

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Read the Bible in a Year Challenge

Week 44

Monday	Daniel 11-12	Psalm 97	Revelation 21
Tuesday	Hosea 1-2	Psalm 98	Revelation 22
Wednesday	Hosea 3-4	Psalm 99	Matthew 1
Thursday	Hosea 5-6	Psalm 100	Matthew 2
Friday	Hosea 7-8	Psalm 101	Matthew 3
Saturday	Hosea 9-10	Psalm 102	Matthew 4

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 Daniel:

1. See the study summary for week 43 for an introduction to Daniel, which includes a discussion of the contents of chs. 11 and 12.

The readings from Hosea:

1. Hosea was a prophet of Israel, the northern kingdom, who prophesied from about 750 B.C. to 732, a period of significant threat to (and overlordship of) Israel from/by Assyrian power.
 - a. The prophet contrasts the external pomp of Israel’s cult with the hollowness of her faith, and sees the pressure on the kingdom and people as reflecting God’s judgment.
 - b. The prophet is concerned particularly with infidelity to the LORD, reflected both in overt Baalism (9.10-14) and in the infection of the very cult of the LORD itself (*e.g.*, the importation into the cult of elements of the worship of Baal, and the theology in which the cult was intended to restrain the “god” from acting, or to promote a desired effect, such as fertility).
 - i. In a positive sense, the prophet focuses on the history of Israel, and repeats the refrain from the true liturgy of the LORD, “I am the LORD who brought you out of Egypt.”
2. Hosea is divided into three sections:
 - a. Chs. 1-3 employ the metaphor of husband and wife, in which God is the husband and Israel His unfaithful wife.
 - i. The tragic marriage of the prophet and his unfaithful and promiscuous wife, Gomer, and the births of their three children (ch. 1), parallel the LORD’S relationship with His faithless spouse, Israel (ch. 2).
 1. The marriage metaphor involves not just the covenant, but also the idea that the will of each spouse is involved.
 2. Unlike a typical Israelite name, Gomer does not contain any allusion to the Name of the LORD. This hints at infidelity, at the service of Baals.

- a. Gomer bears the prophet a son. This son is not the product of adultery and is named by God. This emphasizes divine intention (*cf.* Gen. 17.5; 32.20; Mtt. 1.21).
 - i. Jezreel: The son's name is that of the plain wherein God's power destroyed idolaters. V. 5 makes clear that this naming is a reference to the coming destruction of Israel.
 - b. The next two children of Gomer are not referred to as Hosea's. The implication is that they are the result of adultery.
 - i. The first daughter's name, *Lo-ruhama*, is "She is not pitied".
 - 1. The Hebrew stem of this name carries the connotation of parental love. Thus, the issue of adultery is not loved by the true Father.
 - ii. The second daughter's name is *Lo-ammi*, "Not my people". The covenant is ended.
 - ii. The faithless wife is indicted by God.
 - b. Chs. 4-11 contain the bulk of Hosea's oracles against Israelite politics and the cult, with a predominating theme (building upon and paralleling the theme of adultery) being that of a parent and child.
 - i. God is shown as the loving, caring parent, despite Israel—in her transgression of the covenant—being recognized as a rebellious son.
 - 1. The loving parent is compassionate, despite the intractable rebellion of the son, even though the laws of the land would sanction the parent killing the child.
3. Chs. 12-14 will be discussed in next week's summary, but for purposes of this present discussion it is necessary to note the inscription at 14.9 as an injunction to the reader to understand that what is depicted in the prophet's narrative is a warning to him/her.
- a. In addition, chs. 3, 11 and 14 have a structural significance in the book. Each concludes a major section of the book.
 - i. Each presents a metaphor of the relationship between God and Israel through a story of husband and wife or parent and child.
 - ii. Each highlights the theme of human repentance/return being met by divine forgiveness and mercy.
 - iii. Each chapter employs a journey motif at two levels: the wife's/son's journey back to the husband/parent and the physical journey back to the homeland from exile.
 - 1. Cf. Ps. 80: The LORD has "planted" Israel, and to stray from Him in faith is to leave one's homeland.
 - iv. Each section also employs the motif of the movement from barrenness to fertility.
 - 1. The land that was ravaged and laid waste (2.3, 12) participates at a cosmic level in the bounty that flows from the rebetrothal of husband and wife.
 - 2. The destitution in the land reflects the barrenness of the people's faith.
 - v. Notwithstanding the motif of barrenness the movement to fertility is voiced as a message of hope (5.15-6.3; 10.12; 11.10-11).
 - 1. Where the wife/Israel is sown in the land at the end of ch. 3, she breaks forth as a lush and flourishing land (14.5-8).

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 17 and 18.

The Revelation to John (The Apocalypse):

1. See the study summary for week 40 for an introduction to Revelation. Note particularly the discussion of how symbolism is used in apocalyptic literature.
2. The last series of visions which began at 19.11 continues. The final battle having taken place, and the beast having been consigned to destruction, in ch. 20 the visions continue with a vision of the binding of Satan (20.1-3).
 - i. At 9.1-11 (the fifth trumpet), an angel descended from heaven to open the abyss, releasing the angel of the abyss and his demons to torture the earth. Now, the victorious Christ having been exalted, another angel descends to confine the beast's patron, the dragon, in the abyss for a thousand years.
 1. The thousand year reign (20.4-10) is described, From the earliest times in the Church, this passage has caused controversy.
 - a. "Post-millenniarists" look to the second coming of Christ, followed by a thousand year reign of Christ on earth, followed by the final judgment. This is a predominantly Catholic view.
 - i. The saints will be living on earth, in the new Jerusalem, for 1000 years. The first resurrection of the dead is to take place at the beginning of this period.
 1. Post-millenniarists view the 1000 year reign as a spiritual metaphor.
 - b. "Pre-millenniarists" look to the second coming happening at final judgment, after a thousand year reign of the dragon. Pre-millenniarists view the 1000 year reign as an historical prophecy.
 2. The last judgment is described at 20.11-15. This is the second or general judgment, not the first of the saints (20.4).
 3. A new heaven, a new earth, a new Jerusalem (21.1-8): The last vision in the third series focuses on salvation. This vision of the new Jerusalem is elaborated at 21.9-22.5 *Compare* this section (a coda to the seven visions in the third series) to the coda found following the vision of the seven bowls (17.1-19.10).
 - a. The contrast is a deliberate antithetical parallel (as found in many psalms), in which "Babylon" and "Jerusalem" are contrasted.
 - i. At 22.3 is written "There shall no longer be anything accursed ..." This may imply a reversal of the curses of Gen. 3.14-19. (22.2 has just evoked imagery of the bliss of Eden [Gen. 2.9] and the hope for restoration [Ezek. 47.12]), or that the new Jerusalem is not threatened with destruction for idolatry (Zech. 14.11).
 1. The more general point may be that God is reconciled with the nations, rather than cursing them (Isa. 34.2, 5).

4. Revelation ends with isolated sayings (22.6-20), which constitute a sort of epilogue for the book. The focus is on the origin and authority of Revelation.
 - a. The speaker is not an angel. 22.7 makes it clear that the speaker is Jesus Christ.
 - b. 22.6-7 constitute three sayings which legitimate the book through divine blessings.
 - c. The reaction of the believer makes him/her equal to the angels in beholding God (22.8b-9).
 - d. The risen Christ is identified with God (22.13). This is Jesus (22.16).
 - e. The bride (22.17) is not just a metaphor for the Christian community (the Church). The Church, like the Spirit, is herself an aspect of the divine which calls humanity to salvation.
 - f. The integrity of the book must be respected (22.18). Jesus is coming (22.19).

The Gospel according to St. Matthew:

1. *See* the study summary for week 1 for a discussion of the readings from Matthew.