

**GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

**Read the Bible in a Year Challenge**

Week 42

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<b>Monday</b>	Ezekiel 35-36	Psalm 86	Revelation 9
<b>Tuesday</b>	Ezekiel 37-38	Psalm 87	Revelation 10
<b>Wednesday</b>	Ezekiel 39-40	Psalm 88	Revelation 11
<b>Thursday</b>	Ezekiel 41-42	Psalm 89.1-18	Revelation 12
<b>Friday</b>	Ezekiel 43-44	Psalm 89.19-52	Revelation 13
<b>Saturday</b>	Ezekiel 45-46	Psalm 90	Revelation 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”.*

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**The readings from Ezekiel:**

1. *See* the study summary for week 39 for an introduction to Ezekiel. Ch. 11 is included in this summary.
  - a. *See* the introduction to the third major section of Ezekiel (oracles of restoration, which begin at ch. 33) found in the summary for week 41.
2. Having announced the return of divine rule in ch. 34, the prophet lifts the curse which had been pronounced on the land in chs. 5-7. A curse is placed on the mountains of Edom (which represent all of Israel’s enemies), which reverses the curse laid on the mountains of Israel in ch. 6.
  - a. This reversal is made all the stronger by the pronouncement of a blessing upon the mountains of Israel.
  - b. The promise of blessing is continued in ch. 36 with the reversal of charges of profanation which had been leveled in chs. 15-24.
    - i. The language throughout is covenantal, reminiscent of the P (Priestly) source in the Torah.
    - ii. The covenant is lived into by a holy people in a morally pure land. This brief section summarizes, in effect, Ezekiel’s theology.
  - c. Just as the people recognize the LORD in His blessing, this promise is followed by two dramatic visions: one of dead Israel restored to full life (37.1-14, the famous “valley of the dry bones”), and one of the reunion of the twelve tribes as one (as they were in the days of David, 37.15-28).
    - i. The plain referred to in the vision of the dry bones is probably to be understood as the same plain referred to in 3.22.
    - ii. Ezekiel’s mission to the exile is summed up in his vision of the dead.
    - iii. The two sticks referred to in vv. 15-28 are named “Judah” and “Joseph”. The northern and southern kingdoms are reunited.
3. In chs. 38-39 an allegorical vision is stated. The name Gog is unknown, but may be an invention intended to rhyme with Magog, the land mentioned at Gen. 10.2 as far to the north.

- a. A cosmic and mythological perspective is placed on the historical promises stated in the previous chapters. Four oracles are stated:
  - i. Gog's attack upon the land of God's people: 38.1-16.
  - ii. The counterattack of God: 38.17-23.
  - iii. Divine victory: 39.1-16.
  - iv. The triumph of God's "glory" (*kābôd*): 39-17-29. The themes of the earlier chapters are restated in terms of the manifestation of God's glory to all.
  
4. At ch. 40, the fourth major section of Ezekiel begins. The section describes visions of a new Temple and a new cult of the LORD.
  - a. The section builds, in effect, on the oracle of the triumph of God's glory, but it is so different in style and content from what has come before that many scholars believe the chapters to be an addendum, either by a post-Ezekiel writer or as program for the priestly regulation of a restored Jerusalem, with the program written around a core of prophecies found originally in Ezekiel.
    - i. Nonetheless, it can be persuasively argued that the material is genuine Ezekiel, for the following reasons:
      1. Chs. 40-48 fulfill the promises stated at 20.40-44 and 37.23-28.
      2. 43.1-5 completes the series (chs. 1 and 8-11) in which God's glory departs from Jerusalem to return later.
      3. Chs. 38-39 can be linked to the 40-48 section following the narrative found in Ps. 48.
      4. Just as throughout the prophet's writings there has been an emphasis on the profanation of Israel's cult (as a cause of her destruction), so at her restoration the cult is restored.
      5. The extended vision is one of the ideal, proper relationship between the people and the LORD.
    - b. The prophet describes the new Temple (40.1-43.27). Just as the prophet was the witness of the Temple's destruction (chs. 8-11, *esp.* 11.25), so now he must commit every detail of the new Temple to memory, that the people may execute this construction.
      - i. Upon completion of the Temple, God returns in glory (43.1-12). His appearance is as described in ch. 1 and as He left at 11.23.
    - c. Regulations of the cult are described (43.13-46.24). Most of the text here follows the Priestly regulations found in Leviticus. The prophet must detail the proper boundaries of cultic action.

**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 16 and 17.

### **The Revelation to John (The Apocalypse):**

1. See the study summary for week 40 for an introduction to Revelation. Note particularly the discussion of how symbolism is used in apocalyptic literature.
  - a. It is most important to understand that the visions described in Revelation are visions which are intended to be conveyed to the seven churches addressed in chs. 2-3. John is to relate to *these churches* what he sees, *i.e.*, the message relates to the admonitions found in chs. 2-3.

- b. This understanding of Revelation is reflected, in fact, in the collect prayed on All Saints’:

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

- 2. The vision of seven trumpets began in ch. 8. The fifth trumpet sounds at the beginning of ch. 9. The vision is one of locusts that look like battle horses, combining the eighth Egyptian plague (Exod. 10.1-20) with Joel 1-2. The demonic is now being let loose, with the king of the locusts being named “Destruction” in both Hebrew and Greek.
  - a. The first of three woes is pronounced.
  - b. The sixth trumpet also releases destruction (cavalry from beyond the Euphrates), but most of humanity still do not believe.
    - i. As after the sixth seal there was an interlude, so after the sixth trumpet.
      - 1. The intervening vision places John back on Patmos. An immense angel appears, described in terms as used for the transfigured Jesus (Mtt. 17.2), and the initial vision in revelation of the Son of Man (1.12-16). John is given a small scroll to eat, and is warned that when the seventh trumpet sounds the plan of God promised by the prophets (Amos 3.7) will be fulfilled.
        - a. Temple imagery is prevalent, which echoes the actual temple and her destruction in *A.D.* 70.
  - c. The seventh trumpet is sounded (11.15-19), signaling that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of God.
    - i. Just as the heavens were revealed through an open door at 4.1, at 11.19 the showing of the ark of the covenant reveals the second series of visions.
- 3. Part II of the revelatory experience encompasses 12.1-22.5, with chs. 12-14 including visions of the Dragon, beasts, and the Lamb.
  - a. The imagery echoes in part that found in Gen. 3.15-16, of the enmity between the woman and the serpent.
  - b. The vision of the woman clothed with the sun also echoes Genesis imagery (found at Gen. 37.9) from Joseph’s dream. The woman thus is representative of Israel, for in Joseph’s dream the symbols were those of Jacob/Israel, Joseph’s mother and brothers (*i.e.*, including the twelve tribes).
    - i. The metaphorical birth-giving of the people of God is a theme found throughout the Old Testament, *e.g.*, Isa. 26.17; 66.7-8. The messiah is brought forth in pain, echoing the Jewish expectations that the coming of the Messiah will be accompanied by tribulation.
      - 1. The dragon (Satan) attacks, leading to war in heaven, and Satan’s defeat.
      - 2. The birth symbolism is not a reference to Jesus’ birth as a human, but to His death, and thus “birth” as Messiah. Cf. John 16.20-22. Jesus’ passion and death are described as a struggle with the prince of the world (Jn. 12.31; 14.30; 16.11).

- a. The subsequent struggle between the woman and the Dragon is that between the Church and Satan.
4. The symbolism of the Dragon includes his use of two great beasts (one the sea and one of the land) in his war against the Church.
- a. Using imagery as found in Daniel (in which the horns on the beast symbolized empires) the great beast from the sea is described, as a manifestation of the Roman Empire. (This is explained at 17.9-11, in which the seven heads are the seven hills of Rome.)
    - i. The empire is considered to have caused people to worship the devil.
  - b. The second beast is an evil parody of Christ. It has horns like a lamb but speaks like a dragon, and is later associated with a false prophet (16.13; 19.20; 20.10).
    - i. It beguiles people with false signs and wonders.
    - ii. This beast is symbolic of worship of the emperor.
      1. The famous “number of the beast,” 666 may be understood using “gematria” (where letters serve as numerals), the Hebrew consonants transliterating the Greek form of the name Nero Caesar.
    - iii. The Lamb and 144,000 are a consoling message, that the Church will survive the Dragon and the two beasts. A voice from heaven blesses those who die in the Lord, and the Son of Man with a sickle in His hand executes judgment upon the earth, throwing this “vintage” into the winepress of God’s wrath.