

Bible Study Lesson Summary, Mar. 15, 2020

Today's lesson includes Days 13-18 on your reading guide.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

*An important question to ask has to do with how much of the OT we should trust as history. Part of the first chapters of Genesis is likely written by the priestly class of the Jewish people, so think in terms of homilies. The stories shift between fact and myth with exaggeration in between. The ages of the patriarchs is one of the things that might be questioned. We can be pretty sure that they didn't live 600 years. For if that were the case the genealogies would have had to miss a lot of generations or Jacob would have been going into Egypt with his grandfather who would still have been living. **I still think that some of those things were meant to be symbolic. Like an advanced age could be a rating of their impact. But we do have to remember the point of the OT. It is written by the Holy Spirit to foreshadow the NT. It does that very well even though it was written centuries earlier and at a time when the writing of history was a luxury that took second place to surviving. Another story like this is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. The History Channel and Discovery Channel are always looking for a way to show that these were not miraculous happenings. If you really watch the shows critically, you realize that their premises are more outlandish than miracles. But I suggest that you look at each of these stories as one piece of colored glass. You can study it by itself and be confused or you can look at it as a part of the stained-glass window that it is a part of. The stories of the OT are the background of the NT picture of Jesus. This are the stories that He grew up with. Many of them certainly have a great deal of fact behind them. All of them offer a truth that God is using to help us understand His Son.***

Gen. 19: Notice that you see such an aversion to homosexuality and a dedication to hospitality that Lot is ready to offer his daughters in place of the guests. God's messengers block this from happening. But what was Lot thinking? My understanding is that he knew that hurting someone is bad but unnatural acts are worse. What is an unnatural act? One that has no chance of having family (offspring). When the angels try to save Lot's family it is like God trying to save us. We had better not turn back toward the sinfulness. Lot's wife gets into trouble because she looks back, and so the sign that if you turn away from evil, you had better not turn back to it. Notice in verses 30-38 we see that God is not pleased with incest. We know this because the Moabites and the Ammonites were later enemies of the Israelites. But these daughters were not trusting in God to find them husbands and mixed up the family boundaries of father/daughter with father/wife.

Gen. 20: Once again you have what looks like Sarah being left in a bad situation. But even though Abraham doesn't seem to take very good care of her, God does. Sarah is an image of the Church. No matter how dangerous a situation we seem to be in, He will protect His bride. God even makes her fruitful.

Gen. 21: Verse 30 has Abraham sealing an oath with a well, another sign of baptism. Also note that Sarah, with all that she has been blessed with, even though God did not owe her, becomes selfish and hateful and wants to make sure Ishmael doesn't receive an inheritance. He does not

receive the inheritance of the Israelites but happily God is still generous to him, even if Sarah isn't. God is showing that he looks out for all children, even if they are not a part of the chosen line to Jesus. For God does not abandon Hagar and her offspring, even though they are not to be of the chosen people. So not being one of the chosen people does not necessarily mean you are cut off from God's love. In verses 27-32 Abraham is dealing with Abimelech. He offers 7 ewe lambs for the well, a priestly offering of abundance, which is a foreshadowing of baptism for it served Jews and Gentiles.

Gen. 22: This chapter, with its story of Abraham being willing to sacrifice Isaac is all about foreshadowing the crucifixion. Isaac carries the wood up the mountain. Jesus carries the cross up Calvary, which some of the mystics have said was the same mountain. In verse 8 Abraham prophesies that "God himself will provide the sheep for the holocaust." This sheep or lamb is part of the image of what John the Baptist was referring to in say, "Behold the Lamb of God. The other part we will get to in the Passover account. But think about how weird it is that this story is remembered and protected by the Jews. Most families would try to forget such an incident, but these people save it because they believe the incident is truly directed by God. But it is all a foreshadowing of God being willing to sacrifice His Son. Our fear of death makes us wonder why God would ask Abraham kill his son. But we have to remember that for God death is not the end.

Gen. 23: Abraham is looking for a burial place for Sarah and it ends up being in Hebron, which is just south of Jerusalem. So, it is not in heaven, the "New Peace", since that is not open yet, but it is close enough for us to know that God did not abandon them. Again, Jerusalem means *new peace*.

Gen. 24: Notice God's providence in the story of Isaac trying to find a wife. God is guiding history, but not destroying free will. Isaac prefigures Jesus, so having Isaac find his wife among the Israelites helps us understand why Jesus started His bride, the Church, among the Israelites. It was because their culture would have prepared them to have an easier context in which to believe in him. Rebekah is one who fits the model of the Church in that she is willing to give water to the thirsty. It is important that Rebekah traveled with maids so she was not alone with a man on a journey, which might cause scandal. Rebekah must have had a nose ring for in verse 22 she had a shekel fastened to her nose.

Gen. 25: Verses 1-4 tell us that Abraham got remarried and had more sons. Since they don't play a role in the coming of the Christ, they get forgotten in Scripture. This theme is continued in the story of Esau and Jacob which tells us once again that the difference between those who are the "chosen" or blessed ones and those who are not, is very slim for God. We had better not depend on it. Just being a Jew or a Christian or a Catholic is not enough. Each is loved by God. The difference is that the chosen people are given more, so that they can be a sign of what God wants. But being a chosen one does not determine salvation for the individual.

Gen. 26: Isaac treats Rebekah just like Abraham treated Sarah. But what it does show is that adultery is a problem that makes a mess of marriage and is something that God does not like. But even Abimelech knew this. This all happened in Gerar, which is in the Negev Desert or south of Gaza near Egypt. The stories of the wells could also foreshadow baptism in which the

third one is finally the one that will bring life. The first ones were like false gods, prayed to before the Lord, but could not give salvation.

The Book of Psalms

Psalm 13: This is a shorter version of what we will see as we get to psalm 22. Jesus could pray this as He hung on the cross.

Psalm 14: I love vs. 1: “Fools say in their hearts, “There is no God.”” I heard a story about a judge who used this to silence a complaint in his courtroom against the celebration of Christmas. The person was upset that there was no holiday for atheists. The judge pointed out that there was, April Fool’s Day. This is an example to help with history in the OT. Is that judge story historically true? Doesn’t matter for the meaning is true.

Psalm 15: The last verse: “Whoever acts like this shall never be shaken.” Only Jesus could be this good but he brings us into Himself so we can receive salvation also. This is the answer to a question I had for years. How was I going to stay good forever in heaven? Surely, I would slip up. Not if I become united with Jesus. For with Him in heaven, there is no temptation.

Psalm 16: This is a variation of the same theme as 15. Vs. 5-8 are how Jesus depends on the Father. We depend on Jesus, and he depends on the Father. Being with Jesus, we will have it made in heaven, but we better start now.

Psalm 17: Verse 1, “Hear, Lord (Father), my plea for justice.” The Father has been preparing him and it has been hard. “You have tried me by fire, but find no malice in me. My mouth has not transgressed as humans often do.” King David certainly did not live up to this, but Jesus did as He faced and won against the temptations of the devil. In the last verse Jesus prays for resurrection. “I am just—let me see your face; when I awake, let me be filled with your presence.”

Psalm 18:1-30: This psalm is a great reminder of how the OT uses the image of rock for God. This is important to know when reading the NT, for Peter will be the rock as a stand-in. This psalm is Jesus’ prayer on Easter Sunday, an Exultet.

The Gospel of Matthew

Chapter 8:18-34: Notice how Matthew is explaining to us that Jesus is showing Himself to be the Son of God in an indirect way, by doing all these different things that only God can do. In vs. 18-22 Jesus is pushing people to let go of what is holding them back. That is different for each of us. Only God can calm a sea as Jesus did in vs. 23-27. That is why they were amazed. Driving out demons as in vs. 28-34 is another thing that only the power of God is able to handle.

My thinking on why the people were nervous is that, if there were pigs around these were not kosher Jews and they might have been afraid that this would upset this powerful Man of God.

Chapter 9: In vs. 1-8 Jesus cures a paralytic to try to explain that He also has the power to forgive sins, which is also something only God can do because, even though we can forgive each other, we cannot forgive for God who is obviously offended by our sins. Calling Matthew in vs. 9-13 is pushing back Jewish barriers as to who God would be interested in saving. Matthew is Jewish, but as a tax collector would be hated by the other Jews. The fasting issue is another way He brings up the idea of being a bridegroom which is meaningless unless you know that God referred to Himself in this way in the OT. In Ezekiel God describes His courtship of Jerusalem in very intimate terms. The wineskins reference is about opening up to His new way of looking at things.

In verses 18-26 he ups that level of His power when He raises the young girl from the dead. When He heals the two blind men, He wants them to understand He is at the point in which He wants to let them know that as the one with the power of God, He also wants them to see, or actually believe in Him. Too often this is passed right over. We now have a similar quote: “In God we trust, for everyone else we want cash.” I’m fairly sure the healing of the mute person is to show that this is starting to create a backlash. The Pharisees are not happy. At this point He starts to talk about recruiting help, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.”

Chapter 10: This chapter starts with Jesus picking his first team. They are given power over unclean spirits every disease and every illness. This is what the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick will be about. They are to stay out of pagan territory. Maybe he is starting them easy by going into the familiar area of the house of Israel. But notice the proclamation: “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” I want you to really focus on this kingdom language. It is not something we are used to, so we tend to blow it off. Once you see how prominent it is, you may change your mind about that.

As he sends them out, he is already warning them of persecution. Vs. 22, “You will be hated by all because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved.” Then in vs. 26: “Therefore do not be afraid of them. Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known...” Ask yourself, how do people see when they and their eyes are dead? This is actually Jesus revealing something about the next life. Our souls will be able to see. We presume that, but it had to be reinforced.

By verse 37 he is giving conditions for being a disciple. It sounds like a coach or an army recruiter. But he is also giving the list of the rewards.

Chapter 11:1-15: Remember that this Gospel of Matthew does not give the story of John’s birth. It does tell of his preaching. At this point in Jesus’ ministry John the Baptist has been at this for a while. He has had a few fights with people. He wants to make sure he is betting his life on the right messiah. Jesus reminds him of the prophecies of the OT that he is fulfilling and that must have been enough to keep John going. The way Jesus fulfills those prophecies should give us confidence also. Verse 11 is about the greatness of John in this world as the final prophet to point to Jesus. He is the bridge between the OT prophets and the NT presentation of the messiah. But compared to anyone who is actually in heaven, he is nothing. Up there we are glorified.