

**GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

**Read the Bible in a Year Challenge**

Week 20

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<b>Monday</b>	2 Kings 16-18	Psalm 111	Acts 26
<b>Tuesday</b>	2 Kings 19-21	Psalm 112	Acts 27
<b>Wednesday</b>	2 Kings 22-24	Psalm 113	Acts 28
<b>Thursday</b>	2 Kings 25	Psalm 114	Romans 1
<b>Friday</b>	1 Chronicles 1-3	Psalm 115	Romans 2
<b>Saturday</b>	1 Chronicles 4-6	Psalm 116	Romans 3

**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 2 Kings readings:**

1. See the weekly summary for week 19 for an introduction to 2 Kings.
2. Following a synoptic history from Jehu to the fall of Samaria (9.1-17.41, see week 19 summary), Judah is on its own. The remainder of the book will deal with the reign of Hezekiah, his dealings with the Assyrian threat, and the succeeding rules of seven more kings.
  - a. Samaria (what remains of the northern kingdom) finally falls as a result of infidelity to God.
    - i. 17.7-23 forms an extended theological reflection on the fall of the kingdom.
  - b. Hezekiah is contrasted in person and success with his failed father, Ahaz.
    - i. Hezekiah is faithful, and consults the prophet Isaiah for advice (ch. 19). The king prays directly to the LORD (19.14-19), not that God will save him, but that God will demonstrate who He is.
      1. Isaiah’s reply, speaking for the LORD, is a judgment on Assyria. The Assyrian king and his army are defeated.
  - c. The book ends with appended narratives of the illness and death of Hezekiah, and the ultimate failure of succeeding kings.
    - i. The “book of the Law” (probably a Deuteronomy scroll) is discovered and ignored by Hilkiah and Shaphan, in contrast to Josiah. Josiah desires a prophetic guidance (22.13).
      1. The first and last named prophets in the Deuteronomistic History (Deborah in Judg. 4.4, and Huldah at 2 Kgs. 22.14) are women. Huldah’s name means “weasel”.
        - a. Huldah pronounces a prophecy of doom.
        - b. The book ends with Judah subject to Babylon.

**The 1 Chronicles readings:**

1. The Chronicles are books of history, referred to in the *Septuagint* canon as *paraleipomena* (“leftovers,” i.e., from the narratives of the kings).

- a. The principal narrative of Chronicles sets forth the achievements of King David, chiefly the regulation of the Temple cult. As such these books of history are of historical value!
    - i. Notwithstanding this value, the books also represent a form of prophetic exegesis of the kings narrative. Little is added.
      1. Chronicles accepts the liturgical *status quo*. It is a book setting forth levitical conservatism.
      2. The books were probably written late (*ca.* 500-400 *B.C.*), *i.e.*, a long time after the events which they relate. They are of historical value, however, for recording what has been passed down as tradition.
  - b. The narrative which forms 1 & 2 Chronicles extends through Ezra and Nehemiah.
2. The first four chapters of 1 Chron. are part of a longer narrative (1.1-9.44) of genealogies. *Compare* the details found in Matthew 1.
- a. Much detail is provided regarding the Abrahamic origin of the people, and of the Twelve Tribes.
  - b. Details about the *amphictyony* (a confederation of the tribes), and about the Levites, are found more in Chronicles than in earlier narratives.

**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. 111: This psalm is a hymn of praise, written in Hebrew as an acrostic, and concluding with a wisdom saying. (Cf. Prov. 1.7.)
    - i. The speaker is an individual, but the psalm emphasizes the salvation of the people in the Exodus, and is thus a communal hymn.
    - ii. The psalm is thought to date from after the Babylonian exile.
    - iii. The psalm emphasizes the deeds of the LORD. In Hebrew, the verb “to do, make” occurs six times, and a synonym is also used, for a total of seven references to the deeds of the LORD.
      1. V. 7: “... all his commandments are sure.” The Law is one of God’s works.
  - b. 112: In Hebrew this psalm is an acrostic poem, which (like Ps. 1) begins with “happy” and ends with “perish”.
    - i. In Hebrew, the vocabulary used in the acrostic is very similar to Ps. 111. The opening beatitude *re.* the happiness of the wise person is a common theme in Wisdom literature. Parallel themes to those found in this psalm may be found at Prov. 5.4-9 and Ps. 118.8-9
    - ii. In the monastic office, the psalm is appointed for Vespers on Sundays.
  - c. 113: A hymn of praise of the LORD’S Name, and exalting His greatness. God’s activity flows from His character. (*Compare* the discussion about “righteousness,” *infra*, in the fifth discussion point for Romans.)
  - d. 114: A hymn which celebrates Israel’s sacred history from the Exodus to the crossing of the Jordan.
  - e. 115: A psalm of unclear form and structure (in Hebrew). The psalm may originally have been joined together with Ps. 114. The shifts in tone may represent an antiphonal (responsory) liturgy between the cultic official and the people.
    - i. The Maker of heaven and earth is contrasted with dead, inactive idols.

- f. 116: An individual song of thanksgiving. The language of the psalm (including many Aramaic expressions) points to a late date of composition (post-Exile).
  - i. In the Septuagint text tradition, this psalm is divided into two psalms, with vv. 1-9 being psalm 114, and vv. 10-19 being psalm 115. (The *Septuagint*, or Greek version of the Old Testament, numbers the psalms differently.)
  - ii. As structured here, the psalm reflects the psalmist's distress, the LORD's response, and the faith of the psalmist in his vow.
    - 1. The psalmist refers repeatedly to the Name of the LORD.
    - 2. The Name has power, which is why it is not pronounced.
      - a. The Hebrew letter transliterated as YHWH are not pronounced, but rendered as "the LORD" (all capitals).
      - b. Some Bibles (and in some cases our prayer book) do write out a phonetic Name of the LORD.

### **The Acts of the Apostles readings:**

1. See the summary for week 15 for an introduction to Acts.
2. The close of Acts begins with Paul's defense of his mission and message before King Agrippa II (a defense the account of which began in ch. 25), and continues through his journey to and presence in Rome.
  - a. Paul's speech is the climax of his self-defense described in chs. 22-25.
    - i. The defense involves a summation of the doctrinal charges brought against him by the Jews.
      1. The defense, therefore, is focused on the fulfillment of the Mosaic promise, which Jesus, of course, described as fulfilled in Himself (Lk. 24.27).
    - ii. Paul's account of his experience on the road to Damascus differs in detail from the other two tellings in Acts. The differences relate to how in the third telling Saul's conversion and vocation coincide on the Damascus Road, *i.e.*, there is a christophany (a revelation of the Messiah) that forms the basis for his proclamation.
  - b. Ch. 27 follows ancient literary models of perilous journey. This does not mean that it did not happen, but Luke, as a witness, has conformed the telling to a model his audience would more readily relate to.
    - i. Paul's survival of shipwreck (coupled with imprisonment) and snakebite, all validate his status as an agent of God's Word.
    - ii. When Paul arrives in Rome he finds a Christian congregation there already. Cf. Acts 2.10 (the Holy Spirit has fallen upon visitors from Rome at the Pentecost event in Jerusalem).
      1. Paul remains under house arrest. He is described as remaining for two years, and preaching boldly (*cf.* Acts 1.8; 2.29; 4.29, 31).
        - a. As related in *1 Clement* 5.5-7, Paul was martyred in Rome "under the prefects," *i.e.*, under Tigellinus and Sabinus, in the last years of Nero's reign (who died A.D. 68).
          - i. Paul probably died earlier (in 66?) Regardless of exact dating, Paul was killed in the same persecution that resulted in the martyrdom of Peter.

## The readings from Paul's Letter to the Romans:

1. Within the Pauline canon, Romans is the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> of Paul's undisputed letters (second-to-last or last). If all 13 letters attributed to Paul are authentic, it falls right in the middle. The letter is much quoted and deeply influential for Patristic theology. For example, the "Second Adam" Christology of Romans 5 is central to Christology and soteriology (theology of salvation) of the early centuries.
2. Romans is the source for many ideas central to Christian theology, *e.g.*, original sin, justification by faith, social holiness, the legitimacy of the state, etc. These are some of the most powerful ideas in the history of Western civilization. Every one of these "great ideas" is disputed as to whether it is a valid exegesis (interpretation) of Romans.
3. Paul describes his future plans in Romans. He solicits aid for his future travels (15.20–24), and writes a letter of recommendation (for himself!) This latter purpose in part explains the number of greetings (ch. 16). Paul is asking for help, and to do so he sets forth the most comprehensive account of his gospel and theology.
4. In ch. 1, Paul writes an introduction (1.1-15) and states his thesis (1.16-17). This sets up his argument, that righteousness before God is obtained by faith in Jesus Christ (1.18-5.11). Paul's use of the term "righteousness" (sometimes translated as "uprightness") poses a critical interpretative problem.
  - a. *dikaiosyne* (di-kay-ow-sue-nay) = noun, righteousness or justice (used 58x by Paul). Righteousness can perhaps be thought of in this sense as "*dikaios-ness*"
  - b. *dikaios* = adjective, righteous or just (17x): "*dikaios*"
  - c. *dikaioui* = adverb righteously or justly (3x): "*dikaios-ly*"
  - d. *dikaioma* = noun, righteous deed/act (5x)
  - e. *dikaiouo* = verb, to justify (27x): "*dikaios-ify*"
  - f. *dikaiosuie* = noun, justification (2x): "*dikaios-ification*"
  - g. "righteousness of God" (genitive case): Rom. 1.17; 3.5, 21, 22; 10.3; 2 Cor. 5.21; Phil. 3.9
  - h. "his [God's] righteousness" (possessive case): Rom. 3.25; Rom. 3.26; 2 Cor. 9.9.
5. Interpretative options for "righteousness" include:
  - a. *Uprightness, just character, moral integrity*: Characteristics of God's being, of who God is.
  - b. *Saving power*: What God does; a characteristic expressed.
  - c. *Faithfulness* (especially to covenant promises/people): The characteristic that God keeps His promises.
  - d. Paul means all of the above. (The linguistic argument for this is complicated in Greek!)
    - i. God judges evil in wrath (Rom 1.18–3.20).
    - ii. He justifies sinners in mercy (3.21–5.21).
    - iii. He liberates and transforms believers (and the creation) in power (6.1–8.39).
    - iv. He keeps covenant in loyalty (9.1–11.36).
6. Paul is addressing a fictive opponent in ch. 2. This sets up his ch. 3 argument that righteousness comes by faith. Perhaps the most difficult passage in the letter is 3.21-26. It is tightly packed with

language, using “big,” theologically-freighted words. Many theological battles have been fought over the interpretation of these verses. A three-fold structure to the exposition is evident:

- a. *God’s solution to the human dilemma:* Vv. 21–22 describe a different kind of righteousness. One which is: *apart* from the law; “*from*” (or “of”) God; *through* the “faith of Jesus”; *for* all who believe.
- b. *The extent of the solution:* Vv. 22b–24a describe that the righteousness of God is for *all* who believe/have faith, and that in this righteousness there is *no* difference between Jew and Gentile. *All*<sup>1</sup> sin and lack the glory of God, but are now *justified freely* through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.
- c. *The basis of the solution:* Vv. 24b–25a set forth that we are now justified freely through the *redemption* which is in Christ (Messiah) Jesus. God put forward Jesus as *hilasterion by His blood* [to be appropriated] through faith.
  - i. *Hilasterion* combines the concept of the “mercy seat” (as found with the Ark of the Covenant) with that of a sin-offering under the old covenant. The central point is the self-offering of Jesus Christ.
- d. *The logic of the solution:* Vv. 25b–26 describe God’s “passing over” of “B.C.” sin. This raises a question regarding God’s justice, His integrity. The question is answered by the fact that these sins (and presumably those after) are punished in Christ as *hilasterion*. Therefore God can be both “*just* and the one who *justifies*.”

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<sup>1</sup> “All” here is not all without exception but all without distinction—both Jew and Gentile.