

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Read the Bible in a Year Challenge
Week 7

Monday	Leviticus 16-18	Psalm 36	Mark 9
Tuesday	Leviticus 19-21	Psalm 37.1-18	Mark 10
Wednesday	Leviticus 22-24	Psalm 37.19-42	Mark 11
Thursday	Leviticus 25-27	Psalm 38	Mark 12
Friday	Catch up	Psalm 39	Mark 13
Saturday	Numbers 1-3	Psalm 40	Mark 14

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 Leviticus readings:

1. *See* the summary for Week 6. Ch. 16 serves as a transition between the descriptions of sacrificial ritual and the code of legal purity which follows. The chapter is a detailed description of the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*).
 - a. The sacrificial and legal codes provide the background by which to understand the Day of Atonement.

2. The balance of Leviticus focuses on ritual holiness. Described in detail are rules of conduct, penalties for violations of these rules, and the nature of holiness.
 - a. Importantly, whether describing standards of conduct (*e.g.*, of sacrifices) or of purity (*e.g.*, as this relates to sexual conduct), the code is focused on sacredness.
 - i. For example, sexual conduct must be considered in light of its sacredness to God; of God’s purpose in sexual conduct.
 - ii. An emphasis lies on the need for the Israelites to be holy (that is, set aside for God) in contrast to the Canaanites.
 1. Thus, in the chapter (18) setting for the rules of sexual conduct, child sacrifice is included.
 - a. The sexual conduct proscribed is equated with pagan worship, with serving foreign gods.

3. In ch. 23 the book shifts focus from codes of conduct to the liturgical year, to what days are set aside as holy.
 - a. The high holy days are described: Passover and Unleavened Bread (*Massô*t); Pentecost (*Shavuot*) ; New Years Day (*Rosh Hashana*); The Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*); and The Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths)(*Sukkoth*).
 - i. Passover commemorates the exodus from Egypt, and is combined with the week-long feast of unleavened bread, and agricultural observance in honor of the LORD.
 - ii. Pentecost (the Greek name for the feast) is fifty days after Passover. It is a time of pilgrimage to the Temple. (Hence the presence of many foreigners in

Jerusalem on Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit falls upon believers, as described in Acts 2.)

iii. Tabernacles is a Fall agricultural festival of ingathering and harvest.

4. The balance of Leviticus deals with additional legislation regarding punishments and the observance of vows.

The Numbers readings:

1. Numbers is the “fourth book of Moses” (*see* the summary for Week 1).
 - a. The title derives from the Greek title, which refers to the census figures given in chs. 1 & 26.
 - i. The title ignores that most of the book is narrative, poetry, and legal material.
 - b. Recurrent themes in Numbers are the dependence upon God of the priestly office, and the conflict between a priestly focus on the LORD and the people’s focus on daily wants.
2. The first ten chapters of Numbers focus on the census and organization of the Israelites before their departure from Sinai.
 - a. One aspect of organization of note is the distinctive role of the Levites (described at 1.48-54).
 - i. The Levites are distinguished from the other (lay) tribes and from the Aaronic priesthood.
 - b. Ch. 2 describes the layout of the Israelite camp, and the order for march.
 - i. The placement of the tabernacle of the LORD in the middle of the camp reflects a key concern of the P editor of the book.
 1. This tabernacling of the LORD embodies God dwelling with His people, and foreshadows the theology found at John 1.14 (“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ...”)
 - c. The priestly hierarchy is described in detail in ch. 3.

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. 36: This psalm cannot be easily classified. Its structure is:
 - i. Wisdom sayings (vv. 2-5)
 - ii. A hymn (vv. 6-10) and lament (vv. 11-13). The wickedness of those who do not know the LORD is contrasted with His love.
 - b. 37.1-18: The psalm is an acrostic based on wisdom themes. The just shall be blessed and the wicked cut off.
 - c. 37.19-42: *see above.*
 - d. 38: An individual lament. The third penitential psalm (*cf.* Ps. 6). Suffering is linked to sin.
 - e. 39: An individual lament with wisdom overtones. In adverse circumstances, prayer is raised to God (*cf.* Isa. 53.7; Acts 8.32).
 - f. 40: Composed in two parts: The thanksgiving of an individual (vv. 2-11) followed by a lament (vv. 12-18). This reverses the order usually found in such a psalm.

The Gospel readings:

1. The Transfiguration of Jesus in ch. 9 of Mark's gospel provides the pivot around which the structure of the book is found.
 - a. In Mark the disciples are not present at Jesus' baptism (Mark 1.9-11). Therefore, it is at the Transfiguration that they (a select group of them) first apprehend Jesus' identity.
 - i. The voice from heaven uses the same language as found at Psalm 2.7, *i.e.*, as found in a psalm redolent of messianic references. This is, in effect, God's confirmation of Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ (Mark 8.29).
 - ii. The description of Jesus matches that of the "Ancient of Days" at Daniel 7.9 (*e.g.*, clothing of dazzling whiteness).
 - iii. The voice echoes Jesus' confirmation that He is the Christ (the Son of Man), made (at 8.31) immediately after Peter has confessed that He is the Christ.
 - b. Jesus now turns to Jerusalem, to the Cross.
2. Following the revelation of who Jesus is, He instructs His disciples in this and in what discipleship means.
 - a. Jesus teaches about discipleship in the context of His own predictions of His coming Passion.
3. Following His teachings on discipleship (8.31-10.52), Jesus heals a blind man, Bartimaeus (10.46-52), who "... immediately received his sight and followed him on the way."
 - a. The response to the presence of God is modeled by Bartimaeus, the same outsider who has acclaimed Jesus using a messianic title ("Son of David") and invoking mercy (10.47).
 - i. It is in *this* context that Mark moves his narrative to that of the Passion week.
4. In the passion week narrative, Mark focuses on Jesus' prophetic teaching and on His controversies with the authorities.
 - a. Each time Jesus' authority is questioned, His answer is a revelation of God's will.
 - i. For example, in the famous dispute over taxes ("... render unto Caesar ...") found at Mk. 12.13-17, it is important to note what the inscription on the coin would have read.
 1. The coin would have described the emperor as divine.
 - a. Jesus is not just making a point about taxes, but about God.
5. Ch. 13 involves Jesus' final discourse in Mark. Mark is much more spare in what he relates than the other evangelists.
 - a. Following His prediction of the destruction of the Temple, Jesus speaks of matters which are in the future to His present listeners, but are past or present events to the readers of Mark's gospel (written in the mid-60's, *i.e.*, about three decades after the fact).
 - i. Jesus then describes the great tribulation of disciples (something to come) and the final triumph of the Son of Man.
6. The final chapter in this week's readings includes the account of Jesus' anointing, and of the Last Supper.
 - a. Jesus is described in messianic terms (14.1-11), and his death is placed in the context of the Jewish Passover (14.12-16).

- i. Jesus is anointed. The word Messiah means “the Anointed One”.
 - ii. It is in the Passover context that Jesus’ institution of the Eucharist is revealed. His Body and His Blood are offered (14.22-25).
- b. Mark’s Passion narrative compresses details of the Last Supper, the agony in the garden at Gethsemane, Jesus’ arrest and betrayal, and being bound over to trial.