

**GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

**Read the Bible in a Year Challenge**

Week 17

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<b>Monday</b>	2 Samuel 10-12	Psalm 93	Acts 8
<b>Tuesday</b>	2 Samuel 13-15	Psalm 94	Acts 9
<b>Wednesday</b>	2 Samuel 16-18	Psalm 95	Acts 10
<b>Thursday</b>	2 Samuel 19-21	Psalm 96	Acts 11
<b>Friday</b>	2 Samuel 22-24	Psalm 97	Acts 12
<b>Saturday</b>	1 Kings 1-3	Psalm 98	Acts 13

**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”.*

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**The 2 Samuel readings:**

1. See the summary for week 16 for an introduction to 2 Samuel.
2. The readings this week begin in the midst of a longer narrative (which began at 5.11) of the centralization of the worship of the LORD (and of David’s power) in Jerusalem.
  - a. Conflicts within David’s palace are described, including the famous account of David’s procurement of the death of Uriah the Hittite, and his affair with Bathsheba (11.1-12.25).
    - i. The unit about the Bathsheba affair is part of a theme of the succession of Solomon.
      1. The secondary treatment of this theme (as opposed to the focus in 1 Kings) indicates conflict between Davidic and Solomonic interests in the composition of the canon.
    - ii. The narrative stresses the injustice to powerless subordinates.
      1. The prophet Nathan’s conversation with the king is an example of a *māšāl*, a form of parable.
        - a. David’s repentance is followed by an assertion of the legitimacy of Solomon.
          - i. David is spared, but God executes judgment against David’s house.
3. Chs. 13-20 recount David’s loss and recapture of Jerusalem, with a focus being on Absalom’s challenge to his father’s sovereignty.
  - a. Life in Jerusalem forces changes in tribal customs. This tension outside of the household is reflected within the household.
    - i. The rape of Tamar (ch. 13) is accompanied by her warning against the breaching of society’s norms.
  - b. The loss and recapture of Jerusalem are part of a long succession narrative for the dynasty. This narrative probably existed independently before it was incorporated into the books of Samuel.

4. The final three chapters of 2 Samuel form an appendix to the two books of Samuel. They include a series of stories from the Davidic tradition, inserted prior to the story of his death found in 1 Kings 1.1-2.
  - a. Two narratives exist, one relating to the expiation of Saul's guilt (21.1-14) and one to the expiation of David's guilt (24.1-25), with a list of heroes inserted, and notable songs in praise of God.
    - i. The pattern of the text is a mirror image of 2 Sam. 5.11-8.18: at the end of David's reign the tribal, covenantal realities are reasserted in the face of royal absolutism.
      1. The material provides a balance to the bloodbaths to be related in 1 Kings.
        - a. There are limits on absolutism. The king is always accountable to God.

### **The 1 Kings readings:**

1. 1 and 2 Kings originally were one book. In Church tradition, these are the fourth part of the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings).
  - a. The unity of the Former Prophets as a narrative is evident, and contrasts repeatedly what the life of the people is when they follow the LORD and when they do not.
    - i. In the *Septuagint* text tradition 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings are known as 1-4 Kingdoms.
  - b. The dating of the compilation of the narrative is uncertain, although the final version of Kings probably dates from the Babylonian exile (6<sup>th</sup> C., B.C.)
2. The purpose of the entire "Kingdoms" narrative is to relate how it is that the LORD's people came to be in exile.
  - a. In the persons of their kings, Judah and Israel were both guilty of cultic infidelities to God.
    - i. The divine promise to David (2 Sam. 7.4-16; 1 Kgs. 8.25) is what stays God's hand in the face of Judah's evils (1 Kgs. 11.13; 15.4; 2 Kgs. 8.19).
    - ii. In contrast, Jeroboam's cultic infidelity (1 Kgs. 12.26-31) is the foundational sin for the ultimate fall of the northern kingdom.
3. The first 3 chapters of 1 Kings speak of prophetic intervention (by Nathan) in the succession to David, struggles over this succession, and that the LORD is pleased with Solomon and endows him with many gifts, e.g., a "discerning mind" (3.16-28).

**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. 93: Ps. 93 begins a series of enthronement psalms celebrating the LORD as the victorious king of creation.
    - i. The LORD's might over the "waters" reflects an ancient cosmogony of God's triumph over chaos.
      1. In the ancient Near East creation represented a triumph over chaos.
    - ii. Since God is king of all, His "testimonies are very sure," because God is fixed and immovable.
  - b. 94: Probably a communal lament, although the second half is in the 1<sup>st</sup> person, singular.
    - i. The placement of the psalm in the middle of surrounding enthronement hymns in effect asks that the LORD exercise His rule by judging the wicked.

1. Wisdom elements are present.
- c. 95: Sometimes thought of as an enthronement hymns, but can also be read as a prophetic liturgy. *Because this psalm is used as a canticle at Morning Prayer, and in it's completeness as a canticle in Lent, this summary of the psalm is expanded.*
- i. The many points of contact between vv. 1–7ab and vv. 8–11 (the two “halves” of the psalm), while not a formal chiasm, do serve as a series of contrasts, the mirroring of a hymn of praise with a recitation and sentence which challenges the claims of piety and obedience contained in that hymn, and followed by the sentence of the LORD.
    1. In the first half of the psalm, the LORD’s actions are stressed. The repetition of “hand” in vv. 4–5 emphasizes the creative power of God, and divine care (at v. 7), with this focus on God’s greatness being complimented by the call to prayer throughout, and the claim of obedience in v. 7b. The second half of the psalm then focuses on Israel’s actions, not God’s.
      - a. These are negative actions, rebellion and the hardening of hearts, and the focus shifts to the people’s unwillingness to listen to God’s speech, the irony being that it is now God speaking.
      - b. The verb “come” in v. 6, stated as an approach to the LORD in His temple, is then used by God in v. 11 to deny entrance. The consequence of a lack of fealty, as well as of falseness in the protestation of fealty, is made clear.
    2. When in vv. 10–11 the LORD speaks directly, His language judges the people because they “do not know my ways.”
      - a. “Knowing the way” bespeaks Divine instruction, and not knowing the way can be descriptive of lost sheep, as in Jer. 50.6. The contrast is thus inescapable: The people describe themselves as the sheep of God’s hand at v. 7b; at v. 10 He describes them in terms which bespeak lost sheep.
        - i. The contrasts provide clear instruction: Honor your oath of fealty, and follow the LORD’s instruction, or be excluded from His house, from life.
- d. 96: An enthronement hymn which parallels Ps. 98 and has a doublet in 1 Chr. 26.23-33.
- i. In the Gregorian monastic Office, the psalm is appointed for Christmas Day, as well as other notable feasts.
- e. 97: An enthronement hymn emphasizing the majesty of God as “Lord of all the earth,” and the joy which His reign brings.
- i. The word “earth” in vv. 5 and 9 frames a theophany (a revelation of God), of God coming from heaven to earth and asserting His universal rule.
    1. The reference in v. 9 to the LORD being “most high” (Hebrew = *Elyon*) reflects an earlier poly- or henotheistic understanding of who God is, that He is supreme overlord.
    2. The psalm is appointed in the monastic office for Epiphany.
- f. 98: An enthronement hymn. The psalm most widely appointed for use on Christmas Day.
- i. The references in the psalm to “victory” (RSV) may be better translated as “salvation”.
  - ii. The focus is on the saving acts that God has performed “for the house of Israel” (v. 4), which focus then shifts to “all the ends of the earth”.

1. The “Christmas” connotation can thus be compared with the angelic greeting of “peace” (Lk. 2.14).
2. God’s “faithfulness” is His covenant commitment. In Jesus all are brought into right covenant relationship with God.

### **The Acts of the Apostles readings:**

1. *See* the summary for week 15 for an introduction to Acts.
2. The readings this week begin with the martyrdom of Stephen, *i.e.*, in the midst of the account of the spread of the Gospel outward from Jerusalem (6.1-15.35).
  - a. The narrative of Philip in Samaria is one of the triumph of the Gospel among peoples outside of the covenant.
    - i. Samaritans and Jews are hostile to each other, and the Ethiopian eunuch is from the “end of the earth” (*cf.* 1.8).
3. In ch. 9 the prime instrument in the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles, Paul, comes to the fore.
  - a. The persecutor becomes persecuted (9.1-31).
  - b. The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch has thematically restated the mission. Luke now turns to a milestone in mission, the conversion of an enemy into the greatest missionary.
    - i. The conversion story is told three times: in ch. 9, and at 22.3-21 and 26.2-23 (the latter two being examples of how Luke uses speeches in instruction).
    - ii. Saul is converted. The story does not relate a commission, only a prognosis that Saul will be persecuted.
      1. The retelling of the story in the speeches does include an account of commission, but these speeches are from much later (*e.g.*, after Paul’s defense of his commission as being directly from God, found in ch. 1 of Galatians).
      2. At 9.16 the Lord speaks that Saul is to suffer. This parallels His instruction to His disciples at Lk. 21.12-19. Saul is the Lord’s “chosen vessel” to bear God’s Name.
  - c. When Saul returns to Jerusalem he is shunned. Barnabas “sponsors” him. This account may reflect conflict between Jewish traditionalists and Hellenists, or may simply reflect that Saul’s gospel is “antinomian” (disregarding the Law) and thus perceived as a threat among traditionalist Jewish Christians.
4. The narrative shifts to Peter as a missionary (9.32-11.18). Saul/Paul is the missionary to the Gentiles, Peter to the Jews, and yet Luke demonstrates the universality of the Gospel in telling of the first Gentile conversion (of Cornelius, 10.1-11.18) involving the Jewish apostle, Peter.
  - a. Cornelius would have been a “God fearer,” a pious Gentile who recognized the true God in the LORD, but was excluded from Jewish worship.
    - i. Cornelius would have served in the same legion as the centurion encountered by Jesus in Capernaum (Mtt. 8.5*ff.*), and the centurion at the cross (Mtt. 27.54; Lk. 23.47). There is no direct evidence of these men knowing each other, but *not* knowing each other as senior non-commissioned officers in the same legion would be surprising.
      1. Had Cornelius encountered prior testimony about Jesus?

5. The Gospel continues its spread between Jerusalem and Antioch (11.19-12.25). The first church of the Gentile mission is in Antioch, and these are the first people called “Christians” (11.26).
  - a. Christians (whether known by this name or not) are becoming more prominent; hence the persecution by Herod in Jerusalem, in which James (son of Zebedee) is killed, and from which Peter must escape (12.1-25).
    - i. At 12.12 John Mark makes his first appearance.
  
6. In ch. 13 the account of the first missionary journey begins. Paul and Barnabas journey through S. E. Asia and into Cyprus.
  - a. The missionaries are solemnly commissioned as Antiochian envoys (13.2-4), evidence, perhaps, of a fateful parting of ways with the “prophets and teachers” (otherwise unnamed) referred to in 13.1. Cf. Gal. 2.11-14.
  - b. The missionaries are “sent” (13.4). They act at the behest of the Holy Spirit.
    - i. Saul’s name changes to Paul. No explanation is given.
      1. Possible explanations include the focus on Gentiles (and hence the use of a Greek as opposed to Jewish name), or the switch as a missionary from a Hebrew name which means “strong” to a Greek name which means “small”.
    - ii. A false prophet is overcome in Cyprus (13.6-12).
    - iii. A set piece speech (a Lucan device) is found at 13.13-52, in which Paul first summarizes salvation history and then proceeds to the proclamation of Jesus as Lord (the *kerygma*).
      1. The audience is still mainly God-fearers, and hence the appeal to O.T. history is made with reference to some audience knowledge.