle.

- i. The defeat is so serious that no one from central Israel recovers Saul's despoiled body. As an act of fealty, honoring the man whose deliverance of their town singled him out for kingship (ch. 11), the people Jabesh-gilead recover his body.
- ii. The book ends with no king. A successor is yet to be recognized.

2 Samuel readings:

1. 2 Samuel is a continuation of the first book. A single narrative, probably originating in a ninth century, B.C., northern prophetic circle, probably extends from 1 Samuel through 1 Kings, and also including Deuteronomy. Some scholars refer to this as the "Deuteronomist," or "Deuteronomistic Historian," but properly speaking the narratives in Deuteronomy and 1 Sam.–1 Kgs. serve different purposes and may reflect different editorial strands.
2. The first half of 2 Samuel is focused on David centralizing the LORD's power in Jerusalem, and on conflicts surrounding David consolidating his own power as king.
 - a. The narrative reflects the conflict between competing ethos: that of nomadic pastoralists, and that of settled agrarians.
 - i. At the same time, the narrative reflects a series of genealogies that reflect a mnemonic for the story and for the course of David's dynasty.
3. The elegy for Saul and his sons (1.17-27) is sourced in an ancient anthology, *The Book of Jasher(ar)*. The book (v. 18) is also referenced at Josh. 10.13. The title may be rendered as the book of the "just" or "upright".
4. The narrative continues with David's achievement of supremacy over Judah (2.1-7), followed by accounts of:
 - a. Activity in the northern camp, and hostilities between David's and Saul's houses (2.8-3.1).
 - b. The failure of northern attempts at peace and leadership (3.2-4.12).
 - c. David leads Israel, and Zion is chosen as the center of rule (5.1-10), followed by the relocation of the Ark to Jerusalem, and the securing of allegiances (5.11-8.18).
 - d. The ninth chapter begins a three chapter narrative of conflicts within David's centralized rule.

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. 88: An individual lament of a person near death, used in the morning service for Good Friday in the western monastic offices.
 - i. Unlike most laments, this one does not change tone into a hymn of praise.
 - ii. The abode of the dead is referred by not less than five different terms.
 1. The reference in v. 8 to "waves" reflects the ancient association of the sea with chaos and death (*cf.* Gen. 1.2).
 - b. 89.1-18: Probably a royal lament, uttered by the king after a military defeat. However, the king acts as a representative of the people, and the psalm can therefore be considered a communal lament.
 - i. In this first section of the psalm there is first a recitation of God's favor (in vv. 3 and 4 quoting from 2 Sam. 7.16), followed by a recitation of cosmogony (the order of creation).

- c. 89.19-52: In the second section of the psalm what is recited is essentially an oracle of God, made upon His triumph, appointing David the king as His vice-regent.
 - i. Notwithstanding this triumph, the concluding verses lament that the dynasty is in question due to unspecified disaster.
 - ii. In the monastic offices, the psalm is associated with Ascension.
- d. 90: Probably a meditation on human mortality, one which includes Wisdom elements of choosing the right path.
 - i. This is the only prayer in the Psalter designated “A Prayer of Moses, the man of God”. Cf. Exod. 32.12; 33.1.
 - ii. The psalm is a “chiastic” hymn on the eternity of God, stated in contrast to the mortality of humans.
- e. 91: A psalm of trust, which includes an oracle of salvation. The speaker may be a priest or prophet addressing the king.
 - i. The psalm is used daily at Compline.
- f. 92: A thanksgiving psalm of an individual, reflecting Wisdom elements (*i.e.*, comparing the fate of those who find joy in God with the fate of evildoers).

The Acts of the Apostles readings:

1. *See* the summary for week 15 for an introduction to Acts.
 - a. Last week, Acts 1.8 was reviewed as a programmatic verse.
 - i. The “program” is now seen unfolding: In the readings this week the history of “witness[] in Jerusalem and all Judea” is set forth in 2.1-5.42, coupled with the life and trials of the early apostolic Church (4.1-5.42), and the beginning of the story of this spread of the mission for God outside of Jerusalem.
2. The mission in Jerusalem is described in 2.1 through 5.42. The story includes:
 - a. The appeal to Israel:
 - i. The Pentecost event (2.1-13) and sermon (2.14-41), followed by the first major summary of the message (2.42-47).
 1. *Compare* the imagery of fire at Pentecost with Isa. 66.15-20. In the LXX version of Isaiah the imagery is clearer, but Luke’s use of this imagery is redolent of the gathering of Israel referred to by Isaiah.
 - a. The heavenly origin of the Spirit is emphasized. The outpouring upon the assembly speaks of the gathering as Israel.
 2. The list of nations represented is remarkable both for who is included and who is omitted. The regions where most of the rest of Acts will take place are not mentioned.
 3. The sermon is framed as an accusation against the crowd, coupled with the essential proclamation (*kerygma*) of the lordship of Jesus Christ (*see esp.* vv. 32-36).
 - a. Peter states that the crowd are “witnesses”. They are witnesses not only of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but of the lordship of Jesus, as instructed at 1.8.
 - ii. The healing in the Temple (3.1-11): In the first major summary (at 2.43), “wonders and signs” are referred to. Now one happens. The disciples are standing in succession to Jesus.
 - iii. Peter’s sermon in the Temple (3.12-26): Peter speaks to all. He appeals for repentance and conversion, having referred to Jesus by a series of messianic titles.

A key element is found at v. 16, that “by faith in [Jesus’] name” is the miracle worked.

3. The life and trials of the apostolic Church are described in 4.1-5.42:
 - a. Peter and John are brought before the Sanhedrin (4.1-22). This is responded to by the apostles’ collective prayer (4.23-31), and a second summary of the faith (vv. 32-35).
 - b. Ch. 5 includes references to individual behavior, including unfaithfulness, and transitions into accounts of the persecution of the apostles.
 - i. The persecutions in Jerusalem set the stage for the mission’s outward journey.
4. The first description of the mission leaving Jerusalem begins with accounts of the Hellenist party in the apostles. This includes the commissioning of seven deacons (6.1-7) and the testimony of one of them, Stephen (6.8-8.3).
 - a. The Hellenists were Greek speaking Jews in Jerusalem. The Hebrews spoke Aramaic.
 - i. The description in ch. 6 of conflict comes as a shock following Luke’s idealized account of the apostolic community, in chs. 4 and 5.
 - ii. The seven are given a lesser status than the twelve. They are commissioned to table service. Nonetheless, they quickly enter the ministry of the word, as evidenced in Stephen’s testimony.
5. The account of Stephen’s testimony and trial is set by Luke as a parallel to the Passion of Jesus. The disciple follows his Lord.
 - a. Stephen is depicted as an exemplary bearer of the Spirit.
 - b. Stephen’s argument may be summarized as follows:
 - i. God’s way with Abraham (7.2-8).
 - ii. God’s way with Joseph (7.9-16).
 - iii. God’s way with Moses (7.17-43).
 - iv. God’s dwelling with His unfaithful people (7.44-50).
 - v. Conclusion: Israel’s perennial resistance to the Holy Spirit. Stephen is killed for his indicting witness.
 1. His dying words deliberately parallel those recorded by Luke as Jesus’ last.
 - a. In each martyrdom of a believer, the believer participates in the sacrifice of Jesus.