

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Read the Bible in a Year Challenge
Week 6

Monday	Exodus 40	Psalm 30	Mark 3
Tuesday	Leviticus 1-3	Psalm 31	Mark 4
Wednesday	Leviticus 4-6	Psalm 32	Mark 5
Thursday	Leviticus 7-9	Psalm 33	Mark 6
Friday	Leviticus 10-12	Psalm 34	Mark 7
Saturday	Leviticus 13-15	Psalm 35	Mark 8

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 Exodus reading:

1. Exodus ends with the people dedicating the dwelling which has been made for the LORD.
 - a. The dwelling is erected on the first day of the new year, nine months after the arrival at Sinai.
 - b. When the tent of meeting is finished, “... the cloud covered the tent ..., and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (Exod. 40.34).
 - i. The journey to Canaan may now begin, with the LORD leading (*cf.* Num. 9.15-23).

The Leviticus readings:

1. Leviticus is the “third book of Moses” (*see* the summary for Week 1).
 - a. The title derives from the book's nature as a handbook for the levitical priesthood.
 - i. In Hebrew the book is called after the first word, *Wayyiqra*, which means “and He [the LORD] called”.
2. The first seven chapters of Leviticus are concerned with the rules of what types of sacrifice are to be offered to the LORD, and how they are to be offered.
 - a. The sacrificial code specified includes description of later developments (*ca.* 6th century B.C.), reflecting later editing of the book.
 - i. A “holocaust” is a sacrifice consumed completely by fire. The word derives from the Greek version of Leviticus, referring to the Hebrew for “that which ascends/rises”.
 1. The concept of ascent may refer both to the ascent to the altar and the ascent (*e.g.*, of smoke) from the altar to God.
 - ii. A sin offering was a sacrifice offered in expiation of sin, but only where the sin was inadvertent.
 1. Jesus’ offering expiates intentional sin, but only when the sin is confessed and offered up to God.
3. Chs. 8 through 10 are concerned with ordination to the levitical priesthood.

- a. Ch. 10 contains the only continuous narrative in the book, albeit a narrative intended to describe ritual requirements.
4. Chs. 11-15 are concerned with legal purity, with what is considered clean and unclean.
- a. At issue is how uncleanness can arise, and the means for regaining a state of purity.
 - i. The origins of the exclusion of certain animals as unclean is at best obscure, but may relate to the association of certain animals with pagan cultic practices (*e.g.*, pigs were used in sacrifice to the Babylonian god Tammuz).
5. The readings in these chapters are not encountered in the liturgy for worship in the Church. They are details relating to the practice of ritual purity under the Law.
- a. However, Jesus teaches that He has come to fulfill the Law (Mtt. 5.17), and Paul teaches that Jesus is the end of the Law (Rom. 10.4).
 - i. Paul speaks of “end” as consummation or fulfillment. He and Jesus are saying the same thing.
 - 1. The Law is not abolished, the Temple sacrifices are fulfilled in the one supreme sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross.

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. 30: An individual psalm of thanksgiving for deliverance from mortal illness.
 - b. 31: An individual lament. A thematic emphasis is the safety to be found in the “hand” of God.
 - c. 32: A wisdom psalm, cast as a psalm of thanksgiving.
 - d. 33: A hymn of praise to God.
 - e. 34: An individual song of thanksgiving. The psalm is an acrostic. It is addressed to the just, who are encouraged to join in praise of the LORD
 - f. 35: This psalm does not fit into any standard literary category.
 - i. Elements of royal lament are present, with the king protesting against false accusations of treaty violations.

The Gospel readings:

1. The readings this week comprise the first half of Mark’s gospel, and not just by number of chapters. In Mark, the narrative changes course at the Transfiguration of Jesus (which begins at 9.1).
- a. Everything up to the Transfiguration relates to Jesus’ ministry and exercise of authority in Galilee, including how He is misunderstood by His own disciples.
 - b. At the Transfiguration, Jesus is revealed for who He is to the disciples.
 - i. The narrative focus shifts to Jesus now journeying to Jerusalem, to the Cross.
 - ii. Once He is revealed as the Christ, this identity points to the Cross, and Jesus predicts His own passion.
 - c. Mark can be thought of as an arch, with the Transfiguration as the capstone.
2. Jesus is initially received positively in Galilee. He appoints twelve disciples, teaches, and exercises authority in miracles.
- a. Mark’s use of parables is much more limited than as found in Matthew and Luke.

- b. Jesus' miracles in Mark demonstrate His authority. He stills a storm (4.35-41), exorcises a demon (5.1-20), and heals the sick (5.21-43).
 - i. Despite these demonstrations of authority, Jesus is rejected by His own people (6.1-6a).
 - 1. Throughout Mark, Jesus is not identified properly by His own people. He is recognized by outsiders: by Gentiles; by demons; by a Roman soldier at His execution.

- 3. Jesus is misunderstood by His own disciples. From the description of His rejection by His own people, the narrative flows through a series of incidents in which the disciples fail to realize who Jesus is and what this means, into a series of acts of power:
 - a. The feeding of the five thousand (6.35-44), and healings (6.45-52).
 - b. Healings continue with those of a Gentile woman's daughter (7.24-30), and a man incapable of speech (7.31-37), as interrupted by a narrative of controversy about ritual purity (7.1-23).
 - i. Jesus' dialogue with the Syrophenician woman (7.24-30) can be characterized as harsh, as a test of her faith. *Can it also be understood to be Jesus speaking aloud, so that His disciples can overhear, and understand His mission (which His people have rejected) better?*

- 4. The narrative arch now reaches its turning point. In ch. 8 Jesus disputes with the Pharisees, who seek a sign, and in turning to Jerusalem further instructs His disciples.
 - a. Jesus again heals, and Peter now declares Jesus to be the Christ.
 - i. Immediately following this declaration, Jesus foretells His passion.
 - 1. The narrative then moves to the Transfiguration!
 - a. The stage is now set for instruction on who and what the Christ and His mission are, all of which will be demonstrated in the Passion to come.