

Bible Study Lesson Summary, Nov. 5, 2017

This Sunday, Nov. 5th, your readings should be Day 43: Chapters 18-19 of Exodus, Psalm 42-43, and Matthew 23:23-39.

The Gospel of Matthew

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 pain. 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 will have to suffer. They don't get it. For them they still are thinking glory in heaven. To humble them, Jesus doesn't not give them a straight answer to their request. He just reminds them to be humble servants. 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 show 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 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.

Matthew 22: This chapter starts in the same place. Jesus poking the high priests. Vs. 7 is important: "The king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. This is not a good old sweet God who loves everyone and everyone will get into heaven. This is a king who is not happy when people are showing Him they are not going to be loyal to Him. Vs. 15 shows the Pharisees back in the picture. Obviously the high priests have backed off but these guys with little clout still think they can mess up Jesus with this tax question. Then the Sadducees try a resurrection question because they don't believe in it. Jesus solves that with the statement that heaven is not about that kind of marriage in order to have children. Then in Vs. 34 the Pharisees and the Sadducees come at Him together. In their eyes Jesus has been teaching new stuff. So they go to an old question, the greatest commandment. This is not new. The OT has this in Dt. 6:4-5: "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." The rabbis kept this passage in their phylacteries, strapped around their heads. They still do, during Sabbath prayer. Jesus didn't change the law so they lost again.

The question of David's son is Jesus reinforcing that He is Son of God, as God had promised.

Matthew 23: All but the last part of this chapter is Jesus putting the scribes and Pharisees in the rightful place, out of the game. They are not leading the People of Israel closer to God, but the opposite. Jesus wanted the people to be clear on this.

The Book of Psalms

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 that Jesus says 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.

Psalm 39: Vs. 9, Jesus was the scapegoat for our sins. He carries them for us so they can be forgiven. This psalm probably gave Him strength when He stood and had to put up with the mocking of the Sanhedrin and the soldiers. “I was silent and did not open my mouth because you were the one who did this.” (vs. 10)

Psalm 40: This is another Agony in the Garden prayer for Jesus. “Sacrifice and offering you do not want; but ears open to obedience you gave me. Holocausts and sin-offerings you do not require; so I said, “Here I am; your commands for me are written in the scroll. To do your will is my delight; my God, your law is in my heart!”” (vs. 8-10) “Lord, graciously rescue me! Come quickly to help me, Lord! Put to shame and confound all who seek to take my life.” (vs. 14-15) The Father will was that He be the sacrifice. Because Jesus followed the will of the Father, He was rescued and also saved us.

Psalm 41: “Even the friend who had my trust, who shared my table, has scorned me.” (vs. 10) Sounds like He is talking about Judas. “The good man faces many trials, but the Lord has mercy and raises them up.” (vs. 11) The Father will raise Jesus up.

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

Ex. 7: One of the questions that always comes us 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 handmill, 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 13:14 is one verse 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. 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.

Ex. 13: Vs. 9, “It shall be as a sign on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead...”. Rabbis wear phylacteries on their forearms and their foreheads that are little pouches that contain scripture

verses. Vs. 11-16 focuses on the image of the first-born male, which is the foreshadowing of Jesus. Vs. 17, about not going directly against the Philistines, is how we know why God kept the Israelites in the desert so long. It was to toughen them up. Vs. 21, “the column of cloud to show them the way, and at night by means of a column of fire to give them light.” The Easter Candle takes on this role for Christians.

Ex. 14: Pharaoh depends on “horses” and even chariots. The Israelites must learn to depend on God’s strength. I love vs. 14. “The Lord himself will fight for you; you have only to keep still.” It reminds me not to play God and try to solve all the problems myself. Vs. 21 & 26, “Stretch out your hand over the sea” is a lot like a priest extending his hands in blessing over the people at Mass.

Ex. 15: In vs. 20 the sister of Moses, Miriam “took a tambourine in her hand, while all the women went out after her with tambourines, dancing...” Moses was 83 years old at that time and Miriam was an older sister. In vs. 25 the Lord “pointed out to him (Moses) a certain piece of wood. When he threw this into the water, the water became fresh.” This is what got the people going on their journey through the desert. The wood of the cross does the same thing to the waters of Baptism for our journey through this world. Just a little further into their journey, in vs. 27, they are shown twelve springs of water. This sure sounds like the Apostles, whose teachings are the basis for teachings of the church, which keep us going as we continue our journey.

Ex. 16: In vs. 4 they receive “bread from heaven”, a foreshadowing of the Eucharist. In vs. 8 “the Lord gives you flesh to eat”, another foreshadowing of the Eucharist. This bread and meat gave them enough to eat but they could not get greedy with it or it would just get rotten. In other words God was letting us know that our treasure was not here but in heaven. That is why in vs. 35 it says, “The Israelites ate this manna for forty years, until they came to settled land; they ate manna until they reached the borders of Canaan.”

Ex. 17: In vs. 6 it says: “Strike the rock, and the water will flow from it for the people to drink.” The rock foreshadows Christ on the cross, from who flows the waters of Baptism. This image is continued in vs. 11. “As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Israel had the better of the fight...” We can win the battle because Jesus has His arms stretched out on the cross.