

Bible Study Lesson Summary, June 21, 2020

Today's lesson includes Days 96-102 on your reading guide.

DUETERONOMY

Dt. 19: Cities of Refuge are a concept that we don't hear about anymore, but it sure makes sense for them when someone is killed accidentally. This must have happened a fair amount for this to be set up. It shows that these men were warriors and were on high alert. A negative way of describing this is hot-headed, plus accidents happen. Vs. 8-9 talks of the territory being enlarged but with a condition; "that you carefully observe all these commandments which I enjoin on you today, loving the Lord, your God, and ever walking in his ways...." Vs. 11-13 explains what must happen to someone who breaks this sanctuary law. They are to be killed. The Church will expand according to the same rules. There are many movies that have this theme of asking for sanctuary in a church. St. Bakhita, when she was afraid of being killed by her master, took refuge in a church.

Vs. 16 speaks of the unjust or lying witness. They are to get the same punishment as the one they had accused would have gotten. You can still be sent to prison for this lying under oath. This is a very sophisticated judicial system, but notice that when you break the law seriously then vs. 21 gives us something we are more used to hearing: "Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, and foot for foot!"

Dt. 20: Vs. 5-8 gives possible excuses for soldiers to not go into battle. These should sound familiar because they are the same ones that Jesus used in His example about the King's feast that people excused themselves from, using the same excuses. But Jesus wasn't talking about them going out to battle, but coming in for a feast.

Vs. 10-18 sound as brutal as the Koran which came later. It is about battles with different tribes and countries. For their safety, it is harsher for those in the land they are going to live in, than when battling nasty neighbors. This fits into how judgement is described. It is harsher for those who part of the church and should know better, then for those who are ignorant. So in this case, if they are not willing to serve as forced laborers then kill them. But note the reason, "lest they teach you to make any such abominable offerings as they make to their gods, and you thus sin against the Lord, your God. This is obviously very important to God, which it is commandment number one. If you think in terms of Satan's kingdom as the alternative, this is actually a blessing. God is saving us from Hell. Vs. 19-20 gives an ecological tone to the Bible. Do not kill trees when besieging a city, especially fruit trees. The hardwoods can be used for material to build siege works. This is about looking to the future.

Dt. 21: Vs. 1-9 deals with the way to deal with an unsolved murder. God's wisdom really shows itself in all this. The heifer's death basically closes the door on the death so more violence does not come, like happens in gang territory where the fighting goes on and on. The same wisdom comes in vs. 10-14 with a marriage to a female captive. It balances mercy and justice in ways they can understand. Vs. 18-21 has instructions for dealing with an incorrigible son, stone him. How many of us would have survived our youthful stupidity, or would we have all behaved better if we knew there were more severe consequences. If you would like to know,

just study life in Singapore, where there are severe consequences and few crimes. The bad news is that Singapore is becoming more like us now. Also, you can watch teenagers in Israel, men and women, who must serve in the army. They walk around the streets with semi-automatic rifles and behave very well, for the punishments are very severe. Vs. 23, “since God’s curse rests on him who hangs on a tree”. This is quoted by St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians 3:13. It is probably why the devil thought crucifixion was perfect for Jesus.

Dt. 22: The first twelve verses are about justice and caring for right order to the world, or having a sense of how God has made us. This is a version of do unto others as you would have them do to you. Vs. 20: “But if this charge is true, and evidence of the girl’s virginity is not found, they shall bring the girl to the entrance of her father’s house and there her townsmen shall stone her to death, because she committed a crime against Israel by her unchasteness in her father’s house.” This could have been the death sentence for Mary the Mother of Jesus if Joseph had not accepted the information of his dream. Vs. 22-26 are important when we remember the woman caught in the act of adultery that was brought to Jesus. With vs. 22 both are expected to be killed. He was on the prowl and she did not cry rape. In vs. 23-26 it is even clearer. So if the man is not brought forward in the case before Jesus, something must have made him less innocent as if she was prostituting herself. That is my guess anyway. Contemplate women’s rights when you read this stuff and realize this culture has far more rights for women than any other for centuries. But most people now, would wonder what the big fuss is about virginity. Remember how important genealogy is to these people and to God. It is about knowing whose family you belong to and how dear. That is also why adultery is so evil. All the genetic engineering and cloning things starting to happen will destroy family bonds and make children into products to be purchased.

Dt. 23: Starts with lots more rules about being Jewish and who can become one. Vs. 13-14, “Outside the camp you shall have a place set aside to be used as a latrine. You shall also keep a trowel in your equipment and with it, when you go outside to ease nature, you shall first dig a hole and afterward cover up your excrement.” Can you start to get the idea that these people were starting from scratch, so God has His work cut out for Him. We take so much for granted. We are so advanced that we have kitty litter boxes. Vs. 21, don’t demand interest payments from family but it is okay with foreigners.

Dt. 24: Jesus is later confronted with vs. 1: “When a man, after marrying a woman and having relations with her, is later displeased with her because he finds in her something indecent, and therefore he writes out a bill of divorce and hands it to her, thus dismissing her from his house:... This all sounds awful for divorced women unless you read vs. 19 or the book of Ruth which shows that widows or others who are on the margin are taken care of through specific charity, like letting some grain in the fields for them. Life was tough back then. We have it too easy. Vs. 16 was still being contested in the time of Jesus. “Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children for their fathers; only for his own guilt shall a man be put to death.”

Dt. 25: Vs. 3, “Forty stripes may be given him, but no more; lest, if he were beaten with more stripes than these, you kinsman should be looked upon as disgraced because of the severity of the beating.” This was obviously in the minds of the Pilate, when he had Jesus scourged.

Vs. 9-10 can shed some light on why the father, in the Prodigal Son story, made sure he had sandals put on his son's feet. “This is how one should be treated who will not build up his brother's family?” And his lineage shall be spoken of in Israel as ‘the family of the man stripped of his sandal.’” One of the more interesting meditations you can have is to realize that laws happen because of real problems that exist. Since Adam, Eve, and Cain, people have been coming up with very creative ways to sin and hurt each other.

Dt. 26: Vs. 12, “When you have finished setting aside all the tithes of your produce in the third year, the year of the tithes, and you have given them to the Levite, the alien, the orphan and the widow, that they may eat their fill in your own community, you shall declare before the Lord...” The churches rule of thumb on tithing in our time is 5% for the church and 5% for other charities. The Israelites were obviously to deal with more than the Levites, who would be like giving to the church. But this is why we have so many second collections.

Dt. 27: Vs. 26 sums up the chapter very well, with all its curses. “Cursed be he who fails to fulfill any of the provisions of this law!” And all the people shall answer, ‘Amen!’”

Dt. 28: This starts out with the balance of the previous chapter, which had the curses. This has the blessings. This is basically the format that Jesus used, when He preached the Sermon on the Plains, in Lk.6:20-26. But then the rest of the chapter goes back to the bad news of what happens when you don't follow God's law. It goes on and on, so the moral is that you better follow the law of God because there are too many bad consequences if you don't. Does anyone still think that God loves us so much He doesn't care about our sins?

Dt. 29: Vs. 12-13, “...so that he may now establish you as his people and he may be your God, as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But it is not with you alone that I am making this covenant, under this sanction of a curse; it is just as much with those who are not here among us today as it is with those of us who are now here present before the Lord, our God.” The NT says that Jesus is the cornerstone of the structure that God is building. The cornerstone is put in after the ground has been prepared and a basic foundation set in place. The Jews are the foundation and the Church is set upon that foundation as structure that God is building, a kingdom.

Dt. 30: Vs. 4, “Though you may have been driven to the farthest corner of the world, even from there will the Lord, you God, gather you; even from there will he bring you back.” This applies first to the Jews who will be scattered in what is called the diaspora. God allowed that to happen just as He allows the forces of this world, who along with the devil are trying to pull the church apart. God promises that He will bring His faithful ones and those who are repentant back together. Vs. 11 brings us back from thinking that all of this is too much to handle or understand. “For this command which I enjoin on you today is not too mysterious and remote for you.”

Dt. 31: Vs. 9, “When Moses had written down this law...” This is why the Jews speak of these first five books of the Bible as having been written by Moses even though he dies in the last chapters. Joshua, a name that can also be Jesus, is named as the one to replace Moses. Vs. 26, “Take this scroll of the law and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord, your God, that

there it may be a witness against you.” The Word of God (Jesus) in the new Ark of the Covenant (Mary) contains the Law and the Prophets and more.

Dt. 32: The song of Moses tells of the power of God and the pitiful nature of His people. After singing, Moses gets to view the Promised Land from Mt. Nebo, but then will die before he can go to it. In this way he stands for all of us. You have to die to go to heaven.

The Book of Psalms

Psalm 97: This is another song of praise but note that in vs. 10 “The Lord loves those who hate evil, protects the lives of the faithful, rescues them from the hand of the wicked.” This is why I have problems with the new Theological phrase of “God’s unconditional love.” God the Father is king of the universal kingdom. If the wicked are not in his kingdom His love for them will mean nothing for they will not be in His kingdom. The wicked will be in the devil’s kingdom.

Psalm 98: This psalm is about the glory of the second coming of Christ. Vs. 3, “All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.” Then will come the new heavens and the new earth, which is what His victory accomplishes.

Psalm 99: A song of praise to Our Lord God, who is king. This is God the Father. We usually think of Christ as our Lord and King, which is also correct but Jesus the King of kings on earth and will offer the Kingdom of Heaven built on earth back to the Father at the Second Coming.

Psalm 100: A song of praise and thanks. Vs. 4, “Give thanks to God, bless his name; good indeed is the Lord (the Father).”

Psalm 101: Vs. 3-5 do not sound like Jesus for most people. “I do not allow into my presence anyone who speaks perversely, whoever acts shamefully I hate; no such person can be my friend. I shun the devious of heart; the wicked I do not tolerate. Whoever slanders another in secret I reduce to silence.” That is because very little preaching ever mentions what he said about the scribes and Pharisees; “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and every kind of filth. (Mt. 23:27) Vs. 8, “Each morning I clear the wicked from the land, and rid the Lord’s city of all evildoers.” Jesus cannot have someone in the Father’s kingdom who will stink it up.

Psalm 102: This would have been Jesus’ prayer as he went from Holy Thursday to Easter. But this is written for any of us when we are going through tough times. That is the point of so many of these psalms, Jesus is praying with us and, sometimes, for us. We don’t always know what to say so the Holy Spirit gives us these words of Jesus. Vs. 26-27 are a great image of God and the

universe. “Of old you laid the earth’s foundations; the heavens are the work of your hands. They perish, but you remain; they all wear out like a garment; like clothing you change them and they are changed, but you are the same, your years have no end.”

Psalm 103: Vs. 8-10, Merciful and gracious is the Lord...has not dealt with us as our sins merit, nor requited us as our deeds deserve.” Vs. 19, “The Lord’s throne is established in heaven; God’s royal power rules over all.” The King of heaven is merciful but Jesus is the instrument of that mercy, reconciling us.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 25: In the notes you can see that Paul’s appeal to be tried before Caesar meant he would go before Nero. Paul’s rational discussions before governors and kings in Israel must have seemed nice compared to the craziness of some of the radical sects like the Sadducees and Pharisees. This Agrippa was one of King Herod’s grandkids.

Acts 26: In vs. 11 Paul mentions that he used to punish people to get them to blaspheme. Then he tells his conversion story again. King Herod had to have been rolling over in his grave as he heard his grandson say in vs. 28, “You will soon persuade me to play the Christian.”

Acts 27: The trip to Rome was during a bad season for sea travel and they were about to wreck when Paul has a dream of an angel letting him know that they would all survive. Paul’s guidance to the people on the ship, as he received it from the angel saved all 276 of them. Some were prisoners like him.

Acts 28: The place they ended up was Malta. The islanders first thought Paul was a murderer because he was bitten by a viper. When he showed no ill effects, they thought he was a god. It was an opening that Paul used to teach them the Gospel. Malta is still a very Catholic place. After three months Paul ends up in Rome and spends two years there under house arrest. There is no “The End” after the abrupt conclusion but the reality was that Paul then was killed by the sword. Remember that this whole account started with the Gospel of Luke. Acts of the Apostles is volume two. Luke is just doing his best to relate the good news of Jesus Christ to Theophilus.

ST. PAUL’S FIRST LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

Most scholars agree that it was written about the year 51 A.D. Paul had been at Thessalonica and had sent Timothy to check on things. Timothy’s report was what prompted this letter.

1 Thes.1: This is more of a typical length letter for that time, short. But Paul does not scrimp on the traditionally long version of “Dear sir.” Vs. 10 ends with, “Jesus, who delivers us from the coming wrath.” Paul pulled no punches in terms of the consequences of sin.

1 Thes.2: This chapter seems like a simple summary of how Paul worked with the people when he had been there but he is setting up a comparison between how he worked (this chapter) and how tempters might approach them with false Gospels (next chapter). In other words, if they don’t practice what they preach, be careful about believing them.