

Bible Study Lesson Summary, Sept. 24, 2017

Sunday, Sept. 24, you should have read Chapter 10-11 of the Book of Genesis, Psalm 8, and Matthew chapter 6:1-18.

By next Sunday you should be getting good at following the reading guide.

As mentioned in last week's notes I am starting with the first five chapters of the Gospel of Matthew in this lesson. Then I will be working on the first seven psalms. Then I will be doing chapters 4-9 of the Book of Genesis.

The Gospel of Matthew

Chapter 1: Unlike the Israelites we have a hard time tracking our ancestry back more than a few generations. One of the biggest lessons from this genealogy of Jesus is not who is in it but that they have a list like this. This means that these people felt that the information concerning who they are is important. They keep track of their ancestors and the events of their history. They are almost compulsive in this way. This tells us a lot about the credibility of scripture. These are not vague memories of me trying to remember what I did in first grade. These are the living history lessons of a people holding on to their identity. God uses this to have all these writings kept together. Think of how hard that would have been through captivity and enslavement in Egypt for centuries, forty years in the desert, exile in Babylon. As I have mentioned it is also important to realize that the Catholic Church has carried on this obsession with holding on to our identity. For this is the Word of God now and we don't have the right to come up with our own versions that aren't based on God's Word.

Beyond that Matthew is showing everyone that Jesus is Jewish. This is His family history. The people he was writing to obviously would have known a fair amount about what we call the Old Testament for he writes it in a way that clarifies historical milestones but presumes people were familiar with many of the people referenced. This is the human part of Jesus being clarified just like our family backgrounds help us understand ourselves.

Realize that since Mary was already betrothed she was in even more danger of being stoned for sex outside of marriage. Even if she were not stoned the shame would have been horrible. Joseph trusted in his dream and saved her and Jesus from that fate. It helped that he knew scripture, Isaiah 7:14.

After all an extra issue was brought up concerning Mt.1:25; "He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus." The problem was actually with the footnote which says: "...the evangelist is concerned to emphasize that Joseph was not responsible for the conception of Jesus. The Greek word translated "until" does not imply normal marital conduct after Jesus' birth, nor does it deny exclude it." The concern was that this footnote seems to leave the issue open. This is the case. If this were the only reference to Mary's perpetual virginity, the Church wouldn't have much to stand on. The story of the Ark of the Covenant and the Book of Revelation gives more information that is the Church's reason for this belief. That is the problem with taking one passage and using it to prove the Church is wrong.

Chapter 2: The story of the magi is fascinating. Matthew is making connections with the OT to give credibility to Jesus as the fulfillment of Jewish history. He is making the genealogy come alive as he quotes the OT. The star comes from Numbers 24:17. Jesus from Bethlehem as the birthplace comes from Micah 5:2. That the magi are kings comes from the psalms as do a couple of the gifts, Psalm 72. Also understand that Herod was nuts. Probably too much water from lead pipes. This was the problem with the Caesars. The royal palaces had water pipes of lead and it got into the water and made them crazy.

The Flight into Egypt is prophesied in Hosea 11/1. The Massacre of the Infants ties Jesus into the greatest leader and provider of God's law, Moses. Rachel was the second wife of Jacob. She had two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph they thought was dead and then Benjamin was taken to Egypt to be a prisoner (by Joseph in order to get his family to Egypt).

Chapter 3: John the Baptist is introduced but Matthew does not give his background. He is the focus of preparation for the Messiah. After you have read the rest of the historical books of the OT you will realize why they felt they needed repentance. The people definitely needed a Savior. Realize that this particular century in Jewish history was when they felt the Messiah would come. In that century there were actually others who said they were the one. The High Priests referred to them in the passion accounts. Nothing came from them, but Matthew is telling us that Jesus is different.

The Baptism of Jesus is a proud moment for the Father. "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Chapter 4: The temptations remind us of the battle. The Jewish people were not wishy-washy about the idea of evil. But the particular books or sets of scrolls that made up a book that God chose to be a part of the Bible show a very strong message the evil here. You just read the 3rd chapter of Genesis, which gives the first clue. The devil temps. Our salvation comes from God. Jesus relies on the OT to respond to the devil. But note that the devil can use scripture against Jesus and will do the same to us. That is why we must also have the Church, or the Bible gets torn apart. The other question is whether you have had angels minister to you like happened for Jesus in Mt.4:11.

In the rest of the chapter Jesus is going out after His baptism to start the work. He also quotes the OT. I hope you have found the little keys to quickly find the OT references. At the end of the first line of vs. 15 there is a very small "m" in my bible. That refers to the matching references in the footnotes. Those come right before the verse related footnotes are shown. So you have a footnote labeled 4, 17, which then refers you back to Mt.3, 2. At first your head might start spinning with all of these references. You don't have to do them all. I will point out some key ones. But it is important to realize the way this shows how scripture is all tied together.

Then Jesus starts to pick his team before going on with his town to town ministry in which He preaches, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He gives Himself credibility by the miracles that He performs. Only God should be able to do these kinds of things.

Chapter 5: Chapters 5-7 are the Sermon on the Mount. His being on a mount should make you think of Moses getting the 10 Commandments on Mount Sinai. In these three chapters Jesus is upping the ante on the 10 Commandments. Those 10 were to help the people get to the Promised Land. At this point they are already there. Now Jesus is raising the bar and giving them a chance to get to heaven. It is a better place so the stakes are higher as are the expectations that must be fulfilled. The Beatitudes show that right away. We are being told that bland and dull is not good enough. We must be salt and light.

The Teaching about the Law in verses 17-20 let us know that He is not throwing out the old law but bringing us to a higher standard, if we plan on being in heaven. He will have exceptions to this later on but He is not worried about those now.

Teaching about Anger in verses 21-16 give a few points on these new expectations. It is no longer good enough to not kill someone. You must be reconciled with him before you can come to God. Again, He will clarify this later because we can't be expected to pay the last penny of another person's debt, only our own.

The Teaching about Adultery in verses 27-30 is very scary in our current sexually soaked culture. Pornography is terrifying to priests as we watch so many souls fighting this battle. Before you lose an eye, you might want to lose an i-pad.

The Teaching about Divorce in verses 31-32 is why the church has the annulment process. Why the Protestants have denied that comes from guys like Henry VIII.

The Teaching about Oaths in verses 33-37 fits right into the idea of adultery by thought. This stringency does not make much sense unless you realize that our five senses will die with our body. The soul or sixth sense will live on. With it we will be able to read each other's thoughts. So clean up those thoughts or you might not be allowed in heaven.

The Teaching about Retaliation and the Love of Enemies in verses 38-48 are again based on the idea that it is not good enough to live by the minimum standards of the OT. We have to learn to love or our being in heaven would not be pleasant even if we got there because we would be spending eternity with people we do not like.

The Book of Psalms

In summary of last week's lesson it is critical in understanding the psalms to know that first and foremost must read them as the prayers of Jesus to the Father. They are the words of Jesus speaking to the Father. When you read the word "Lord", realize that this can usually and easily be replaced with the word, Father, or Abba.

Psalm 1: In this psalm Jesus is doing something that most children would not do. He is praising the rules of the Father, not just for Himself but also for us. Read vs. 2 as: Rather, the law of the Father is their joy God's law they study day and night. And vs. 6: The Father watches over the way of the just, but the way of the wicked leads to ruin. This simple psalm talks of the good guys and the bad guys. But what it says can only be fulfilled if there is a heaven and a hell. For justice does not always happen for each good guy ("whatever they do prospers") or each bad guy ("the wicked will not survive judgment") in this world.

Psalm 2: This was written about King David but it is more accurate in describing Jesus. "Kings on earth rise up and princes plot together against the Lord and his anointed" *Samuel anointed David as King, God the Father anointed Jesus at the Baptism.* "I myself have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain." "You are my son: today I am your father." Like the first psalm imagine Jesus speaking of himself and his troubles to the Lord, His Father. This would have been a prayer He would have said when His ministry was getting tough.

Psalm 3: Again, it is about King David, but is all about Jesus feeling His passion. Since Jesus, like most Jews of His time, would have had this memorized, imagine Him saying this prayer from His heart to the Father during those three hours He was on the cross or simply as He was feeling frustrated in the lack of faith in Israel. The meaning of the word "Selah" is not known, but it is guessed that it has to do with singing the psalms. Like when we have a G-clef to start a piece of sheet music.

Psalm 4: This is about Jesus but also all the saved. We were anointed when we were baptized and many of us suffer things that can feel like parts of the Passion of Christ, so the last two psalms can be very powerful as our prayers also. This one is easier to feel like we are praying right with Jesus. Vs. 4, Know that the Father works wonders for the faithful; the Father hears when I call out. Jesus could have prayed this when He was dying but notice that it can only be seen as being correct if you believe in a resurrection.

Psalm 5: Murderers and deceivers the Father abhors. “Then all who take refuge in you will be glad and forever shout for joy.” Again, this can only be the case if there is resurrection and heaven, for if there are murders then some have to be dead, and that would rule out anything good if there were no heaven.

Psalm 5: Jesus could have prayed this whole psalm during His agony in the garden. This is one that I would have had a lot of trouble with before I recognized it was a prayer of Jesus. It is violent and emotional. I can believe those thoughts of Jesus as He hung on the cross.

7: Imagine Jesus praying this psalm. This psalm talks of lions but only that the person praying not be torn to pieces so there would be none to save. When Jesus takes our guilt on His hands at the Garden of Gethsemane “then let my enemy pursue and overtake me, trample my life to the ground, and leave me dishonored in the dust.” This ends with the three days in the tomb, but who ends up in hell? Sinners “open a hole and dig it deep, but fall into the pit they have dug.” The devil and his league will end up in the pit and not Jesus for the Father will save Him.

The Book of Genesis

Gen 4: Notice that even though this story is about the beginning of the relationship between God and humans, it is not a history that can help us to figure simple historical things like how did Cain find a wife? The story does tell us that greed was there from the beginning and it did not please God. It tells us that God wants our best efforts and will punish anything else. You may also have noticed that there is no specific description that tells us that Cain’s offering was less than his best. A rabbi explained to me that clarification of that is in other Jewish writings but that it is certainly implied in Genesis. Notice in vs. 24 we hear about Lamech. He does not sound like a nice man. He does not forgive like Jesus said. He condemns his wives seventy-sevenfold. This is surely to let us know just how bad the sinfulness had become.

Gen. 5: In this chapter, vs. 28-31, we find out that Lameck was the father of Noah. So again we know that the world is in a terrible state. One of the typical questions that are asked is whether these guys lived as long as this says. Two answers: the first is that the story is not about historical accuracy so it doesn’t matter from that perspective. The second is that they might have been doing something similar to what some of the surrounding nations did as far as listing their kings. They rated them in effectiveness by saying that a good one ruled 600 years even though they might have only been around for 20. Another might be rated as having ruled for 10 years when they were really around for 40. They were trying to show that these guys were great. With Lameck, it might have been that he was powerful, even though he was not good and the NT portrays good. Notice that Cain is not even listed but that he built a city and a tribe, the Canaanites, became strong. Notice from that perspective that one of the main purposes of this genealogy has to do with the many tribes of people that lived in the Middle East in the time of the writing. It might be their way of saying where some of these tribes came from and it also gave them an idea of how to treat them, depending on just who their family line included. Last but not least notice that this genealogy goes from tight to broad. The genealogy in Matthew sharply focuses on one line to Jesus. This is much like the situation created by Babylon that is fixed by Pentecost.

Gen. 6: The first verses talk of “sons of heaven” breeding with the “daughters of man.” One of the main things to focus concerning this strange little story is that it foreshadows the Holy Spirit

overshadowing Mary so she can be the mother of a God-man. As you read the story of the flood and the ark, it is important to realize that this is a story to foreshadow baptism and the Church. The water washes away sin and the ark is the image of the church that protects the people of God from the destruction in the world. Also note that this is not a historic document. The end of Chapter 6 says that Noah must bring in two of every animal. The beginning of Chapter 7 says he must have seven pairs of the clean animals. This is a contradiction in a history story that any one of the listeners would have caught. They didn't correct it because their intention was not to do history. Scholars see it as one two versions of the story bringing two viewpoints, one from the priestly class and the other from the Lord's perspective.

Gen. 7: Notice in verse 11 that it talks about the "floodgates of the sky were opened." This is a part of these peoples image of the universe. It fits with their idea from chapter 1 that said the sky is a dome. That dome explains why the sky is blue—because it holds all the water back. When the floodgates open (hidden by clouds) you get rain, snow, sleet, or hail. If the dome were torn, it would mean the end of the world.

Gen. 8: Notice the dove is a great foreshadowing of the Holy Spirit that came at Jesus' baptism. Also note the olive leaf. Olive oil is what was used for an anointing, so the leaf is a foreshadowing of the Anointed One that is to come to bring a new heavens and a new earth.

Gen. 9: Notice in verses 4-6 the focus on blood. It is the essence of life for these people. This is an important thing to remember when Jesus starts talking to his disciples about drinking his blood. It makes it hard for them to except but it also makes it an essential part of His plan. This is right after verse 3 in which God allows the animals and man to eat meat. Before that every creature was to be a vegetarian. This vegetarian idea helps to make sense of what was being eaten on the ark. Notice the idea of nakedness between men being seen as evil in verses 20-26. Ham, the father of Canaan sees the nakedness and does nothing about it, but tells his brothers, which would have been seen as trying to shame his father by spreading the news. The other brothers cover the dad. So the Canaanites are cursed.