

Bible Study Lesson Summary, Mar. 1, 2020

Wednesday, Feb. 26, you should have read Chapter 1 of the Book of Genesis, Psalm 1, and Matthew chapter 1, vs. 1-17.

Thursday, day 2 on your guide, you should read the second chapter of Genesis, Psalm 2 and the rest of Chapter 1 of the Gospel of Matthew. Next Sunday you hopefully be starting to read chapters 10-11, Psalm 8, and the first half of chapter 6 of the Gospel of Matthew.

You should have already noticed that the reading list is numbered for days one through 365. For your convenience, above day 1, write Feb. 26, 2020. That will help you keep track of where you are. Just as a simple warning, the first few weeks can be tough until you get into the habit of doing the 20 minutes of reading each day. To help you keep up, there will be occasional catch-up weeks.

*The first lesson is that you are reading the Word of God. It is helpful to pray to Him as you do it. You can start with one of the simplest prayers for this purpose: **Come Holy Spirit**. Then start reading, but read it with the idea that you are hearing from God. As you read Genesis imagine God trying to reveal Himself to you just like He was revealing Himself to Abraham and his family, which would become the People of Israel. As you read Genesis you might feel confused but think in terms of how confused the Israelites must have felt. This was all very new to them and they didn't have Jesus and the Church to help understand this revelation would be further revealed by God's Son.*

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Gen.1: Notice that this story does not relate to our experience of the world. It relates to the image of the world and its surroundings as the writers could understand it 3000 years ago. It is not a story to tell us about how the universe was created even though that is the setting. Compare this to the "Barney Show". The star of the show is a purple dinosaur with a green belly and he sings and dances. You cannot tell from the show that dinosaurs all have those characteristics. Nor can you tell from the stories of creation in Genesis how creation happened. What you can tell is that God made us according to a good plan and that we are seen as the high point of what he made. Also notice that God's inspiration is already coming through. Gen.1:26 "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." He spoke of Himself in the plural even though the people who are holding onto this story are monotheistic. They believe in one God but they had no clue as to how this would be the first revelation of the idea of the Trinity. The purpose of this chapter is not to give us details on how creation happened. For that reason, you will not find out when dinosaurs were created. What you will find out is what the People of Israel thought about God. They believed Him to be God and orderly. Things He did made sense. They were no illogical. This is different than most of the God's portrayed in other cultures, who were irrational. They believed God did a good job creating men and women. He did not think we were a mistake. We were "very good", which was what He said after he made us.

Gen.2: The first paragraph of this chapter is the ending of the first story of creation. God is finished and he rests. You would expect the credits to roll down the screen after you read that paragraph and all the credit would go to God, for He produced, directed, and created the special

effects for that production. Notice that you are then getting a second story of creation. Again, it is not to tell us about how God created us. It is to explain where sin comes from. Also notice that it can't be a simple continuation of the first story of creation because in this story the order of creation is a man, then the animals, then a woman. In the first story it is the animals then men and women. Realize that the church does believe that there was truly a first man and woman that are mother and father of us all. The church does not say that their creation happened just like this story, but the story helps us understand how our relationship with God started. Notice that when the man was made, he was made from what was there, only water and dirt. Without our souls, which is what God breathes into us; that is what we are. The soul is God's breath of life.

Gen. 3: Notice in the story of the Fall of Man, God inspires the writers to use a tree to foreshadow the cross. Because of man's dealing with a particular tree we are kicked out of the garden. Because of our dealing with a particular cross, we have the chance to get back in. Gen.3:15 "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel." When you read this in context you will notice that the woman being spoken to cannot be Eve. This is the first reference in the Bible to Mary. Eve started the process that got us all in trouble. Mary helps with the process to get us out. Adam got us kicked out. God is already setting it up so that we would recognize that it will be His Son, the offspring, will make things right.

It is very appropriate that we are starting this Bible Study and Lent at this time. Ash Wednesday is a good reminder that we are made from dirt or clay as Genesis has just told us. Repenting for our offenses, so we can get back into paradise, is what God's plan includes, along with the sending of His Son to help us find the way back.

The Book of Psalms

It is important to realize that the psalms provide one of the best lessons in understanding that Scripture is the Word of God. First and foremost, read them as the prayers of Jesus to the Father. The Gospels give us some of His prayers, but remember that He spent 40 days in the desert, praying. These psalms are written as prayers and it is obvious that they are not the words of the Father. They are the words of Jesus speaking to the Father. When you read the word "Lord", realize that this can usually be replaced in these psalms with the word, Father, or Abba. The psalms were written centuries before the birth of Jesus and before He told us to pray, "Our Father". At that early point in revelation the Jewish people would not refer to God as Yahweh. They did not call Him Father, but we know that Jesus did call Him that. So, substitute Father for Lord, just as the Israelites substituted Lord for Yahweh. In some of the psalms Jesus is saying a personal prayer and it is written in terms of I or me. Other times He is speaking with the family of God in mind and it is written in terms of we, us, ours. If you really want to use your imagination, think of Jesus singing these psalms, for that is what they are, songs. You will get to know the moods of Jesus and you will eventually be able to identify when Jesus would have prayed each of these prayers. I will be pointing those things out in these notes. So even though a psalm might have been written by King David, it is inspired by the Holy Spirit to be the Word of God, or more specifically the words of the Word of God, Jesus; the Word made Flesh. But

even when we realize these are Jesus' words, we need to realize that they can become our words for we become part of the Body of Christ.

A personal note: I struggled a long time with the psalms because they were very violent and very emotional. I thought I was too German to relate to them. Once I realized that they were about Jesus, they made sense. They spoke of God's retribution because it was His Son being torn apart. They were emotional because this was life-and-death for Jesus. After that, I could understand more of the depths of these prayers.

Psalm 1: In this psalm Jesus is doing something that most children would not do. He is praising the rules of the Father, not just for Himself but also for us. Read vs. 2 as: Rather, the law of the Father is their joy God's law they study day and night. And vs. 6: The Father watches over the way of the just, but the way of the wicked leads to ruin. This simple psalm talks of the good guys and the bad guys. But what it says can only be fulfilled if there is a heaven and a hell. For justice does not always happen for each good guy ("whatever they do prospers") or each bad guy ("the wicked will not survive judgment") in this world.

Psalm 2: This was written about King David but it is more accurate in describing Jesus. "Kings on earth rise up and princes plot together against the Lord and his anointed" *Samuel anointed David as King, God the Father anointed Jesus at the Baptism.* "I myself have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain." "You are my son: today I am your father." Like the first psalm imagine Jesus speaking of himself and his troubles to the Lord, His Father. This would have been a prayer He would have said when His ministry was getting tough.

The Gospel of Matthew

Chapter 1: Unlike the Israelites, we have a hard time tracking our ancestry back more than a few generations. One of the biggest lessons from this genealogy of Jesus is not who is in it but that they have a list like this. This means that these people felt that the information concerning who they are is important. They keep track of their ancestors and the events of their history. They are almost compulsive in this way. This tells us a lot about the credibility of scripture. These are not vague memories of me trying to remember what I did in first grade. These are the living history lessons of a people holding on to their identity. God uses this to have all these writings kept together. Think of how hard that would have been through captivity and enslavement in Egypt for centuries, forty years in the desert, exile in Babylon. As I have mentioned it is also important to realize that the Catholic Church has carried on this obsession with holding on to our identity. For this is the Word of God now, and we don't have the right to come up with our own versions that aren't based on God's Word. Beyond that, Matthew is showing everyone that Jesus is Jewish. This is Jesus' family history. The people he was writing to obviously would have known a fair amount about what we call the Old Testament for he writes it in a way that clarifies historical milestones but presumes people were familiar with many of the people referenced. This is the human part of Jesus being clarified just like our family backgrounds help us understand ourselves. Realize that since Mary was already betrothed, so she was in danger of being stoned for sex outside of marriage. Even if she were not stoned, the shame would have been horrible. Joseph

trusted in his dream and saved her and Jesus from that fate. It helped that he knew scripture, Isaiah 7:14.

Then an extra issue was brought up concerning Mt.1:25; "He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus." The problem was actually with the footnote which says: "...the evangelist is concerned to emphasize that Joseph was not responsible for the conception of Jesus. The Greek word translated "until" does not imply normal marital conduct after Jesus' birth, nor does it deny exclude it." The concern was that this footnote seems to leave the issue open. This is not the case. Brant Pitre's book on Mary clarifies this by helping to understand her Jewish roots. For if this were the only reference to Mary's perpetual virginity, the Church wouldn't have much to stand on. The story of the Ark of the Covenant and the Book of Revelation gives more information that is the Church's reason for this belief. That is the problem with taking one passage and using it to prove the Church is wrong.

Chapter 2: The story of the magi is fascinating. Matthew is making connections with the OT to give credibility to Jesus as the fulfillment of Jewish history. He is making the genealogy come alive as he quotes the OT. The star comes from Numbers 24:17. Jesus being from Bethlehem as the birthplace comes from Micah 5:2. That the magi are kings comes from the psalms as do a couple of the gifts, Psalm 72. Also understand that Herod was nuts. Probably too much water from lead pipes. This was the problem with the Caesars. The royal palaces had water pipes of lead and it got into the water and helped make them crazy.

The Flight into Egypt is prophesied in Hosea 11/1. The Massacre of the Infants ties Jesus into the greatest leader and provider of God's law, Moses. Rachel was the second wife of Jacob. She had two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. They thought Joseph was dead but was only a slave in Egypt, and then Benjamin was taken to Egypt to be a prisoner (by Joseph in order to get his family to Egypt).