

Bible Study Lesson Summary, Apr. 5, 2020

Today's lesson includes Days 33-39 on your reading guide.

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

(The story of Moses and how it foreshadows Jesus is best told by Pope Benedict in his book, Jesus of Nazareth.) The point of the story is different than Genesis. Genesis was about the breakup of the family, with stories of broken families. But it also had good people, like Joseph, who still tried to do good things. Exodus is about God's rebuilding plan. To raise a family, two things are focused on. The first is to teach good behavior and use the discipline methods to train the children to stay out of trouble. The second is to have a goal. This gives the family a focus for why they should work on that good behavior. Without this, the discipline seems meaningless and cruel. The Ten Commandments are only a part of the pattern for good behavior, but they help focus it. The promise of the homeland, or Holy Land, is the goal.

Ex. 1: Verses 12-14 states that even under horrible conditions the Israelites multiplied and got stronger. This is how God strengthens us. It is not by granting us our every wish. That weakens people. Life in Egypt was the first phase of bootcamp. But it was also protection for his people as they went from one vulnerable family to the beginnings of a nation. Even though the Pharaoh was enslaving them, without the protection this offered, the Israelites would have been attacked and weakened continually by the crazy tribes and nations, in the area. This foreshadows the early Church. Being in Rome was a nightmare, but kept the Christians tied together, so they could grow. The story of the killing of many male children as a part of a story about the birth of someone very special should be obvious. The slaughter of these little boys, while one is spared, foreshadows Jesus.

Ex. 2: Moses being found in the water and being adopted into the royal family foreshadows baptism in God's royal family. In verse 10 we have: "I drew him out of the water", is a foreshadowing of salvation through baptism. If you read the notes with this chapter you will have noticed that the Hebrew word for the "basket" that Moses was found in is the same word that is used for ark, as in Noah's ark, which was also a sign of baptism. Moses at the well in Midian reminds me of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well.

Ex. 3: In this chapter we have the calling of Moses. The burning bush is the paradox of Jesus, dying but living forever. As a sinful man he is out in the desert and called by God. As a sinless man, Jesus was out in the desert and was tempted by the devil. Both are asked to go and save the people from slavery because God has heard the people's prayers. The Promised Land of "milk and honey" can be confusing but honey represents the northern part of Israel with its lush cropland where there are bees and plenty of crops to feed on. Milk represents the southern and more arid part of Israel where the goats live and can provide milk.

Ex. 4: Moses' mission is confirmed by miracles and wonders just like Jesus. I struggle with an explanation as to why, in vs. 6-8, God tells Moses to do the miracle of the leprous hand. Maybe

it is just a way of showing the corruption of the heart of Moses at that time. God has to purify it yet, for it is right after that, when we have Moses arguing with God about being qualified to do this job, because of his limited speech training.

In verse 22-23 we hear that Israel is God's first-born son. If Egypt messes with the People of Israel, they might lose their first-born sons. This is a nasty threat. Remember, usually, it is the first born who would gain the inheritance.

In vs. 24-26 we have a strange little sidebar. Moses hadn't followed the law of the Jews, to have his son circumcised. This almost got him killed by God. Moses was going to become the instrument for giving God's law to the people. He had to realize that God's commands applied to him also. Being the chosen one does not give an exemption from the law. Verse 10 says Moses he is slow of speech and tongue. Many scholars say he may even have stuttered. With verses 27-30 Aaron foreshadows John the Baptist.

Ex. 5: Notice that Pharaoh was no dummy. He knew how to break this attempted labor union action. He just doesn't understand he is messing with God.

Ex. 6: In vs. 5 God says: "I am mindful of my covenant." This is the covenant that He made with Abraham, so a lot of time has passed. In vs. 7, "I will take you as my own people, and you shall have me as your God." I have been told that the Hebrew word for "my own people" could also be translated as my kin. God is telling the people that He wants them as His family, or as mentioned earlier, his firstborn son to receive the inheritance.

Ex. 7: One of the questions that always comes up is why God made Pharaoh so obstinate? Think in terms of a weight lifter showing off to his friends. "Put on some more weights. Put on even more." God did not have to show off for His own sake, but for us He needed the task to seem all but impossible to show the chosen people what He could really do. Also, much of Pharaoh's obstinacy is because of his natural fears as a leader. He has much to lose, mainly his work force. Think of a CEO who is about to lose all his employees. The lifestyle of he and his family would be changed drastically. Vs. 7, Moses is doing fairly well for an old man of 80.

Ex.8-10: Recently there are theories that all these things may have happened because of earthquakes. Of course, God could have used natural means to accomplish some of His plagues. That does not change that they happened at the right time to save His people. Here I will insert a plug for Jeff Cavin's Great Adventure Bible Series. It outlines so much more about these plagues and the whole chapter. For example, he outlines how each plague is a direct attack on one of the gods of the Egyptians. The Egyptian god of fertility is the frog. If you harm a frog you will pay a price with your fertility and God gives them so many frogs, they can't walk without hurting one. Ex.8:22 is significant: "for the sacrifices we offer to the Lord, our God, are an abomination to the Egyptians." A typical Jewish sacrifice would have been a calf, but that was horrible for the Egyptians, who worshipped them. That is why the Golden Calf was so bad. It was walking like an Egyptian.

Ex. 11: The tenth plague would have been a hard one to do by totally natural causes and be as specific as God was. But then nothing is impossible with God. The History Channel shows don't happen to mention those things. Vs. 5 says "Every first-born in this land shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh on the throne to the first-born of the slave-girl at the hand-mill, as well

as all the first-born of the animals.” It doesn’t mention just males dying. Of course, this is clarified in other places to be male offspring but it shows how we must read the whole story because one line can be misleading. Exodus 13:13-15 is one place that helps clarify it.

Ex. 12: The lamb of sacrifice is one of the main OT foreshadowings of the NT. A whole lamb that is a year-old male and without blemish. So, it was at its prime and not faulty. Jesus was at his prime and without sin. The blood must be applied to the two doorposts and the lintel of every house in which they partake of the lamb. They must eat its flesh. Jesus’ blood must be shed on the cross and we must eat it. Notice that salvation does not come simply from the blood on the door but also from the people eating the lamb of sacrifice. This is a foreshadowing of the importance of Communion to salvation. Vs. 15 lets us know why the Church insists on unleavened bread. Vs. 40 gives another time reference. The Israelites had stayed in Egypt for 437 years. Vs. 43 says, “No foreigner may partake of it.” This comes up as a question whether Christians should celebrate any part of the Passover meal, like many parishes do near Holy Thursday. Some scholars are okay with this and others worry about it. But the practice has been happening for almost 40 years that I know of and I believe it has actually helped to renew the brotherhood that should be there between Christians and Jews. As Christians, having a version of the ceremony is teaching, for Jews it is a part of their salvation. Vs. 9, “roasted whole” foreshadows Jesus in that the method of roasting at that time was to have the animal affixed to a cross shaped roasting spit so it roasts evenly. Vs. 46, “You shall not break any of its bones.” Just like Jesus.

The Book of Psalms

Psalm 32: In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus took on the guilt for all our sins so that He could pay the price for them. At that point this becomes a prayer of Jesus, in which He stands before God to plead our cause. It is later echoed in St. Paul who says: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” With Jesus shouldering our sins for us as he carried His cross, and then helps us with our crosses; we have the best of allies.

Psalm 33: Unless you work with the Lord and do the work of the Lord, you are in big trouble. Jesus speaks with us in this psalm rather than for us as in the previous one, vs 12: “Happy the nation whose God is the Father, the people chosen as his very own.” And then vs. 20, “Our soul waits for the Lord, who is our help and shield.”

Psalm 34: This psalm could be a teaching by Jesus as He preached the Kingdom of God. Vs. 12: “Come, children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” Verse 21 even predicts what He will go through: “God watches over all their bones; not a one shall be broken.” Jesus was just, so none of His bones were broken. We won’t be justified until we are in heaven. Then none of us will worry about broken bones.

Psalm 35: This is another psalm that could have been said by Jesus on the cross. In verse 8, He describes what the Scribes and Pharisees had been trying to do to Him. In verse 11, He describes the trial on Holy Thursday night: “Malicious witnesses come forward, accuse me of things I do not know.” In verse 15, He reflects on the way of the cross and his falling three times: “Yet when I stumbled, they gathered with glee, they gathered against me like strangers.”

Psalm 36: Part I is probably why Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Part II is about judgment. Vs. 9-10 sound like our receiving the Bread of Life: “We feast on the rich food of your house; from your delightful stream you give us drink. For with you is the fountain of life, and in your light, we see light.” This says that, what we receive from the Father is Jesus. He is talking of what He will serve at the Father’s request. Vs. 13 is far more negative: “there make the evildoers fall; thrust them down, never to rise.” Sounds like Hell to me.

Psalm 37: In case you missed the footnote, the headings are the Hebrew alphabet. This is another one of the psalms that would be totally meaningless if there was no hell or heaven. That is because very little of this is fulfilled in this life. Vs. 3 sounds like me talking about my dad: “Trust in the Lord (Father) and do good that you may dwell in the land and live secure.” When said by Jesus to His Father, it is about heaven.

Psalm 38: This is about a sinner who feels guilty, but also lets us know what Jesus felt when He took on all our sins, during His Agony in the Garden. He felt all our guilt and shame. He had to take it on so that he could pay the price for it on the cross.

The Gospel of Matthew

Chapter 18:21-35: This parable of the unforgiving servant, starts with Peter asking about forgiving his brother. I think it is important to remember that Peter’s brother, Andrew, is probably standing right there says, “At least one more time for embarrassing me.” So, in verses 34-35 God says He will hand us over to the torturers unless we pay off the debt. In this live the torturers might be our siblings. In the next life, it will be the fallen angels, who are also unforgiving. But He gives the escape clause for all of that; forgive your brother from your heart.

Chapter 19: Notice that Matthew is mentioning divorce a second time (Mt.5). He again mentions the exception of an unlawful marriage. This does not refer to a breaking of the vow but of the vow not being valid. The Catholic Church is the only one that follows this strict teaching of Jesus.

The blessing of the children is beautiful. The story of the rich young man is a reminder of how deadly it is to hold on too tight to the things of this world. We won’t find out until the next life if this particular rich man was finally able to let go of riches and hold on to God.

Matthew Chapter 20: I think Matthew was having fun with James and John in this chapter. It starts out with an image of the Kingdom. Everyone gets the same daily wage, no matter when they got into the field to work the harvest. Then we have the third prediction of the Passion of Christ. In other words, Jesus is being insistent that salvation comes with suffering. Then Matthew goes right into the story of James and John. The first poke at them is that their mother is speaking for them. The Gospel of Mark has this same story but doesn't mention that it was their mom doing the talking. But this is directly following what Jesus said what he would have to suffer. They don't get it. For them, they are only thinking of the glory in heaven. To humble them, Jesus doesn't give them a straight answer to their request. He just reminds them to be humble servants. That is different than the current Theology that says we are all the "beloved sons and daughters of God." Then, we have two men being cured of blindness. I'm guessing it was set up this way to poke at James and John again for their blindness to the situation.

Matthew 21: Now Jesus enters Jerusalem. This is no longer the small towns around the Sea of Galilee. This is the big league. The Pharisees don't call the shots down here. The high priests are in charge. They have clout. This set up, with Jesus coming on a donkey, may seem humble, but it is not. He is proclaiming who he is. Isaiah said the Messiah would come through the gates. Zechariah said the Messiah would come on a donkey. King David rode out of Jerusalem on a donkey as his rule was coming to an end. Jesus is coming back in to bring back the kingdom of David. God had promised this, and that it would be a son of David and a son of God. The people recognize this and sing to him as the Son of David. He makes a public display of cleansing the temple and then doing more cures. He is declaring himself to be the Son of David and God. Then in vs. 17 he heads out to Bethany, just outside of Jerusalem. The next morning, he heads back into Jerusalem and curses a fig tree, and suggests that if we have faith in him, we can do this, or even move a mountain. Vs. 23, but this time the chief priests and the elders are almost ready for him. They needed time to think and for the crowds to calm down. Jesus had given that to them. Obviously, they are still not ready for Him. Vs. 28 starts two parables. Both of them are like Jesus poking these bigwigs with a stick.