

Bible Study Lesson Summary, Jan. 31, 2020

Today's lesson includes Days 320-326 on your reading guide.

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET BARUCH

Bar. 5: This chapter is a continuation of the last 8 verses of chapter 4, which is God's promise. For the people at the time of Baruch, it comes when the Jews were helped when Nebuchadnezzar freed them, but the real promise is that Jesus fulfills it totally. Vs. 1-3, "Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on the splendor of glory from God forever: Wrapped in the cloak of justice from God, bear on your head the mitre that displays the glory of the eternal name. For God will show all the earth your splendor..." This is fulfilled in the new Jerusalem which is in the new heavens and the new earth. For this promise is far more than the short-term rebuilding of Jerusalem that came after the exile.

Bar. 6: This chapter sounds different. It is about a common subject, idolatry, but it is a different style. It just gives example after example on how silly idolatry is. 6:15, "As useless as one's broken tools are their gods, set up in their houses; their eyes are full of dust from the feet of those who enter... (18) They light more lamps for them than for themselves, yet not one of these can they see." Or vs. 69, "For like a scarecrow in a cucumber patch, that is no protection, are their wooden, gilded, silvered gods."

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

Ezekiel is a priest and was one of the exiles deported by Nebuchadnezzar in 597. His visions are of an awesome God. His being a priest colors his coming to be a prophet while in exile.

Ez. 1: Ezekiel is called by God through visions. Vs. 5, "Within it were figures resembling four living creatures that looked like this: their form was human, but each had four faces and four wings...each of the four had the face of a man, but on the right side was the face of a lion, and on the left side the face of an ox, and finally each had the face of an eagle." Similar visions are in the Book of Revelation. I like vs. 26b-27 because it reminds me of how the host shown at Holy Name Church after consecration: "Upon it was seated, up above, one who had the appearance of a man. Upward from what resembled his waist I saw what gleamed like electrum; downward from what resembled his waist I saw what looked like fire; he was surrounded with splendor." If I held the paten just right at the consecration at Holy Name, this image appeared on the host. By the way, did you notice the mix-up of verses between vs. 6 and 15.

Ez. 2: Vs. 2, "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their fathers have revolted against me to this day." He is becoming a prophet.

Ez. 3: Vs. 18-21 speaks of the responsibility he has as a prophet. He knows that if he does his job he is off the hook. Then it is up to the people to listen.

Ez. 4: Chapters 4-24 are about what God is going to do to Jerusalem. The siege will happen. Very few are going to survive. The first sign Ezekiel is given, is to use a clay tablet to represent the city. They might have to bake bread by burning human excrement, which would be considered "Unclean." (vs. 12-15)

Ez. 5: Here he uses his hair as an example of how different groups of people will fare; a third by pestilence, a third by the sword, a third will be scattered.

Ez. 6: God will destroy all the idols the people have set up in the hills.

Ez. 7: A nice summary is vs. 9: "I will not look upon you with pity nor have mercy; I will deal with you according to your conduct..."

Ez. 8: Jesus was tempted three times by the devil as he came out of the desert. Ezekiel has three visions. The first is in vs. 10-11: "I entered and saw that all around upon the wall were pictured the figures of all kinds of creeping things and loathsome beasts [all the idols of the house of Israel]. Before these stood seventy of the elders of the house of Israel, among who stood Jaazaniah, son of Shephan, each of them with his censer in his hand." Then in vs. 14 and "I saw sitting there the women who were weeping for Tammuz." Tammuz is an Egyptian fertility god. Then in vs. 16b he sees at the door of the Lord's temple "were about twenty-five men with their backs to the Lord's temple and their faces toward the east; they were bowing down to the sun." When Jesus was tempted, the three temptations would have seemed as shallow as these images compared to the glory that He knew about. As human this would still have been tough in His weakened state, unless His time in the desert helped Him have visions of the Father in Heaven.

Ez. 9: Vs. 4: "Pass through the city and mark an X on the foreheads of those who moan and groan over all the abominations that are practiced within it." The letter 'taw' is like the sign for the Franciscans and looks like a capital T. This is a lot like the blood on the doors of the slaves in Egypt, but now is closer to the cross rather than just the blood. This chapter makes me wonder about the "joyful" Christians that we are supposed to be. It is not a beautiful day in the neighborhood when souls are being lost. Joyful is when the victory has happened. Groaning is when we realize that some are heading to hell.

Ez. 10: This chapter is a vision-description of the glory of the Lord, which includes the word of the Lord. Vs. 14 has the evangelist signs; the ox, the man, the lion and the eagle, like chapter 1:10. The whole point is in vs. 18: "Then the glory of the Lord left the threshold of the temple and rested upon the cherubim." Vs. 25: "And the glory of the Lord rose from the city and took a stand on the mountain which is to the east of the city."

Ez. 11: Ezekiel has to prophesy against the 25 leaders who think they will get out of the kettle or the city and survive, but the Lord has bad things in store for them. But in vs. 17: "I will gather you from the nations and assemble you from the countries over which you have been scattered, and I will restore to you the land of Israel." Vs. 19 and 20b: "I will give them a new heart and

put a new spirit within them; I will remove the stony heart from their bodies, and replace it with a natural heart... Thus they shall be my people and I will be their God.” This is fulfilled in heaven.

Ez. 12: God uses an exile skit to show the people of Jerusalem how he is going to use the bad guys to do his work of cleansing his people. Vs. 13: “I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare. I will bring him to Babylon...” And in vs. 16: “Yet I will leave a few of them to escape the sword, famine and pestilence, so that they may tell of all their abominations among the nations to which they will come; thus they shall know that I am the Lord.” God will also get rid of false prophets as in vs. 24: “There shall no longer be any false visions or deceitful divinations within the house of Israel, because it is I, the Lord, who will speak.” This is again a double prophecy because it is about having the false prophets of the time removed but also that there will only be God’s word of truth in heaven.

Ez. 13: In this chapter God outlines how he will clear out all the falsehoods from false prophets by showing the truth.

Ez. 14: God lets Ezekiel know how he hates idolaters. He also makes it clear that only the sinner will pay the price as in vs. 14: “and even if these three men were in it, Noah, Daniel, and Job, they could save only themselves by their virtue, say the Lord God.” So individuals can and will be saved in all this disaster. We just can’t save another person, only give them more time to repent and a reason to do it. And in vs. 21-22: “Even though I send Jerusalem my four cruel punishments, the sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast, still some survivors shall be left in it who will bring out sons and daughters...”

Ez. 15: The inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be valuable like wood from a tree, but worthless like the wood of a vine.

Ez. 16: This whole chapter is about Jerusalem being like an abandoned child that the Lord cared for and nurtured into a beautiful woman she ended up becoming a harlot with other countries and their gods. But in vs. 59-60: “I will deal with you according to what you have done, you who despised your oath, breaking a covenant. Yet I will remember the covenant I made with you when you were a girl, and I will set up an everlasting covenant with you.” This will be the wedding feast of Christ and his church in heaven as described in the Book of Revelation. Ezekiel and Revelation are really connected. More than other books.

Ez. 17: This image of the top of the tree being taken and grown but turning to another eagle is about the king of Judah turning away from God and trying to find help from Egypt. God or the first eagle will destroy that tree. But God will take a king from the tree and plant it on a high mountain. That king is Jesus and the high mountain is heaven where his kingdom will thrive.

Ez. 18: The first part of this chapter takes away many of our excuses for being bad. My parents didn’t do a good job, or my pastor? didn’t do a good job? God won’t buy that excuse. Vs. 13b: “But because he practiced all these abominations, he shall surely die; his death shall be his own fault.” Then God lets us know that it is our last state in life that will be important in judgment. It will be with that last attitude that we will face him.

THE BOOK OF SIRACH

Sir. 27: Vs. 4 and 6b can help you understand me as I talk to you and anyone else who speaks: “When a sieve is shaken, the husks appear; so do a man’s faults when he speaks.” So too does a man’s speech disclose the bent of his mind.” In my case it might be a bent mind. Vs. 22-30 are about nasty men and is continued with vs. 1 of the next chapter. Vs. 30: “Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight.”

Sir. 28: Vs. 2-7 are very positive ways of thinking and vs. 2 even sounds like a foreshadowing of part of the Lord’s Prayer. “Forgive your neighbor’s injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven.” Vs. 8-11 are more warnings about being a jerk. This part of the chapter is about an evil tongue and can be summarized by vs. 18: “Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not as many as by the tongue.” Between politics and religion, this is sure true today.

Sir. 29: I have been trying to understand the difference between a loan, alms, and surety. A loan that is not repaid becomes an alms for many of us. I think of surety as betting a life on a loan. If it is yours or theirs, you lose if trouble starts. One way they help the poor in the Holy Land or the Middle East is the bartering system. There are no prices on anything. That way they can give a bargain to a poor person and not insult them. They can also soak the rich and not feel guilty for they do it for the poor. It is not alms, but a loan that can come around to the person when they are in need. I really like vs. 23: “Be it little or much, be content with what you have...”

Sir. 30: God must love me because in vs. 1: “He who loves his son chastises him often, that he may be his joy when he grows up.” That is why I don’t expect warm fuzzy things from God. I am in training as his son. Vs. 7: “He who spoils his son will have wounds to bandage, and will quake inwardly at every outcry.” That is why my Dad said his job was to make our lives so miserable that no matter what we did in life, we would be happy. Physical health is good if your mind is okay. Vs. 21: “Do not give in to sadness, torment not yourself with brooding...”

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

Jn. 17: This chapter is all about Jesus prayer to the Father as he faces all of this. He expresses his trust in the Father and prays for the apostles and for us who will believe through their word. He completes this thought in vs. 21: So that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us...”

Jn. 18: Notice John never mentions the actual meal. He covered his part of that in Chapter 6 in the bread of life discourse. He also knows that it is covered in the other Gospels. When Jesus is faced with being arrested, he lets them know in vs. 5-8 that he is God.” Vs. 8: Jesus answered, “I told you that I AM.” After he is taken to Annas, the father-in-law of the high priest. Vs. 15-18 Peter and that “other disciple” are following and Peter has his first denial. He probably doesn’t think much of it, almost a thoughtless remark. Vs. 19 says the high priest questions Jesus and he is speaking to Annas. The in vs. 24 it says: “Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.” The mention of the other disciple, continues the literary technique of letting us be in the scene through John, as a faithful disciple.

In vs. 25-27 Peter denies twice, but this dual action surely makes him think, especially since “and immediately the cock crowed.” It is no longer just a casual remark to keep him out of trouble. By now he would now understand that he is denying Jesus, just as we do too many times, starting with casual remarks.

Vs. 28: “Then they brought Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium. It was morning.” There is a time gap here and missing hours with Caiaphas, probably because John could not witness this part, but also because things are no longer going to be done in secret. The whole population can now see what is going on.

Vs. 29 is the start of the trial with Pilate. In vs. 29: “Pilate came out to them and said, ‘What charge do you bring against this man?’” They don’t give him a straight answer but Pilate goes a strange direction for his first question in vs. 3: “Are you the King of the Jews?” Then they talk about kingdom. The chapter ends with Barabbas, or the son of the father, being freed instead of Jesus. Bar means son and abba or abbas means father. This is simple sign to let us know that God is still in charge.

Jn. 19: This chapter starts out with more king connections. Vs. 2: “And the soldiers wove a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head, and clothed him in a purple cloak, and they came to him and said, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’” It would be royal purple. After the scourging, in vs. 5, Pilate says: “Behold the man!” By this point, he is less than human looking because of the vicious scourging. He and Jesus talk about power. In vs. 19: “Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, ‘Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews.’” That causes a fight but we have to remember that the idea of the messiah was that he would not only end up the king of the Jews but it would be a universal kingdom and so would be over everyone, forever. Remember what we have been reading in Ezekiel about the king reigning over everything.

This is far as Fr. Frank got in his class this week, so the rest of this information will be discussed next Sunday.

Vs. 23: They also took his tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top down.” The way this garment is described is as a priestly garment like a priest’s alb. This is taken off by God’s design to show that Jesus is going from being the priest offering the sacrifice to being the sacrifice itself. That they would cast lots was predicted in Psalm 22. Only John’s Gospel mentions that Mary, the mother of Jesus, is at the foot of the cross in vs. 25. Maybe the others didn’t get close enough to know that. Vs. 26 has her with “the disciple whom he loved.” This is that same technique to put us in the picture so we can now feel ourselves as having Mary as our mother is we are beloved disciples. Vs. 30 says: When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, “It is finished.”” Scott Hahn says that what is finished is the Last Supper. Because in the other Gospels, Jesus skipped the fourth cup, which must be done at a Seder meal. This is a sign that the Passover meal is now complete. The piercing was predicted in Psalm 22 and no broken bones was foreshadowed in the Passover lambs not being allowed to not having broken bones. Also in Psalm 22 it says they could number all his bones. I believe that is a reference to no broken bones because they are not in pieces.

Jn. 20: Mary of Magdala sees the empty tomb first but Peter and John actually check it out. John or the “other disciple” looks but Peter actually goes in. He sees the cloth that covered his head rolled up in a separate place. Back then when the Master left the table if he just threw the napkin on the plate it meant he was done. If it was rolled up it meant he was coming back. Vs. 8 says, “Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed.” So we are now in a place in which we can be beloved disciples and believe. Jesus stands before Mary Magdala but he has to speak before he is recognized. After all, he is the word. In vs. 19-23 he comes to the disciples in a locked room and proves who he is, then gives them the power for confession in vs. 22: “he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained. In vs. 24-29, Thomas plays a key role in helping us as non-believers and his words are: “My Lord and my God!” This is a contrast to Caesar who was also called that. So you should remember what Matthew describes, which John would have presumed everyone already knew: Jesus was given a gift of gold for a king from a king. For the Magi called him the newborn king but he was a humble baby compared to Caesar who had called the census. Jesus was not a normal king. Vs. 30-31 really sound like they should be the end of the Gospel.

Jn. 21: Jesus appears to some of the apostles who are out fishing in this part that seems like an addition to the original Gospel. They take a while to recognize him. Starting in vs. 15 we have Peter’s confession. In vs. 20-23 we have Peter being a busy-body and wondering about the beloved disciple. This time in vs. 24 we find out that this disciple is the one telling the story. In the last verse he says there is much more that isn’t written. This is part of what we call sacred Tradition. In other words, not everything is contained in the Bible.

THE FIRST LETTER OF ST. JOHN

1Jn. 1: It starts poetic like the Gospel of John but his message is that the author really wants to share the good news. “God is light...” “We have fellowship with him.” “and the blood of his “Son Jesus cleanses us from all sins.”