

Bible Study Lesson Summary, Mar. 22, 2020

Today's lesson includes Days 19-25 on your reading guide.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Gen. 27: Jacob is a liar, or worse, a con artist, partially with his mother's training. Not something to be proud of, but he is the chosen one. It is another reminder of lawlessness in the pre-commandment times. In post-commandment times, the only improvement in human behavior is that they knew when they were doing wrong. But this again is why Jesus shows us that salvation does not come from being a member of group. By itself, that is not enough. We must do the will of God. It also shows again that God's will gets done even when we are sinful. For through Jacob another part of Scripture is written, that would point to the Messiah. Note verse 40, "By your sword you shall live, and your brother you shall serve; but when you became restive, you shall throw off his yoke from your neck." The yoke is Esau's anger at his brother Jacob. God is speaking through Isaac to let Esau know, that if Esau, and his descendants, ever get over their anger at Jacob and the chosen people they can come to God. But if they hold that grudge, bad things will happen. By the way, Jacob does receive his father's blessing but God the Father's blessing in a totally different level of blessing, for it gives salvation.

Gen. 28: In this chapter you read about the stairway to heaven that Jacob dreams about. The stone that Jacob had his head on, becomes a memorial stone or altar. It was the base of the stairway, which, according to the footnotes, should actually be pictured to be like the Tower of Babel. Verse 18, Jacob poured oil on top of it. We still bless altars when they are to be used in a Catholic Church, by anointing them with oil, for they too sit as a connection to heaven. Verse 13, Jacob is again given a promise that he and his descendants will have the land around what will be the Jerusalem area. That promise of a home is the foreshadowing of the promise of a home in heaven. Verse 22, "Of everything you give me, I will faithfully return a tenth part to you" is a reminder of what a grateful person gives back to God.

Gen. 29: This is a great chapter because the con man gets conned. He wants Rachel as his wife and gets Leah instead, so he has to work twice as hard to finally get Rachel. This sets up the next chapter which is a battle between the two con men. I like the idea of working seven years as a part of marriage prep.

Gen. 30: When Jesus shows up, he comes up with a better plan for marriage than they had at this point. One of the main reasons for Jesus' one man and one woman concept of marriage must surely come from the horrible competition that having multiple wives shows. Have you kept a tally of the children of Jacob? There were four boys from Leah, two from Rachel's servant Bilhah, two from Rachel's servant Zilpah, then Leah had two more boys and a girl, Dinah. Rachel then has a son, Joseph.

Gen. 31: In verse 19, "Rachel had meanwhile appropriated her father's household idols." The trouble this causes, is surely one of Jesus' reasons for saying the two (husband and wife) must become one. This doesn't just apply to intercourse. He hopes and prays they will become one in faith, in Him. There will be a constant theme in the Old Testament of the problems that come

from bringing the idols of the family of the bride or groom into the new family of God and how it causes disasters. By the way, carrying the bride across the threshold is from an old Roman custom that makes it okay for the bride to leave her own family's household's gods and pray to the gods of the groom. The act was to appease her household gods by showing them that she could not worship them because she had been kidnapped and so wasn't free to pray to them anymore. Verse 54, "He then offered a sacrifice on the mountain and invited his kinsmen to share in the meal." Memorial stone, altar, mountain, and rock are some of the key words to watch for. They blend together and become the focus point of God's plan for the Eucharist. This meal as a part of a sacrifice on a mountain (altar) should sound familiar. The problem with the household gods can also be a reminder that even though the line of the Chosen People can be sinful, what is outside that main line tends to be worse.

Gen. 32: Jacob has become another foreshadowing of Christ. Jacob precedes his message with gifts from his flocks. Jesus precedes his message with miracles. Jacob's wrestling with an angel is a taste of Jesus' battle with temptation. Jacob wins against a good angel and gets a blessing. Jesus wins the battle against an evil angel and wins, but in both cases the battle is not over. In vs. 29, Jacob is renamed Israel, but this is only the first time. Stay tuned for chapter 35.

Gen. 33: The first thing to note in this chapter is how kindness is better than strength. The second is the continuation of the memorial stone (altar) concept in verse 20.

Gen. 34: Coming right after the peacemaking chapter, this gives another lesson. For both sides are not very nice. Shechem rapes Dinah. This is not a good approach to work towards marriage. His family then tries the peaceful approach, but they are more into greed than peace, so even the acceptance of circumcision was just a concession to get more livestock (verse 23: Would not the livestock they have acquired—all their animals—then be ours?). This is also like being baptized for the wrong reasons. But then the sons of Israel are pushing way past justice. Without laws and a way to enforce them, there is always trouble. Also notice that much of the current Middle East culture still fits this clan justice theme. If you shame someone in a family, you shame the whole family and so your whole family must pay.

Gen. 35: In vs. 10, God renames Jacob, Israel. As I mentioned the wrestling angel had done the same in 32:29. Verses 9-15: We are back to the image of a memorial stone with oil poured on it as a sign of a covenant or promise from God. Verse 19: "...and the same monument marks Rachel's grave to this day." It is still there. That is where Rachel gave birth to the 12th son of Jacob, Benjamin. Mothers go there to pray before childbirth to this day, Rachel died in childbirth. This mourning by Rachel is what was referred to in Matthew 3:18. So it is not just about a mother losing a child but a mother and child being separated by death. Verse 22: Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine. Our century is not the only one with sexual issues to deal with. This is to be seen as a power-play on the part of Reuben, challenging his father.

Gen. 36: Notice that God has not abandoned Esau, even though he is not in the line of those chosen to bring the Word. He still prospers but he has become a part of the Canaanites by marriage. They will be enemies of the Israelites.

Gen. 37: Joseph first foreshadows St. Joseph with his dreams. Joseph then becomes the next OT Christ figure. There is no Judas for they all contemplate killing Joseph, but there is a John (Benjamin), a Peter (Reuben) and nine others. There is a cloak, a father that sends the son, and salvation that will come from the one who is betrayed, when he who was thought to be dead ends up saving them. They only get 20 pieces of silver and not 30. The difference must be due to inflation.

The Book of Psalms

Psalm 18:31-51: The fifth part of this psalm (vs. 36-46) is very violent. When you transfer the speaker from King David to Jesus as the person praying this psalm, it goes from a physical battle to a spiritual one. The battle is then a war against evil. I see this as a really good reason for going to confession. It is better to be freed from sin rather than to have it within us when the destruction of that sin happens. Vs. 47 is more like the Easter Exultet again: “The Lord lives! Blessed by my rock (the Father)! Exulted by God, my savior!”

Psalm 19: This psalm is a great prayer for King David, Jesus, or for us when we finally decide to love the laws of the Lord rather than to see them as restrictions.

Psalm 20: When I read this psalm, I picture the resurrected Jesus standing triumphantly above His tomb with a glorious banner in His hand. It sounds to me like His speech of encouragement to us in our battles after He has won His battle.

Psalm 21: A tribute to David the King but more importantly I see this psalm as Jesus speaking to His Father and letting Him know how wonderful he feels being treated as king. It is a little odd because He is speaking of Himself in the third person but I think this is a sign of the kind of humility He wants us to feel for the gifts we receive. It would have been odd for David to be speaking of himself in the third person but then he was writing these psalms for the people to sing.

Psalm 22: This is the psalm that was Jesus’ praying as He hung on the cross. The part that was reported to be said out loud was the first line: “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” But the whole psalm is description of Jesus’ feelings as He hung on the cross. “They stare at me and gloat; they divide my garments among them; for my clothing they cast lots.” It sounds pretty accurate for having been written about 1000 B.C. Supposedly it was not uncommon to introduce a psalm by just reciting the first line. You also have to remember that hanging on a cross puts pressure on the lungs so short sentences would be all he could say at a time and that would have been with great difficulty and a lot of extra pain because he would have had to push himself up against the nail through his feet so the pressure would be off his arms.

Psalm 23: The beautiful song of how the Father comforts His Son, Jesus, and each of us. Notice that we usually think of Jesus as the Good Shepherd because of his parables. But he reflects the Father who Jesus is referring to the ultimate Good Shepherd.

Psalm 24: This is a song of praise for the king of glory, but (vs.10) “Who is the king of glory?” It is the Lord, or God the Father, from who Jesus received His kingship and who He will return it to after all things are made subject to Him.

The Gospel of Matthew

Chapter 11:16-30: It helps to know that Tyre and Sidon (vs. 21) are not Jewish towns so this is a mocking of the lack of faith of the Jewish people. Verses 24 bring up an interesting question. If “it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment”, does that mean some of the people of Sodom might get to go heaven eventually or do they just get off easier in hell? It almost can’t be the latter since hell is hell no matter what level you land in. Pope Francis wants us to focus initially on verses 25-30 to invite people to come to know Jesus.

Chapter 12: Verses 1-8, this helps me feel more comfortable about how hard priests and other ministers have to work on the Lord’s Day. If we didn’t work on the Sabbath, not much would happen. Actually, it is the same for parents. But Jesus calls us to the spirit of the Sabbath Law. He continues this theme in healing a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath in vs. 9-14. In vs. 15-21, Matthew is tying the OT into the NT which is a big reason for this Bible Study. In vs. 22-32, curing the mute person is to make it clear where Jesus gets His power. He is making it clear that there are two kingdoms. Beelzebul has one. God has the other. The sin against the Holy Spirit seems to be a matter of not trusting in the power of God, because it will keep us in trouble in this world and the next. Since Jesus has lowered himself to this world, we can get away with speaking against him in this world, but not against the Holy Spirit.

Verse 36 is very threatening. Watch what you say, or be condemned.

I have to laugh when reading Jesus’ version of the story of Jonah. Most commentators only read the Book of Jonah and are very careful to say that it was a fish that swallowed Jonah because that is what the book says. I trust that Jesus knew what he was talking about when in verse 40 he says it was a whale. Jonah was very big in the Middle Ages. His picture is actually one of the biggest figures painted on the Sistine Chapel. There might be several reasons why that is the case but the fact that he prefigured the Resurrection is the most important. That was their focus. As St. Paul would say, if there is no resurrection, we are idiots. Sorry that is a loose quote. Vs. 42 is worth thinking about because it shows that OT people could be in front of the line to heaven, ahead of many who hear Jesus. Vs. 43-45 is good spiritual direction material. Don’t just block out sin. Fill in the empty spot with the Lord’s work or you could end up in worse trouble, being discouraged by more sin. In Vs. 46-50 we have the definition of the new family of God. Remember that the Jewish people figured they were the chosen ones. They received that by the bloodline. Mary is not being put down here because she did the will of the heavenly Father perfectly.

Matthew Chapter 13: All but the last part of this chapter has to do with parables. First, he gives a parable, sower and the seed. Then he quoted Isaiah to let them know that many of them will not accept the word but, like Isaiah, Jesus will still preach it. Then in Vs. 16-17 he takes the focus back away from the OT prophets and puts it back on himself. Then he finishes the sower parable. This is what is called sandwiching, which was a common literary practice back then. You use the beginning and end of a story to be the bread. Then you put the meat in the middle. In this case the meat is that his parables are more important than OT prophecy. Then he gives three more parables about the kingdom of heaven. I hope by this time, you have begun to take notice of and even started to underline the word Kingdom as he uses it. These are ways of understanding a very important image that Jesus uses to help us understand God and his family. God's family can best be understood in the context of kingdom language. Those three parables are the bread for another sandwich. Then he reemphasizes the importance of his parables. Then he finishes the weeds parable for the other slice of bread. Then to top off this teaching he gives another parable about the kingdom, adds that a good scribe will be able to use OT and NT for teaching. The Chapter ends with Jesus going back to his home territory of Nazareth and being rejected. Vs. 58 says he did not work many mighty deeds there because of their lack of faith. It is not that he needed their faith to have the strength to do a miracle. It is just that he wants them to understand that God rewards faith.