

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Read the Bible in a Year Challenge

Week 13

Monday	Joshua 19-21	Psalm 71	John 5
Tuesday	Joshua 22-24	Psalm 72	John 6
Wednesday	Judges 1-3	Psalm 73	John 7
Thursday	Judges 4-6	Psalm 74	John 8
Friday	Judges 7-9	Psalm 75	John 9
Saturday	Judges 10-12	Psalm 76	John 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".*

The Joshua readings:

1. See the summary for week 12 for an introduction to Joshua.
 - a. The second section in Joshua (13.1-21.45) is focused on the division of the land which has been conquered, followed by appendices (22.1-24.33) relating to the Transjordan tribes, Joshua's farewell and death, and covenant renewal.
2. The readings this week begin in the middle of the division of land, with the tribe of Simeon.
 - a. As noted in the week 12 summary, Joshua is concerned with origins, with a refrain relating to people and people in their places as being "to this day".
 - b. In contradiction to Judges and to historical reality, the Phoenician cities (*e.g.*, Sidon and Tyre) are included in the territory of Asher.
 - i. These were not Israelite cities, as recognized by Jesus (Mtt. 11.21-22; Lk. 10.14).
 - c. Joshua is given his own personal bequest (19.49-50), where he will be buried. This is in reciprocity with the grant made at 11.23.
 - d. The legal rights of asylum are described at 20.1-9. Asylum is not the same thing as sanctuary. Sanctuary is at the altar. Asylum is within designated cities, with procedures specified for judgment of the case by the congregation.
 - i. The principles of asylum are elaborated at Deut. 19.1-13.
 1. One who is adjudged to have committed involuntary homicide is to remain in a city of asylum until the death of the high priest. The avenger of blood (next of kin) may not enter the city.
 - e. The Levites are given extratribal allotments of land (21.1-42). This contradicts the reality that the Levites had no territory of their own, and tended to be associated with Reuben and Gad. See also Num. 35.1-8.
3. The appendices are not well-related thematically to the rest of the book.
 - a. The episode of the conflict between the Transjordan and the Cisjordan tribes is a resumption of the description found at 1.12-18. Ch. 23 resumes the LORD's speech found at 1.1-9.

- i. The passage thus serves as a bookend within a “chiasm” (a literary form with parallels).
 - ii. The issue discussed relates to the central concern of where worship is to be localized, and thus anticipates ch. 24, in which the shrine at Shechem is established.
- b. Joshua’s dismissal (22.1-9) completes the commands found at 1.12-18.
- c. The Transjordan tribes construct an altar West of the Jordan, leading to controversy which is resolved through negotiation (22.10- 34).
- d. Joshua’s farewell speech parallel’s the LORD’S address at 1.2-9, and follows the tradition of a farewell (*e.g.*, that of Joseph at Gen. 49; that of Moses in Deuteronomy.)
 - i. The covenant ceremony at Shechem (24.1-8) shows Joshua fulfilling the commands of Moses found at Deut. 11; 27; 31.
 - ii. Shechem seems to have been peacefully incorporated within Israel. There is no archaeological record of destruction.
 - 1. Disparate peoples are united under a common God.
- e. The book ends with the burial of Joshua, paralleling the burial of Moses at the end of Deuteronomy. Cf. Judg. 2.6-10.

The Judges readings:

1. Judges is focused on the era between the death of Joshua and the rise of Saul. During this period the people are a loose confederation of tribes (the technical term for which is *amphyctiony*).
 - a. The fractured nature of the narrative in Judges may be part of the message: In the absence of common rule under the LORD (or under a king) “... the people did what was evil in the sight of the LORD ... (2.11).
 - i. Judges in effect poses a question: How did the people live in the absence of a leader? (Answer: Badly.)
 1. A recurring image is that of boundary, *e.g.* between the public and private spheres of life, as seen in the tent flap where Jael stands (4.20) and the window from which Sisera’s mother watches (5.28).
 - a. The most important boundary is that between the human and divine. Moses and Joshua where figure on this threshold. Now there is none, other than the “judges” (tribal leaders), but they do not stand on the boundary between the LORD and *all* of the people.
 - b. Joshua and Judges focus on the period between 1200 and 1050 B.C.
 - i. One reason why the actions of some judges are described at length, and others very briefly, may be that some were more major, charismatic figures in a time of calamities.
 1. The root *šāpat* literally means “to judge,” but not in the sense of a juridical action; rather in the sense of “to rule”.
2. The historical perspective is vast, but the central theme relates to the fact that the LORD has commissioned Israel to establish hegemony over all the land, and is angry at Israel’s failure to do so.
 - a. The stories of the first three judges (Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar) are stories of successes, followed by the story of Deborah, and that of Gideon.
 - i. Deborah is the only female judge, and one of the few women in the Bible identified as prophets (Miriam, Exod. 15.20; Huldah, 2 Kgs. 22.14-20; Noadiah, Neh. 6.14; Anna, Lk. 2.36).

1. The Song of Deborah (5.1-31) is viewed by many scholars as the most archaic part of the Old Testament. There are many linguistic and grammatical obscurities.
 - a. The song extols the LORD as ruler, and Israel as a tribal union.
 - b. Gideon is initially successful, but then apostatizes (denies the LORD, 8.22-28) and the severity of his defection is magnified in the next generation by his son Abimelech
 - i. Thus, the story of this first Israelite king is a foretaste of the disasters narrated in the epilogues to Judges (17.1-21.25).
3. After the fiasco of Abimelech, there is a series of failed rulers (9.1-16.31). The readings this week end in the midst of this cycle.

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. 71: An individual lament, which includes an appeal to God for deliverance, a curse against enemies, and praise of God and of God's righteousness, concluded by confidence in God's saving acts.
 - b. 72: A royal psalm. Only here and in Ps. 127 is found the heading "Of Solomon," and the psalm may be viewed as a dynastic prayer.
 - i. The endowment of the king and his son with God's justice is a common element in Near Eastern theology (to this day, *e.g.*, as in the institution of *majlis* in Persian Gulf monarchies).
 - c. 73: This psalm begins Book Three of the Psalter, which is largely a collection of levitical psalms. The first ten of this book are 'Psalms of Asaph,' who is identified (at Ezra 2.41) as the ancestor of Temple musicians.
 - i. The text has wisdom elements, of the scandal to the righteous that the wicked flourish.
 - d. 74: A communal lament. References to the destruction of the Temple probably date this psalm to the exilic period.
 - i. Note the reference (v. 4) to the enemy setting up "banners" (military standards) within the holy place.
 - e. 75: This psalm contains elements of communal thanksgiving and of oracle, and thus may reflect a prophetic liturgy.
 - f. 76: Probably a Song of Zion (*cf.* Ps. 46) celebrating God's abode in Jerusalem, and His defeat of attackers.

The Gospel readings:

1. *See* the summary for week 12 for an introduction to John.
2. The five chapters encountered this week recount disputes over Jesus' acts and words, with the essential question depicted in the narrative being "Is Jesus from God?"
 - a. Jesus' miracle ("signs" in John) are accompanied by statements in which He invokes the Holy Name, I AM.
 - i. The Name is revealed to Moses at Exod. 3.14. It is not to be pronounced. Thus, Jesus' use of the Name in self-identification is of the highest significance, and completes the identification pointed to by each sign.

1. "I am the bread of life" (6.35).
 - a. Spoken after the feeding of the five thousand, and Jesus walking on water.
 2. "I am the light of the world" (8.12 and 9.5).
 - a. Spoken after Jesus does not condemn the woman taken in adultery, and in the healing of the man born blind.
 3. "I am the door" (10.7-9), and "I am the good shepherd" (10.11-14).
 - a. Spoken during Jesus' identification of Himself as the Shepherd (*cf.* Ps. 23.1).
3. Jesus exercises authority:
- a. He heals on the sabbath (5.1-18).
 - b. He condemns unbelief (5.41-47), as a rejection of God's word (5.39).
 - c. The centerpiece of the feeding of the five thousand (6.15) and the dialogue about Jesus' identity is the biblical quotation (at v. 31).
 - i. The authorities challenge Jesus with an allusion to Exod. 16.4-5 (which John conflates with Ps. 78.24). Jesus recasts the citation from past tense to present tense.
 1. In affirming that He is the bread of life (6.35), Jesus responds as he did to the request of the Samaritan woman at the well (4.15).
4. Jesus asserts authority. At 8.58, in response to objections from Pharisees, Jesus says, "... before Abraham was I AM". This self-identification by the Holy Name causes the Pharisees immediately to seek to stone Him to death (8.59).
5. Jesus restores sight to the man born blind (9.1-41).
- a. The man knows that Jesus must be "from God," and not the sinner the authorities claim Him to be.
 - i. After the man is expelled from the synagogue, Jesus reveals to him that He is the Son of Man" (9.37), and the man worships Him.
 - ii. The pattern in this story repeats that of 5.1-18: healing, hostility from the authorities, a second encounter with Jesus, and then faith.
 1. John is making the point of how the believer must respond to hostile authorities. (Remember, John is written when persecution is already a reality, under Domitian.)
6. Jesus is both the door and the shepherd. He is the door both through which His sheep have access to the "green pastures" of Ps. 23.2, but also (as protector) through which persons have access to the sheep (10.7-10).
- a. Jesus is the only source of salvation (*cf.* Jn. 14.6).
 - i. The Greek definite article *hé* is not commonly used. In normal speech, Jesus would have said "I am door".
 1. When the definite article is used it's meaning is exclusive, as in "the one and only".
 - a. This is the "scandal of particularity" of the Christian faith.
 - i. John 14.6: "I am *the* way, and *the* truth, and *the* life; no one comes to the Father, *but by me.*" (*emphasis supplied*)