

**GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

**Read the Bible in a Year Challenge**

Week 33

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<b>Monday</b>	Isaiah 25-27	Psalm 34	1 Timothy 3
<b>Tuesday</b>	Isaiah 28-30	Psalm 35	1 Timothy 4
<b>Wednesday</b>	Isaiah 31-33	Psalm 36	1 Timothy 5
<b>Thursday</b>	Isaiah 34-36	Psalm 37.1-18	1 Timothy 6
<b>Friday</b>	Isaiah 37-39	Psalm 37.19-42	2 Timothy 1
<b>Saturday</b>	Isaiah 40-42	Psalm 38	2 Timothy 2

**Sunday: 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 Isaiah readings:**

1. See the study summary for week 31 for an introduction to Isaiah.
2. Chs. 25-27 continue the “Apocalypse of Isaiah” begun in ch. 24. A hymn for safe refuge (25.1-5) is addressed to the LORD.
  - a. Throughout this section prophecy and prayer alternate, framed by pronouncement of divine judgment.
  - b. Images of banquet and vineyard are prominent, images which will recur in Jesus’ parables.
    - i. The enthronement of the LORD upon Zion is a banquet for all nations, as a celebration of victory over death.
    - ii. This victory is followed by a longer song extolling God’s protection, praising the power of His commandments, and praying divine protection against the people’s enemies.
  - c. The resurrection prophesied at 26.19 is described in language which cannot be construed conclusively to refer either to metaphorical resurrection, literal resurrection, national revival or individual resurrection. (Cf. Hosea 6.2 for the use of similar language in the context of national revival).
    - i. This “ambiguity” in language is not likely to be accidental, for in the larger context of chs. 24-27 (which includes reference to the end of death) national revival seems to include individual resurrection, *i.e.*, the individual is identified with triumph over death in the intervention of the LORD.
3. Chs. 28-33 include oracles concerning the reign of Hezekiah, reinterpreted in the light of promises of future salvation.
  - a. The oracles (a series of woes) are from the latter part (*ca.* 705-701 B.C.) of Hezekiah’s reign, taking the form of laments over the dead.
    - i. Samaria (destroyed in 721) is denounced, *i.e.* as an example of the fate of Judah and Jerusalem.
    - ii. Priest, prophets, and “scoffers” in Jerusalem are denounced for blinding arrogance.
    - iii. A siege of Jerusalem is foreseen (in the woe against Ariel, 29.1-8).

- iv. The prophet denounces the people for their inability to understand God's word or work, with salvation described in terms of reversal of this situation (29.9-21).
  - b. The prophet describes an ideal kingdom (32.1-8), either as a wisdom instruction or as a prophecy of future blessing.
  - c. The oracles conclude with a prophetic liturgy (33.1-24) in which prayer and prophecy alternate.
- 4. The balance of "First Isaiah" (through 39.8) includes a series of prophecies concerning God's judgment against those who ignore His will.
  - a. The flowering of the southern desert described at 35.1-10 is stated as a promise of salvation. The reference is to the desert where Edom lay (with the judgment upon Edom having been described in ch. 34).
    - i. This description is coupled with an ending taken from "Second Isaiah" (from 51.9-11), evidence of editing placing different strands together in a narrative order.
      - 1. This description of new birth (*esp.* 35.5-6) is referred to by Jesus in describing to John the Baptist's disciples who He is, *i.e.*, in referring to the prophecy of what happens when the Messiah comes (Mtt. 11.4-6).
- 5. At ch. 40 the text shifts to what is often referred to as "Second Isaiah". *See* the summary for week 31.
  - a. Whereas chs. 1-39 bear the hallmarks of having been written before the fall of Jerusalem, chs. 40-55 bear the hallmarks of having been written during the captivity in Babylon.
    - i. The addressees are no longer inhabitants of Jerusalem, but exiles in Babylon (43.14; 48.20). Jerusalem has been destroyed (44.26-28).
      - 1. Contrary to the narrative in chs. 1-39, in chs. 40-55 the Davidic dynasty is mentioned only once, and then that its privileges may be transferred to the entire nation (55.3-5).
      - 2. The literary tone of the work has now changed from threat and condemnation to one of consolation and sorrow.
      - 3. Whereas in chs. 1-39 the pastoral focus was on a prosperous people, now the focus is on those who are destitute and tempted to apostasy.
  - b. The prophet places ancient traditions and historical narrative in a cosmic setting, so that a new exodus (from captivity) will be accompanied by cosmic signs, such as the leveling of mountains (40.3-5; 41.17-20).
  - c. Prominent themes (to be discussed as the readings progress) include:
    - i. The New Exodus: This is a controlling theme for the narrative throughout "Second Isaiah".
    - ii. The First and the Last: In the new age to come, the perspective of God becomes evident.
    - iii. The identity of the LORD as Creator is emphasized as evidence of the new form of what is to happen to God's people, Israel.
    - iv. God is just: Every divine promise is at the point of fulfillment.
    - v. The central role of Jerusalem in God's plan is emphasized.

**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 6 and 7.

## The readings from Paul's First Letter to Timothy:

1. See the study summary for week 32 for an introduction to 1 Timothy.
2. Ch. 3 continues the teaching on leadership in the Church. The most basic principal is that leadership is for the community. Both 3.2-7 and Titus 1.6-8 relate to the requirements for a bishop, and both appear to draw on an earlier listing of requirements.
  - a. 3.1 therefore, in referring to a “reliable saying” for what follows, may be an appeal to equate the teaching with genuine Pauline tradition.
  - b. The term for bishop, *episkopē* is not yet a reference to a Church hierarch. It is a reference to an “overseer” who has authority as a pastor over a house church, but also as one who has overseership (in a pastoral sense) over the leaders of other house churches. In effect, the bishop is a senior pastor.
    - i. The Church is considered the household of God. Therefore, the example of the bishop in managing his own household (he is presumed to be married) is deemed relevant.
  - c. The reference to deacons (3.8-12) is one evincing evolution of the diaconate from one of servant to a church office.
    - i. The reference to women in this passage (at v. 11) includes a reference to qualities that are identical to those listed for deacons. The Greek reference to the women as *gynaikas* is ambiguous, and could mean women or wives (*i.e.*, of deacons).
      1. However, given the identical nature of the qualifications listed, and the absence of any reference to the “wives” of bishops, the intent is probably to refer to women as deacons, not as wives of deacons.
3. The conduct in God's household must reflect the goodness of creation (3.14-4.5). This teaching, that creation is good, must be taught (4.6-10) to refute any false teaching of a separation of matter and spirit.
  - a. 4.11 then serves as a framing statement (with 6.2) for what follows, a series of teachings about specific members of the household of God, and how they are to relate to the community.
    - i. In teaching on stations within the Church, the author is relying on older community teaching, *e.g.*, for how widows are to be enrolled. He therefore focuses on how the institution has been strained and must be regulated.
4. The author summarizes his message in ch. 6. He is concerned that Timothy recognize false teachers (*e.g.*, by their money-grubbing ways!), and therefore instructs his charge in how he is to act.
  - a. Acting in this way will distinguish the true Church leader from the false teacher.
  - b. The Church leader is a steward, and is to guard what has been entrusted to him. The Greek *parathēkē* (6.20) is a reference to a deposit (*e.g.*, of money) which must be returned as it has been received. In other words, the leader is not to change the teaching of the apostles, but to preserve it.

## The readings from Paul's Second Letter to Timothy:

1. As discussed in the introduction to 1 Timothy (*see* the summary for week 32), the Pastoral Letters were written in Paul's name, but probably not by Paul.

- a. This does not make the letters to be forgeries. Within the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition the writing of pseudonymous letters was a long-standing practice in which the thought of the master was extended to the problems of a later time.
  - i. The recipients of the letter would have understood, therefore, that the letter represents an extension of authentic teaching, as handed down within the believing community.
    1. The reception of these letters within the canon of Scripture was made at a time when the Church understood quite well any questions about authorship. That they were accepted as genuine testifies to the manner in which their teaching fits within the authoritative traditions of the Church.
  - ii. The general tone and thrust of the Pastoral Letters includes the vocabulary, style, and manner of argumentation of philosophical works, here used to make teaching points that are based not on mental deliberation but upon divine revelation.
  
2. Second Timothy was probably written before First Timothy (and before Titus), at a time soon after Paul's death. It is therefore more focused on the experience of the apostle as having an immediate bearing on the ministry of his protégé.
  - a. The encouragement is thus a call to ministry, organized as follows:
    - i. Timothy is to renew the spiritual gifts of power, love and ethical instruction (1.6-2.13).
    - ii. The "reliable saying" (2.11-13) constitutes a portion of a hymn used in Pauline churches. *Compare* Rom. 6.3 for content.
    - iii. True teaching and false teaching must be distinguished. Four antitheses are stated by which true and false teachers may be distinguished (2.14-26).
    - iv. The true teacher must rely on the resources available to him (*e.g.*, Scripture)(3.1-17).
    - v. A concluding exhortation is stated (4.1-8), followed by a narrative of Paul's situation and needs (4.9-21).
      1. Given the understanding that Paul probably did not write this letter, the narrative may be considered as providing vignettes of the apostle's life as examples to be imitated.