

Bible Study Lesson Summary, June 14, 2020

Today's lesson includes Days 89-95 on your reading guide.

This is a good time to clarify the issue that many people have as they read about all the killing and wars in the Old Testament. It confuses them in trying to understand the God of Love. The New Testament is written in one of the few times, and maybe the only time, that the world has not been covered with war. That is appropriate since it was a time when it would be save for the Prince of Peace to be born and be able to preach His message and not die in combat with the wrong enemy. But the OT is not in a peaceful time. It shows us in our sinful state, the result of which is death. We read that consequence of sin in Genesis. People are shocked that God would have His people kill men, women, and children. There are several things to remember.

The first is that everyone dies. We do not get out of this world alive. It is only in the next world that we are going to live forever. Second, there is guaranteed life-span in this world. Some die young and some die old. Some die peacefully and some die horribly. But we will all die. In the Old Testament God specifically uses that reality to teach us lessons. As parents understand, lessons don't work if there is no connection to the problem that the consequence is intended to correct. For this reason, God gives many immediate lessons in which the consequence is death to teach us lessons.

The second thing to remember is that death does not equal condemnation. If that were the case everyone would be condemned, for we all die. Within the OT there are many references of how God is showing how He is watching out for people who have supposedly been left out of His plan of salvation, because they are not a part of the Chosen People. These include Esau, Lot, and ones we are getting to like Ruth. These are reminders that God wants us to know that He does not forget anyone, but they may not be a main part of the story. If He told the story of every person and every group the Bible would be a lot longer. So realize that just because God has people killed, does not mean they all go to hell. Those who are innocent will still receive a just judgement when they die.

DUETERONOMY

Dt. 4:25-5:33: Vs. 27-31, God is making it very clear that He is trying to fix our waywardness by making things bad for us. It is the discipline of a father. Some consequences will come naturally from the sins we commit but some will come from God to let us know we are going the wrong direction. This is His way of encouraging us to go the correct direction, toward Him. Vs. 25-31 explain how He doesn't want us to follow other gods. Vs. 32-40 describe how this is truly a sign of God's love. We call it tough love. But I still hear the echo of my Dad as I read in vs. 40: "You must keep his statutes and commandments which I enjoin on you today, that you and your children after you may prosper, and that you may have long life on the land which the Lord, your God, is giving your forever." My Dad just shortened it: Do what I tell you and you will live. A king is basically a dad for a really big family.

Dt. 5: This chapter gives another reminder of the 10 Commandments. It then expressed how important it is for us to follow them. Vs. 32, "Be careful, therefore, to do as the Lord, your God,

has commanded you, not turning aside to the right or the left, but following exactly the way prescribed for you by the Lord, your God..." Notice how vs. 6-15 are a long section on the first three commandments. Then there is a short section on the last seven. The question that needs to be asked is which is more important to focus on in confession: sins again God, or our neighbor.

Dt. 6: In vs. 4 we find out what Jesus was quoting when He gave the great commandment. "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone! Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength." Jesus added a second commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves. The first already fulfilled the first three of the Ten Commandments. The second fulfilled the last seven. Vs. 8, "Bind them at your wrist as a sign and let them be as a pendant on your forehead." As the notes say; some of the Jews actually do this with phylacteries, or little boxes containing strips of parchment on which the words were inscribed. Vs. 20-25 remind us that we should follow these commandments because we owe it to God, who has saved us. In the OT they owe Him for saving them from slavery in Egypt and giving them the Promised Land. In the NT it is saving us from slavery to sin and giving us the possibility of heaven.

Dt. 7: This chapter reminds us of the dangers of intermarriage with someone who does not believe in the same way, for vs. 2 says that in the Promised Land those who do not follow the Lord, our God will be doomed. Vs. 10, God "repays with destruction the person who hates him, he does not dally with such a one, but makes him personally pay for it." Jesus is willing to give us chances until we die because that is when we either enter the Promised Land or not. Vs. 14-15: "You will be blessed above all people; no man or woman among you shall be childless nor shall your livestock be barren. The Lord will remove all sickness from you; he will not afflict you with any of the malignant diseases that you know from Egypt, but will leave them with all your enemies." Would this have been true if every Israelite had been faithful? We will never know but it is a promise renewed by Jesus about heaven. I just want to know who is going to have to milk the livestock in the new earth. I hope that is just a Holy Land thing and not heavenly.

Dt. 8: Vs. 3 says, "He therefore let you be afflicted with hunger, and then fed you with manna, a food unknown to you and your fathers, in order to show you that not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord." This gives us one reason why God sometimes allows suffering. This is something that Jesus understood for He quoted it in Mt. 4:4 & Lk. 4:4, as He was being tempted by the devil. The section from vs.4-20 are a powerful warning to us and it is labeled: **Danger of Prosperity**. One of the reasons our culture is getting so crazy is that we have it too good. In areas in which they must put most of their energy into survival, there is very little conversation about sexual identity.

Dt. 9: Vs. 2 mentions the Anakim. I wonder if they many have come from the Sudan. They are the tallest people I know. Vs. 4: "After the Lord, your God, has thrust them out of your way, do not say to yourselves, 'It is because of my merits that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land'; for it is really because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out before you." This would explain why God commanded so much killing. Vs. 18: "Then, as before, I lay prostrate before the Lord for forty days and forty nights without eating or drinking, because of all the sin you had committed in the sight of the Lord and the evil you had done to

provoke him.” Moses, like Christ, can make the difference between the people being destroyed and getting another chance. Jesus spent His forty days in the desert as a part of His plan to save us. I hope you are noticing how much of this is focused on God’s work with Moses. It is the point of the book and helps us in many ways to think ahead about Jesus.

Dt. 10: Vs. 8-9 is a repeat that lets us know that the tribe of Levi will not receive land to live on because they will have another source of income, being the priests for the other 11 tribes. God has Moses start a priesthood. Jesus also started a priesthood. Vs. 14-15; “Think! The heavens, even the highest heavens, belong to the Lord, your God, as well as the earth and everything on it. Yet in his love for your fathers the Lord was so attached to them as to choose you...” This is the incredible inheritance that God is offering us.

Dt. 11: Vs. 11-12 lets us know that the Promised Land is not like Egypt. It receives rain all year round. The main part of the land around the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River Valley is fruitful all year round. It is like Florida in which they have three growing seasons per year. They also have one of the biggest citrus crops, which provides citrus for most of Europe. The last few decades they seem to have been overdoing it for the water supply has not been adequate for the crops they want to have, so they have been draining the Jordan River and so the Dead Sea is no being refilled at water evaporates. The land around the Dead Sea is now filled with sink holes because there isn’t enough water flowing into it. The basic message of the second half of this chapter is follow the law and good things will be the result. If you don’t, you will not enjoy the blessings. Jesus gave the same message about heaven.

Dt. 12: Vs. 8-9, “You shall not do as we are now doing; here, everyone does what seems right to himself, since you have not yet reached your resting place, the heritage which the Lord, your God, will give you.” This is a great reminder of the true meaning of freedom. In heaven we will be totally free but it is because we will be ready to do things God’s way. Vs. 15-16 was confusing to me at first because I thought it was giving permission to eat unclean animals but it actually is giving permission for the people who are unclean to eat meat, which normally they would not have been able to afford. Keeping them from consuming blood was critical in preparing them to consume the one blood source that would truly give them life, the Son of God (vs. 16 and vs. 23). So that is another connection between Moses and Jesus, blood as life. The last part of the chapter warns them to stay away from the pagan gods. Vs. 30, “Do not inquire regarding their gods...” Curiosity could kill them like a cat. Vs. 31 mentions one of the reasons God was angry with the pagan nations, “because they offered to their gods every abomination that the Lord detests, even burning their sons and daughters to their gods.” This is a reminder that God does care about everyone, but He has to do drastic things to keep us from killing each other. We are still doing it with abortions, should He get more drastic?

Dt. 13: The first few verses of this chapter has us watch out for prophets or dreamers who promise signs or wonders urging us to follow other gods. This is a test of our faithfulness. In vs. 6: “But that prophet or that dreamer shall be put to death.” This would have made 1st century Jews wonder about whether to kill Jesus or not. The test would have been if He tempted them toward another God.

Dt. 14: The first part of this chapter outlines which food is clean and what is unclean. Most of it makes sense when you think of the limitations they had in food preparation. Cooking pork was dangerous. Animals or birds that ate other animals would carry strange bacteria and many people might have had problems with fish without scales and fins, shell fish. At least I know that I am allergic to them. I don't know if they understood that cows chew cud. Also vs. 27 is an example of several places in which it lets the Israelites know that they had better not forget to take care of the Levites (priestly class). I like those parts. From vs. 24-26, realize a normal tithe would be an animal but it says they can change that into money and then change it back when presenting it to the priests. Don't drop your pets or livestock off at the rectory.

Dt. 15: The section in this chapter on Hebrew Slaves is interesting because it doesn't seem to fit our concept of slavery as being cruel and horrible. Vs. 17 has them taking an awl and thrusting it through a slave's ear and into the door, if the slave likes his situation and wants it to be permanent. But it is not because the slavery sounds horrible, but the ear-piercing that women do today seems strange to me, and that is what they are doing. Realize that this has a lot to do with St. Paul's, and even the early church, not being against slavery. They were against the mistreatment of slaves. Not every version of what was called slavery was evil, but it is not just our version of slavery that was so evil. There have been horrible types of slavery throughout the history of mankind. This version of the Israel's notion of slavery didn't seem to be that way. It was a matter of paying off debts, whereas ours was the owning of a person.

Dt. 16: A simple list of feasts until vs. 21-22 in which sacred pole of wood or sacred pillars are banned. These are bad because is it a form of worship to the Canaanite god, Baal. Moses had to worry a lot about idol worship. This problem continued through the time of the Israelite kings. Jesus did not have to focus on it as much. His concern was for us to see Him as God. The Acts of the Apostle goes back to worrying about false gods like the meteor rock mentioned last week in Acts 19.

Dt. 17: The first part is that it is a death penalty to worship a false god. That is because it is treason to their true king, God. Then we have rules for any judges or kings who are to be in charge over Israel when they get to the Promised Land. He must not be a foreigner. He cannot take the people back to Egypt and must not have a lot of horses, silver, gold, or wives. I think David and Solomon seemed to have a problem holding to the last three of those, and it caused problems. But then this is about judges and not kings.

Dt. 18: Priests must be fed and so they get part of the sacrifice. Vs. 10-11 – “Let there not be found among you... a fortune-teller, soothsayer, charmer, diviner, or caster of spells, nor one who consults ghosts and spirits or seeks oracles from the dead.” We still have kids playing with Ouija boards and their parents buying them for the kids. This is not just an abomination, as the Bible says; it is dangerous. Horrible things have happened with these “games”. Vs. 15-20 are powerful. Vs. 15: “A prophet like me will the Lord, your God, raise up for you from among your own kinsmen; to him you shall listen.” Vs. 18-19: “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kinsmen, and will put my words into his mouth; he shall tell them all that I command him. If any man will not listen to my words which he speaks in my name, I myself will make him answer for it.” All of this comes over 1000 years before Jesus fulfills it.

The Book of Psalms

Psalm 89:19-53: Vs. 20-38, Jesus is quoting the words of God, the Father from a vision (to Nathan, the prophet). Vs. 27-28, “He shall cry to me, ‘You are my father, my God, the Rock that brings me victory!’” I myself make him firstborn, Most High over the kings of the earth.” How was Jesus the firstborn? He is eternally begotten, but He is also the firstborn from the dead. In other words, He was the first to rise from the dead. Vs. 39-52 is how Jesus would have talked after He took on our sins in the garden. Vs. 53, He celebrates this role of His to take on this punishment for sins. All of this should help you understand that it was prophesied, that an extension of David would be Son of God. Realize that Americans are the only true “rugged individualist” culture. All the other cultures were family cultures. Each person was to be an extension of their family.

Psalm 90: Vs. 3, “But humans you return to dust, saying, “Return, you mortals!”” In this psalm Jesus lets us know what we are without God. I really like this psalm because it is so blunt about what we are without God. Old age makes it even more real, that we each need God.

Psalm 91: The song, On Eagles Wings, is based on this psalm. The first part of this psalm is about God’s love for Jesus and is what was on Jesus’ mind as he was tempted by the devil in the desert. The last three verses are there to help us realize that God loves us all the same way. They are the promise of a good king.

Psalm 92: This psalm is a beautiful prayer of thanksgiving for God saving the good people. Vs. 2, “It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praise to your name,..” It is a reminder of why we pray the “Alleluia” so often. It is the focus of our “praise and worship” music. We may not be feeling great now, but the knowledge we have of the ways of the Lord, help us to His glory in heaven.

Psalm 93: This psalm is about Jesus glorifying the Father who is king. The Father is the King of heaven. Jesus is the King of kings of this earth.

Psalm 94: These words of Jesus in this psalm should be helpful to us when we are feeling discouraged. This is how we should be looking at all the wicked things that go on every day, because ultimately the bad guys will not win.

Psalm 95: Jesus is teaching us to praise the Father rather than being blockheads, like at Meribah and Massah.

Psalm 96: This is beautiful song of praise. If it hasn’t already been put to modern music, it should be. Of course, each of the psalms was written to be sung. One of the early Church

Fathers explained how, “Sing to the Lord a new song...” meant letting our lives be a song of praise to the Lord and since we are each unique, each will be a new song.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 21: In vs. 14, Paul answers the fears of the people for his safety with “The Lord’s will be done.” Think in terms of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane or the Lord’s Prayer. Paul is being transformed to be Jesus speaking and not the old Saul. The rest of this chapter is Paul dealing with the Jews in Jerusalem who are having a hard time letting go of the Law of Moses. In vs. 31, they are trying to kill him, but the soldiers have to save him. We have a hard time with this reaction, but remember that they had been taught to kill idolaters.

Acts 22: This is Saul’s story being told by Saul, who had become Paul. It is a repeat of Chapter 9. As Paul finishes his conversion encounter with Christ, he ends with how he became an apostle or one who was sent. Vs. 21, “Go, I shall send you far away to the Gentiles.” The idea that Paul is a Roman citizen scares them for the Jews were controlled by the Roman occupation. Paul’s father must have been a Roman.

Acts 23: Paul is good at his mission because he understands the culture of these people and their beliefs. His mixed background would have made him more conscious of this kind of thing. That way he was able to work the Sadducees against the Pharisees. The plot against Paul’s life starting with vs. 12 shows how passionate these people are about their faith. Vs. 16 lets us know that Paul has a sister and a nephew. He did not just appear out of thin air. As for the 40 guys mentioned in vs. 21, who weren’t going to eat until they killed Paul; I presume they starved to death.

Acts 24: In vs. 5 Christianity is referred to as the “sect of the Nazoreans.” In vs. 14 Paul calls it “the Way.” Notice Paul’s calm demeanor. He does not go crazy like so many do because they feel persecuted in some way. That dignity comes from God. So Paul spends two years in Caesarea, a Roman town in Israel. You would think people would have calmed down by then.