

**GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

**Read the Bible in a Year Challenge**  
Week 9

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<b>Monday</b>	Numbers 21-23	Psalm 47	Luke 5
<b>Tuesday</b>	Numbers 24-26	Psalm 48	Luke 6
<b>Wednesday</b>	Numbers 27-29	Psalm 49	Luke 7
<b>Thursday</b>	Numbers 30-32	Psalm 50	Luke 8
<b>Friday</b>	Numbers 33-35	Psalm 51	Luke 9
<b>Saturday</b>	Numbers 36	Psalm 52	Luke 10

**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 Numbers readings:**

1. In ch. 20 Aaron died, following the sin of Moses and Aaron at Meribah. Now the narrative shifts to the struggle to enter the Holy Land, as Israel travels across the plain of Moab. Ch. 21 begins with a fragment relating to a successful invasion of Canaan from the South.
  - a. The account of the fiery serpents (which arrive as a consequence of Israel’s ingratitude for the manna) describes the origin of bronze serpent found in the Temple as a cult object, which serpent was destroyed in the reforms under King Hezekiah (2 Kgs. 18.4) as incompatible with the worship of the LORD.
2. The narrative continues through accounts of travel and battles to the self-contained story of Balaam (22.1-24.25).
  - a. Balaam is described in two ways, as one who acts only upon consulting God, and as one who proceeds despite the will of God (and must be instructed by his donkey!)
    - i. The two different depictions may reflect differences in the E and J accounts.
    - ii. The account of Balaam’s ass appears to be independent from the rest of the story.
3. At Baal Peor the Israelites engage in apostasy. Sexual promiscuity with Moabite women leads to the worship of a foreign god. Those who worship Baal are killed at God’s command. More than one authorial strand is present.
4. The narrative shifts in ch. 25 to preparation for the conquest of Canaan and division of the land. This includes a second census of the tribes, and legal rulings on inheritance.
  - a. Since Moses will die before he enters the promised land, because of his sin at Meribah (20.2-13; cf. Deut. 32.48-52; 34.1-9), the narrative shifts to the commissioning of Joshua.
    - i. Joshua’s role is as military leader, not as prophet.
  - b. Additional preparation includes specification of a calendar of rituals (of high feasts) as the culmination of a process begun at the time of the writing of Exodus.
    - i. In Numbers the description of sabbath is not as a day of rest, but only made in terms of the sacrifices to be offered that day.

- ii. Vows made by women are now recognized as binding (a late development).
5. A holy war is launched against the Midianites (in part in retaliation for their role in apostasy to Baal Peor).
    - a. This section of the book is probably late P. It links Balaam to the Baal Peor incident, and its dependency on other writings may indicate the section (31.1-54) to be “midrashic,” *i.e.*, in the form of rabbinic commentary.
  6. The balance of the narrative focuses on the settlement of the tribes of Gad and Reuben in Transjordan, on an overview of the desert itinerary of the people, and on apportionment of the land of Canaan.

**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. 47: An enthronement psalm celebrating God’s kingship. (Cf. Pss. 93, 96-99.)
    - i. The LORD is to be acclaimed not only by all people, but by all the “gods” of the vassal states whose conquest is described.
  - b. 48: Like Ps. 46 a Zion hymn. The motif of a divine mountain, and the defeat of the nations hostile to Israel, is included.
  - c. 49: A Wisdom psalm. Echoes of Job are found in the themes of death being the end of wise and fool alike.
  - d. 50: Probably part of a covenant renewal liturgy. Prominent also are themes from the prophets, calling people to obey commandments, and to convert their hearts to the doing of His will.
  - e. 51: One of the penitential psalms. An individual lament, for which the heading links the psalm to David’s adultery with Bathsheba.
  - f. 52: This psalm is often classified as an individual lament, but is difficult to fit into any standard category. The evil actions described have to do mainly with the actions of the tongue. (Cf. James 3.6.)

**The Gospel readings:**

1. Luke’s narrative in this week’s lessons is focused on Jesus’ Galilean ministry.
  - a. The promises of God having been described as fulfilled in Jesus, and for all (ch. 4), the story continues first with a positive response to Jesus’ kingdom message.
    - i. This acceptance is tested in Jesus’ boundary-breaking ministry to outcasts (*e.g.*, a leper), which results in opposition from the religious authorities.
      1. In response to this opposition, Jesus asserts His power to forgive sins, and that His mission is to sinners (ch. 5).
2. Jesus exercises authority (*e.g.*, over the sabbath). He selects His apostles, and teaches how the reconstituted Israel is gathered.
  - a. The Sermon on the Plain (6.17-49) is the Lucan parallel to Matthew’s account of the Sermon on the Mount (with Luke being abbreviated compared to Matthew).
    - i. Jesus’ teaching is not an example of teaching about right living, but about right relationship with God.

3. In chs. 7 and 8, and at the beginning of 9, the narrative makes clear that Jesus' kingdom message is for men and women, and that He shatters the boundaries between clean and unclean.
  - a. The Gentiles are open to Jesus' message.
  - b. God's gifts of mercy and forgiveness are exemplified in Jesus' compassion for a widow (7.11-17), and in how a woman sinner responds to God's gifts (7.36-50).
  - c. Women disciples are described.
    - i. These include named individuals.
      1. Notably, Mary is surnamed Magdalene (Mary of Magdala).
        - a. For a woman to have a surname means that the societal convention of her having to be under the protection of a man is *not* in place.
        - b. Magdala is a village of Galilee near Capernaum and Nazareth.
          - i. The naming of Mary with the wife of Herod's steward, and Susanna, and the description of the women providing for the needs of the disciples "out of their means" (8.3) points to women of wealth.
      - ii. In giving new life to a girl and a woman, Jesus is depicted as having authority which exceeds all ritual purity (8.40-56).
4. As Jesus' Galilean ministry draws to a close, Luke makes clear the fate which awaits Jesus.
  - a. The fate of John the Baptist (the Forerunner) foreshadows Jesus' fate (9.7-9).
  - b. Jesus' gift of feeding (the miracle of the loaves and fishes) is linked by Luke to the Cross (9.10-27).
    - i. God's mercy is interpreted through the Cross.
      1. This is not evident to the disciples, and Jesus teaches about what it means to follow Him. Discipleship has a cost.
    - ii. Having taught about the cost of discipleship, Jesus teaches about mission and how this relates to observance of the Law (10.1-37).
      1. The famous parable of the Good Samaritan is here included.
        - a. The older brother's reaction is a key to the meaning of the parable.
    - iii. Women again figure prominently (Martha and Mary). Women are in full discipleship with men.