

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Read the Bible in a Year Challenge

Week 19

Monday	1 Kings 22	Psalm 105	Acts 20
Tuesday	2 Kings 1-3	Psalm 106	Acts 21
Wednesday	2 Kings 4-6	Psalm 107	Acts 22
Thursday	2 Kings 7-9	Psalm 108	Acts 23
Friday	2 Kings 10-12	Psalm 109	Acts 24
Saturday	2 Kings 13-15	Psalm 110	Acts 25

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 final story in 1 Kings (ch. 22), really needs to be read together with that found in ch. 20, as a pair which encompass the story of Naboth’s vineyard (ch. 21).
 - a. The death of Ahab and defeat of Israel are announced by Michaiah, and realized during the course of a disastrous campaign against Syria.
 - i. The prophetic narrative comes before the story, unlike the order found in chs. 20 and 21.
 - b. The remainder of 1 Kgs. involves telling of Ahab’s death, and very brief mentions of subsequent and failed reigns.
 - c. The division of the narrative between 1 Kgs. and 2 Kgs. is wholly arbitrary, and does not correspond to a significant event.

The 2 Kings readings:

1. As noted, *supra.*, the division between 1 & 2 Kgs. is arbitrary. The narrative therefore continues between the two books in the midst of telling of Ahaziah’s reign.
2. The story of the kings changes in ch. 2 of 2 Kgs., with the appearance of Elisha. The Elisha cycle of stories will continue until 8.29. Elisha and his extraordinary power are the focus of attention.
 - a. The cycle begins with the testing of Elisha (who was called in 1 Kgs. 19) to determine his loyalty to his master, Elijah.
 - i. The cycle is interrupted by the story of Jehoram as king. His mild cultic reform (destroying a pillar of Baal) is not true reform, and thus not enough to save him (*see* 2 Kgs. 9).
 - b. The cycle continues with a complex of ten legends (4.1-8.15). The stories are “legendary” in the sense that they do not name characters (other than Elisha), and their purpose includes the evocation of wonderment at the hero’s powers.

- i. The stories alternated between those in which the prophet deals with his own people, and those in which he interacts with Gentiles.
 1. A widow's plight is relieved through the miraculous multiplication of oil (4.1-7).
 2. The prophet raises the son of a Shunammite woman (4.8-37).
 3. Elisha counteracts food poisoning (4.38-41).
 4. The prophet multiplies bread (4.42-44).
 5. Elisha is master over leprosy (5.1-27).
 6. An ax head is recovered (iron is made to float)(6.1-7).
 7. The prophet is a military resource (6.8-23). He can discern the plans of the Syrian king and army at a distance.
 8. Samaria is delivered from the siege of Ben-hadad by reason of the prophet's clairvoyant and predictive powers (6.24-7.20).
 9. Property is recovered (8.1-6, to be read together with the story found at 4.8-37).
 10. The divine directive given to Elijah at 1 Kgs. 19.15 is realized in the accession of Hazael as king of Syria.
3. In ch. 9 the Elisha cycle has ended, and there begins a history of the Israelite and Judean monarchs in the last 125 years of the two kingdoms' co-existence.
 - a. The narrative is very similar to that found at 1 Kgs. 14.1-16.34, from which it is separated by the Elijah and Elisha cycle, in which the focus is on prophetic as opposed to royal figures.
 - i. The history continues from 9.1 to 17.41.
 - b. Jehu is anointed by Elisha. His bloody doings are depicted as the fulfillment of prophecy, and so as divinely sanctioned. Note especially 9.30-37, the account of Jezebel's violent death as a fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy.
 - c. Jehu mops up survivors and supporters of the Israelite royal houses (10.1-17). These political measures reach a climax in the religious reforms of Jehu, in which the prophets of Baal are destroyed (10.18-28).
 - i. Despite these reforms, Jehu does not destroy the calf cult instituted by Jeroboam I, and so Jehu is destroyed.
4. Through to the end of this week's readings, stories are repeated of successive kings.

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. 105: The history of Israel from Abraham to the Exodus and the conquest of the Promised Land is recited in hymnic form. This is the only psalm which mentions the patriarchs and Joseph in historical narrative. Cf. Josh. 24.2-4.
 - b. 106: An historical recital, like Pss. 78 and 105. However, where Ps. 105 is a hymn, Ps. 106 is a communal lament.
 - i. The recital of Israel's rebellion against God (vv. 13-43) is framed by celebrations of the salvation effected by the LORD.
 - c. 107: A communal hymn of thanksgiving, punctuated by two refrains: "Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress" (e.g., v. 6); and "Let

- them give thanks to the LORD for his mercy and the wonders he does for his children” (*e.g.*, v. 8).
- d. 108: A lament which includes individual and communal elements. The psalm is probably postexilic, and is made up of Ps. 57.7-11 and Ps. 60.6-13.
 - i. The combination of these earlier laments speaks to the situation of the postexilic community.
 - e. 109: An individual lament of one falsely accused. Vv. 5-19 are treated as optional in the Lectionary. They are not “nice,” and serve as a good example of how every human emotion can be found in the Psalter.
 - i. A minority of scholars argues that the difficult words of vv. 5-19 are not, in fact, those of the psalmist, but are quotations of the words of his accusers.
 - ii. In v. 5 reference is made to an “accuser”. In Hebrew the definite article (“the” accuser) is used. The word “accuser” (in the sense of a prosecuting attorney) is *śātān*.
 1. This term is used as a name at Zech. 3.1.
 2. Note, however, that in the final verse of the psalm it is not the satan (or Satan) who stands at the psalmist’s right hand, but God.
 - a. Even if the reference is to the Devil, God saves.
 - iii. The psalm is appointed in the Ambrosian Rite (Milan) for Good Friday, with the rationale for this use finding its origin in an argument of St. Thomas Aquinas, “That Christ lay under a curse, that He might deliver us from the curse of the Law.”
 - f. 110: Two divine oracles to the Davidic king, voiced as the words of a prophet. The psalm may date from the time of Solomon.
 - i. V. 1 is the Old Testament text quoted most frequently in the New Testament.
 - ii. The meaning and translation of v. 3 are obscure, as testified to by wide variations in translation.
 - iii. At a human level the v. 4 reference to Melchizedek (*see* Gen. 14.17-24) seems to point to the Davidic monarch succeeding to the status (including priesthood) of the former Jebusite kings of Zion.
 1. At the level of divine oracle and typology, the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ (*see, e.g.*, Heb. 5.6; 7.3) is understood.

The Acts of the Apostles readings:

1. *See* the summary for week 15 for an introduction to Acts.
2. The Acts readings this week include the stories of Paul’s final travels between Greece and Asia, (ch. 20), and of Paul as a prisoner and defendant in Palestine. The latter narrative, which begins in ch. 21, extends beyond the readings this week, to end at 26.32.
 - a. At 20.17-38 Paul’s farewell to his missions is described.
 - i. Compared to the other speeches in Acts, this discourse is of a different type, a farewell to Christians, not an evangelical teaching to those who do not know God.
 1. Paul announces both the end of his missions and the beginning of his trials and imprisonment. The speech is thus a transition between two long narratives, one of mission and one of passion, and is a Lucan parallel to the life of Jesus.
 - a. Much of the wording in the speech may represent Luke’s reconstruction more than Paul’s speaking, *i.e.*, Luke is marking the

close of the first generation of the Church.

3. Paul returns to Jerusalem. On his way there he stops in Caesarea Maritima, and Agabus prophesies Paul's imprisonment. Agabus acts out his prophecy, like an Old Testament prophet (21.11).
 - a. Paul arrives in a Jerusalem which is at a fever pitch of Jewish nationalism (under Roman occupation), and thus more and more overtly hostile to the Christian community. It is in this context that James relates the accusation against Paul (21.21), and that Paul makes a display of his fidelity (21.23-24).
 - i. Paul is arrested in the Temple, on the basis of accusations of Jews from Asia, who have knowledge of his missionary work.
 1. A riot ensues, which is suppressed by the Roman military. Paul is taken prisoner by the Romans. This recapitulates Jesus' Passion, in which He is accused by His people, but tried under Roman law.
 2. Paul offers the first of three speeches of defense found in the trial section of Acts. The speech does not address the charge that caused the riot, but is a proclamation of the faith (22.1-21).
 - a. The proclamation is rejected by the crowd (in confirmation of Jesus' words at 22.18), and the Romans propose to scourge Paul, who invokes his Roman citizenship, and thus his right to trial.
 - i. In v. 28 it is made clear that Paul's outranks the tribune, who purchased his citizenship.
4. Paul appears before the Sanhedrin, which has been *summoned by the tribune* (an historical singularity, at best). Whether the meeting is a meeting or a trial is unclear, but the narrative is one of historical continuity with the arraignment of Jesus (Lk. 22.63-71), Peter and John (Acts 4.5-22), the apostles (5.26-40), and Stephen (6.12-7.60).
 - a. The judicial process against the earthly Jesus has been continued through four trials in Acts, where the accused is the risen Lord of the *kerygma*.
 - b. A plot to kill Paul ensues, and the Roman commander transfers Paul to the garrison at Caesarea (the seat of the governor). The number of troops assigned to the transfer would have been about half of the garrison in Jerusalem!
 - i. The letter to the Roman governor neatly summarizes the issue from a Roman point of view: Paul is guilty of no crime under Roman law, but his presence in Jerusalem leads to religious unrest. This letter parallels the attitude of Pontius Pilate toward Jesus.
 - c. Paul offers another apology speech before the governor, Felix. This follows a speech of accusation made by a spokesman the high priest himself (who is present).
 - i. Central to Paul's defense is his confession at 24.14-15, which defines Christian life in terms of the Old Testament Jewish faith.
 - d. The governor, who is corrupt (24.26) leaves Paul in prison for two years. When he is replaced, the new governor leaves Paul in prison as well, and Paul appeals under Roman law to the emperor.
 - i. The new governor, Festus, seeking to curry favor with the Jews, meets with them in Jerusalem, and summons Paul to appear before King Agrippa II. The governor is playing politics, involving a puppet.
 1. The king's arrival is filled with pomp, setting the scene for Paul's final apology speech.