

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Read the Bible in a Year Challenge

Week 18

Monday	1 Kings 4-6	Psalm 99	Acts 14
Tuesday	1 Kings 7-9	Psalm 100	Acts 15
Wednesday	1 Kings 10-12	Psalm 101	Acts 16
Thursday	1 Kings 13-15	Psalm 102	Acts 17
Friday	1 Kings 16-18	Psalm 103	Acts 18
Saturday	1 Kings 19-21	Psalm 104	Acts 19

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 Kings readings:

1. See the summary for week 17 for an introduction to 1 Kings.
2. The narrative continues through 11.43 relating events of the reign of Solomon. In ch. 4 this includes a description of the riches of Solomon’s reign, both in internal and external affairs.
 - a. Solomon is honored “above kings” as a sage (5.9-14).
 - b. The building of the Temple is described (5.15-7.51).
 - i. The Temple is built with a corvée of labor, partly supplied by the king of Tyre (*i.e.*, a vassal).
 1. A forced levy of labor is the earliest form of taxation.
 - c. The royal palace is described (7.1-12), as are the furnishings of the Temple (7.13-51).
 - d. The dedication of the Temple is described:
 - i. Solomon speaks (8.14-61), following a narrative prologue (8.1-13), and followed by an epilogue of the entire story of building (8.62-9.9).
 - e. The building of the Temple is a high point of Solomon’s reign, but also a turning point.
 - i. Hidden among the glories of the project and dedication are the beginnings of the king’s failure—his infidelity to the LORD, and God’s consequent repudiation of him, with the consequent disintegration of the Davidic empire (related in chs. 11 and 12).
3. The visit of the Queen of Sheba (ch. 10) is an example of Solomon’s fame, but also presages the narration of his downfall, which begins in ch. 11 with the words, “Now King Solomon loved many foreign women ...”
 - a. Disputes about the location of Sheba persist, but most modern archeological evidence points to Yemen.
 - i. The queen is referred to as Makeda in the Ethiopian tradition (with the Ethiopian imperial house having claimed descent), and as Bilquis in the Qur’an. The latter name is an Arabic reference to one having “hairy legs”.
 - b. Solomon’s love for foreign women leads him to idolatry.
 - i. “[The king’s] heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God ...” (11.4).

- ii. The adversaries who arise against Solomon are described as being raised by the LORD (11.14).
- 4. In the midst of insecurity regarding the succession, prophetic intervention (in the person of Ahijah) comes about. This prophet of Shiloh is also mentioned in ch. 14, where he revokes the oracle given at 11.29-39.
 - a. Nothing else is known about Ahijah, although at 2 Chr. 9-10 he is referred to again, and described as the author of a book of prophecy (since lost).
- 5. Chs. 12 through 17 include synchronic histories of both Israel and Judah, which are now no longer under common rule.
 - a. Most of the reigns described are not remembered outside of Scripture. Omri (16.23-28) is described briefly, but he *is* remembered outside of the canon, having reigned for forty years, and being prominent enough that the Assyrians referred to Israel as “The House of Omri”.
 - b. Omri’s success stemmed in part from alliance with surrounding kingdoms. This set the stage for a struggle in faith and culture, into which steps the major figure of Elijah the Tishbite.
 - i. Elijah arises during the reign of Ahab, Omri’s successor. This reign will be described through 22.40. It is with Ahab that Elijah interacts.
- 6. The stories of Elijah form a tight literary unit. The overall framework of the stories in chs. 17 through 19 is of a concentric journey: to Transjordan; outside of Israel to the north; outside of Israel to the south; and a return to Transjordan, which completes the circle.
 - a. The contrast in the narrative is between fidelity to the LORD and fidelity to Baal.
 - i. In this context (and in the drought which results from the LORD’s disfavor), Elijah comes to the widow of Zarephath, a Sidonian town.
 - 1. As remarked upon by Jesus at Luke 4.26, the prophet is sent to a pagan. The LORD’s love is not a “possession” of His chosen people.
 - ii. The opposition culminates in a contest between God and Baal. Upon the LORD’s decisive victory, the rain returns.
 - iii. Ahab does not attribute the drought to God’s disfavor, but to the prophet as “a troubler of Israel” (18.17).
 - 1. The pagan prophets “eat at Jezebel’s table” (18.19), *i.e.*, they are subsidized from the royal treasury.
 - b. Elijah’s return includes his encounter with Elisha (19.19b-21), the successor whom the LORD has chosen.
 - i. The prophet returns to a world of food and companionship, and his successor abandons his family and previous life to follow Elijah.
 - 1. The prophet himself becomes, therefore, a locus of holy power to which Elisha is drawn, and from which he will go forth as a bearer of power and mission (2 Kgs. 2).
- 7. The narrative continues with Elijah’s flight from danger (19.1-21) and the downfall of Ahab (20.1-22-38).
 - a. The first story relates an attack on Israel by Syria.
 - b. The story of Naboth’s vineyard (21.1-29) speaks of an internal matter, not war with a foreign power.

- i. Where Ahab was depicted as magnanimous at the supplication of Ben-hadad (20.31-34), now he is depicted as petty and ineffectual. The second half of the story is a prophetic narrative, in which Ahab is doomed because of Naboth's murder.

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. 99: The last of the enthronement hymns. The sections are marked off by the refrain found at vv. 5 and 9. The first section calls all people to worship the LORD, and second recites His saving deeds. The second involves appeal to God for mercy.
 - b. 100: A hymn of praise which serves to close the series of enthronement hymns leading up to it. The whole earth is called upon to recognize that the LORD alone is God.
 - c. 101: Probably a royal psalm, in which a dialogue between the king and God takes place. References to "sincerity" (integrity) in v. 2 reflect a Wisdom theme. Cf. Prov. 2.7; 10.9; 13.6; 19.1.
 - d. 102: The fifth of the penitential psalms. An individual lament.
 - e. 103: An individual hymn of thanksgiving. The psalm quotes Exod. 33.13 at v. 7, and 34.6 at v. 8, with commentary provided at vv. 9-13.
 - i. In the monastic Office, the psalm is specified for Ascension.
 - ii. The eternal love of God is contrasted with the transitory nature of human life.
 - f. 104: A hymn of praise to the LORD as the God who has created and maintains (creates anew each day, *see* v. 31) the world.
 - i. This is the first of a trilogy of psalms (104-106) which are linked linguistically, and in poetic style.
 - ii. V. 1 and v. 37 form an *inclusio* (poetic "bookends") of praise.

The Acts of the Apostles readings:

1. *See* the summary for week 15 for an introduction to Acts.
2. The missionaries meet a mixed reception in Asia (14.1-20), and return to Antioch. The first missionary journey is generally dated *A.D.* 46-49.
 - a. Following the missionaries' return, the Jerusalem conference takes place (15.1-35).
 - i. The Hellenist wing returns to the seat of the Church to seal the legitimacy of the mission to the uncircumcised.
 1. Paul gives an account of this meeting at Gal. 2.1-10. Luke, who has a high view of the apostolic Church as under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, does not, however, relate the subsequent conflict, which Paul describes at Gal. 2.11-14.
 2. Peter's discourse resolves the circumcision issue, and James settles the meal-sharing controversy. The four clauses set forth by James (15.20, 29) are not recorded in Galatians.
 3. The central roles of Peter and James at the council, with Paul reduced to a "friend of court" witness (15.4, 12) signals that the apostles will soon depart from the mother church, which will remain in the custody of James.
3. At 15.36, Paul's path to Rome and martyrdom begins. The second and third missionary journeys are led by Paul. Luke reverses the order of description from "Barnabas and Paul".

- a. 16.1-10 describes the road to Europe, with 16.11 to 18.17 describing the mission in Greece.
 - i. Timothy is circumcised. He is Greek. Under Deut. 7.3 mixed marriages were illegal, but the child of a Jewish woman was considered Jewish.
 1. Paul's circumcision of Timothy contradicts what was agreed at council. This happens even though Timothy has already been baptized. Perhaps Paul needs to show himself standing squarely within observant Judaism in order to win hearts?
- b. In Philippi the missionaries convert Lydia, expel a divining spirit, are released from prison miraculously, and are vindicated (16.11-40).
- c. The missionaries proceed into Thessalonica and Berea (17.1-15), and then to Athens (17.16-34).
 - i. Paul's sermon in Athens (17.22-31) follows a two-pronged approach of conversion from idolatry to rule by the Resurrected One. The appeal is first to monotheism and then capped with a proclamation of the lordship of Jesus.
- d. Paul proceeds to Corinth (18.1-17). The account is detailed about an important mission, but silent on the developments that result in later reproach to the congregation (in 1 and 2 Corinthians).
 - i. Paul's arrival can be dated to *A.D.* 51. Corinth was a prosperous city, a trade cross roads, known for its wealth and luxury.
 1. Aquila and Priscilla (Prisca) are referred to as Jews, but in 1 Cor. 1.14-16 and Rom. 16.15) it is made clear that they are Christians already.
 - a. The couple are apparently Roman Christians, expelled as Jews from Rome under the expulsion of Claudius (*A.D.* 49).
- e. Following a return to Antioch, Paul undertakes mission in Ephesus (18.24-19.40), another prosperous town (in Asia).
 - i. Paul has been preceded in Ephesus by Apollos. There is no trace in Acts of the rivalry described in 1 Cor. 3.4-11; 4.6
 1. The Apollos episode casts light on the otherwise inexplicable situation of Paul encountering disciples of John the Baptist, who know nothing of the Holy Spirit. Apollos is from the seat of Jewish learning in the Diaspora.
 - ii. Paul's mighty word at Ephesus leads, literally, to a riot. The silversmiths see their trade (with numerous pilgrims to the shrine of Artemis) threatened.
 1. The first mention that Paul will go to Rome (19.21) occurs in this context.
- f. Paul returns to Greece and back to Troas (20.1-6), raises Eutychus from the dead (20.7-12), and speaks a farewell to his missions (20.17-38).
- g. Paul returns to Caesarea and Jerusalem. Throughout the journey, the narrator recounts how "we journeyed".
 - i. The "we" passages indicate the presence of Luke.
 - ii. Paul visits James in Jerusalem, and is arrested in the Temple, charged with apostasy during a period of intense Jewish nationalism.
 1. What follows is the first formal "apology" speech of three given by Paul. He is arrested by troops of the Roman cohort (a force of 1,000 soldiers stationed at the Fortress Antonia, at the N.W. corner of the Temple area).
 - a. Paul's conversation in Greek with cohort commander (21.37-39) leads to the commander giving him leave to address the crowd.