

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Read the Bible in a Year Challenge

Week 32

Monday	Isaiah 7-9	Psalm 28	1 Thessalonians 5
Tuesday	Isaiah 10-12	Psalm 29	2 Thessalonians 1
Wednesday	Isaiah 13-15	Psalm 30	2 Thessalonians 2
Thursday	Isaiah 16-18	Psalm 31	2 Thessalonians 3
Friday	Isaiah 19-21	Psalm 32	1 Timothy 1
Saturday	Isaiah 22-24	Psalm 33	1 Timothy 2

Sunday: 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 Isaiah readings:

1. See the study summary for week 31 for an introduction to Isaiah.
2. Chs. 6-9 include Isaiah's memoirs, his narrative of his call. His encounter with king Ahaz, and the sign of Immanuel are prominent elements.
 - a. The prophecy of the sign of Immanuel is of prophecy of "God with us" (the meaning of the name).
 - i. The word used in Hebrew manuscripts of 7.14, "Behold, a *virgin* shall conceive ..." is *'almah*, which is also found at Gen. 24.43, Ex. 2.8, and Ps. 68.25.
 1. The Hebrew is generally translated as "young girl" or "maiden," and includes an assumption of virginity.
 - a. Matthew, in quoting this verse at Mtt. 1.23, quotes from the Greek version of the Old Testament (the *Septuagint*), where the word is *parthenos*. The word in *Septuagint* Greek usage is more clearly associated with "virgin".
 - ii. Isaiah's point (and Matthew's) is that God acts directly in this sign, not by human agency outside of the Virgin.
 - b. The references to a Prince of Peace, and to Zebulun and Naphtali (in ch. 8) are references to people under Assyrian oppression (as the northernmost tribes), delivered by the successor to Ahaz, as the righteous king conceived of the virgin (the sign of Immanuel).
 - i. The messianic nature of this figure is thus clear. The figure is anointed by God.
3. Chs. 9 through 12 include prophecies regarding Judah and Israel. The focus is on the fact that the LORD reaches out to His people. He is the true Ruler, and the prophet therefore utters a series of woes against oppressive (false) rulers.
 - a. The prophet therefore foresees a righteous king in the future. The advent of a righteous earthly ruler will result from the righteousness of the LORD.
4. The balance of the chapters in this week's readings (except for 24, *see below*) consist of oracles against nations.

- a. Notable in the oracles is that found in at 14.1-2.
 - i. These verses were probably intended as additions to the preceding oracle against Babylon.
 - 1. Israel's restoration is the corollary of Babylon's downfall.
 - a. However, the restored Israel will be so esteemed that others will want to join them (*cf.* Zech. 8.20-23).
 - b. The clear meaning, however, is that those who were captives will now possess those who held them.
5. In ch. 24 there begins the "Apocalypse of Isaiah" (chs. 24-27).
- a. Following oracles against particular nations, the prophet now speaks of the end times for all the earth.
 - i. The themes of judgment of evil, end of death, and resurrection of the dead betray this section as later than the surrounding chapters.
 - ii. Prophecy and prayer alternate in the narrative of the LORD'S triumph.

The psalms: N.B. *In The Bible Challenge the Psalter is read twice (once in each half year). We may all be led into new insights, particularly in focusing on praying each psalm (preferably aloud). See the summary for week 1 for a general introduction.*

- 1. See the study summaries for weeks 5 and 6.

The readings from Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians:

- 1. See the study summary for week 31 for an introduction to 1 Thessalonians.
- 2. Ch. 5 includes a continuation of Paul's discourse on eschatology (the theology of end times) which began in ch. 4, and concludes with final exhortations to order in the Christian community, and an expression of personal wishes and a salutation.
 - a. 5.1-11 serve as an instructive complement to 4.13-18.
 - i. Paul had spoken of the second coming (the *Parousia*), here he reflects on the fate of those who are alive at the *eschaton* (the end).
 - 1. In referring to the end of time, Paul uses the scriptural term "the Day of the LORD" (*cf.* Amos 5.18; Joel 2.1; Zeph. 1.7).
 - 2. Themes of light and darkness are used to distinguish those who live in Christ from those who do not.
 - 3. Christians are involved in a final eschatological confrontation. Therefore, they are to arm themselves with the Christian virtues and grace. The imagery of a warrior's panoply is an echo of Isa. 59.17.
- 3. Paul is concerned that the Christian community be built up. It is not enough that individuals have faith; this must be lived actively in community.
 - a. This general exhortation is followed by a series of short instructions to those in particular stations of life.
 - i. Christian charity must be put into practice.

The readings from Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians:

1. Paul's second letter to the Christian community in Thessalonica is believed by most scholars to have been written by another writing in Paul's name, and at a later date. This conclusion is reached on the basis of textual evidence (*e.g.*, variations in vocabulary and style) and variations in message (*e.g.*, about end times).
 - a. The practice of pseudonymity, under which a disciple wrote in the name of his master, was common in the ancient world, and was considered to be the expression of a high degree of adherence to the teaching of the master.
 - i. The nature of this text, and the manner in which it follows the argument of 1 Thess., indicate the author to likely have had a manuscript copy of 1 Thess. available to him.
 - ii. The purpose of 2 Thess. seems to have been to discredit the claims of apocalyptic preachers, made in Paul's name, which were causing alarm within the community (2.2), and social unrest (3.6-12).
 1. 1 Thess. certainly discusses apocalypticism. 2 Thess. seems to be a "corrective" (whether written by Paul or not), intended to deal with the misinterpretation of parts of 1 Thess. to preach a "doomsday scenario".
2. The letter may be outlined as follows:
 - a. Greeting and opening thanksgiving: 1.1-10.
 - b. Prayer: 1.11-12.
 - i. The prayer and opening formula together reflect the instruction that persecution is a test leading to God's glory in judgment.
 - c. Proper understanding of the *Parousia* (the second coming):
 - i. The triumph of the Lord over deception: 2.1-15.
 - ii. A prayer for strengthening of the faithful (2.16-17).
 - d. Closing exhortations, prayers, and greetings: 3.1-18.

The readings from Paul's First Letter to Timothy:

1. Paul's First Letter to Timothy is one of the "pastoral letters," *i.e.*, it is written to a specific Christian leader.
 - a. These letters are intended to provide specific advice and argument to a designated community or individual.
 - b. Pauline form: Letters which are Pauline follow a general form which includes:
 - i. Opening formula: a salutation which offers grace and peace.
 - ii. Thanksgiving (particularly for the witness of the recipients).
 - iii. Message: This can include argument and/or answers to specific questions which have been posed by the recipients.
 - iv. Conclusion and final greeting: This section often contains personal advice, and ends with a blessing.
2. Much debate exists over authorship. If the pastoral letters were written by Paul, late in his life (*cf.* 2 Tim. 4.16-18), then it is necessary to envisage Paul freed from his (first) imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28.1), and that he considered it more important to return to the Aegean than to pursue his stated plan to go to Spain (Rom. 15.23-24, 28).
 - a. If the letter was written by Paul, it would date to about A.D. 65.
 - b. If written by another, it would probably date to about A.D. 85-95.

- i. Most scholars take the latter view (*i.e.*, of pseudonymity). Some would date the letter later (*ca.* 110), given notable similarities in style and thought with the *First Letter of Ignatius*.
 - ii. 1 Timothy (as well as Titus and 2 Timothy) clearly rely doctrinally on Romans and 1 Corinthians.
- 3. The content of the letter is focused on warning Timothy (*i.e.*, warning any person called to leadership in the Church) to guard against false teaching and false teachers, using Paul's career as a model.
 - a. The letter is stated, therefore, in terms of a charge, which includes details on the ordering of worship, the office of bishop and that of deacon, and encouragement to pastors in teaching.
 - b. Instructions are also given for additional persons in the Church, according to their station (*i.e.*, as a widow, an elder, a slave).
- 4. "Paul" makes clear that it is God's desire that every human being be saved (2.1-7; *see also* 1 Tim. 4.10; Titus 2.11; 3.2, 8). His instruction focuses, therefore, on how we are to respond.
 - a. This instruction can be specific (*e.g.*, posture in prayer), and can be specific as to classes of persons (*e.g.*, women in worship).
 - i. The author's concern about women exercising a teaching role (he expresses no concern about women praying in community), would appear to conflict with Paul's recognition of responsible roles for women in the Church (*e.g.*, Phoebe as deacon, Rom. 16.7; Prisca, Rom. 16.3; 1 Cor. 16.19; Junia, Rom. 16.7), and as they are depicted as preaching (1 Cor. 11.5), and teaching (Acts 18.26).
 - 1. This seeming conflict may be evidence of an author other than Paul, at a later date, who is more focused on discipline in the Church.
 - a. The parallels are greater to the *Didache*, a first century manual of Church conduct in Asia Minor, than to indisputable Pauline teaching.
 - i. This teaching, and that regarding bishops (3.2-7), both seem to draw on an earlier list of qualifications, and so may be based on the same traditions that gave rise to the *Didache*.