

Bible Study Lesson Summary, Jan. 7, 2018

This Sunday, Jan. 7th, your readings should be Day 92: Chapters 10-11 of Deuteronomy, Psalm 92, and Acts 22:17-29.

How accurate are the bible translations we have in our century? The church has continued to find pieces of scripture that from early centuries that verify the accuracy of our scriptures. Obviously going to different languages, and having different translators for the different Bibles can be a problem, which is why we must select our Bible carefully. But finds like the Dead Sea Scrolls, which come from the earliest years of Christianity are proof that what we have is accurate. There are only a few phrases in the whole Bible that might have been added to, or words dropped or changed. God makes sure of its accuracy.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 19: In vs. 6: “And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.” This is Confirmation starting. Our notion of second class relics comes from vs. 12: “that when face cloths or aprons that touched his skin were applied to the sick, their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.” Vs. 13-17 are why no one should try doing an exorcism except an appointed priest. The Church holds that the power to cast out demons is from the Apostles and handed on to bishops. An official exorcists is one that has been appointed by the Bishop. The last part of the chapter is about Demetrius who was losing business as a silversmith who made idols. Remember this is in Ephesus where Mary and John the Apostle eventually lived. Vs. 35 is fun: “know that the city of Ephesians is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image that fell from the sky.” They had a sacred meteor. Confirmation, naked exorcists, idol worship, meteors; this chapter has a lot of fun things. This is also a good time to remind people that things like Ouija boards and other simple things that are not from God are dangerous. They can bring in a nasty spirit that is hard to remove.

Acts 20: Vs. 7-12 is a reminder to priests about preaching too long. Eutychus fell asleep during a homily by Paul and fell out the window and died. Paul brought him back up to Mass, which lasted another six hours and the boy alive again. In vs. 22 Paul continues talking about going to Jerusalem but that the Holy Spirit is warning him about the hardships ahead. Like Jesus, he does not avoid them. In vs. 26-27, “And so I solemnly declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, for I did not shrink from proclaiming to you the entire plan of God.” Priests are not here to make people happy but to preach the word accurately. After that the person is responsible for their own judgment.

Acts 21: Paul answers the fears of the people for his safety with “The Lord’s will be done.” (vs. 14) Think Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane or the Lord’s Prayer. The rest of this chapter is Paul dealing with the Jews in Jerusalem who are having a hard time letting go of the Law of Moses.

Acts 22: 1-16: This is Saul’s story being told by Saul, who had become Paul. It is a repeat of Chapter 9.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Psalm 85: In this psalm Jesus is once more standing for His people (His Body, the Church) and praying for mercy. Vs. 11 is about the balance between justice and peace, or God's vengeance and mercy.

Psalm 86: This is a prayer of Jesus during His Passion and trusting in the Resurrection. In vs. 13, "your love for me is great; you have rescued me from the depths of Sheol." In Peter 3:18-20 we read that: "Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the spirit. In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison, who had once been disobedient..." The end of vs. 16 ("save this child of your handmaid.") foretells Mary, who called herself the "handmaid of the Lord." (Lk 1:38)

Psalm 87: This psalm was written to be an acknowledgement of how the Lord brought the Chosen People back together in Zion after they had taken as slaves to other countries (vs. 4, "From Babylon and Egypt I count those who acknowledge the Lord. Philistia, Ethiopia, Tyre, of them it can be said: "This one was born there."") This diaspora happened way after King David. But now comes the Church and the new birth of Baptism for peoples of all these nations. They become a part of the new Zion, heaven. Vs. 5, "But of Zion it must be said: "They all were born here." We are reborn for heaven.

Psalm 88: This is a prayer of Jesus on the cross as He comes close to death. As the Eternal Son of God, He has taken all our sins upon himself, so now He is feeling rejected because of our sin. He feels the rejection and distance from God that we feel when in sin. Vs. 15, "Why do you reject me, Lord? Why hide your face from me?" Back in vs. 11 he says: "Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the shades arise and praise you?" Shades are those in Hades. In other words, what good am I if I am dead or in hell?

Psalm 89:1-18: This psalm is about the covenant of God with King David. Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise, the King of Kings. Vs. 5, "I will make your dynasty stand forever and establish your throne though all ages." Vs. 11 mentions Rahab, which would be the Boogie Man for people who feared the water, sea monster.

Psalm 89:19-53: Vs. 20-38, Jesus is quoting the words of God, the Father from a vision (to Nathan, the prophet). Vs. 27-28, "He shall cry to me, 'You are my father, my God, the Rock that brings me victory!'" I myself make him firstborn, Most High over the kings of the earth." How was Jesus the firstborn? He was firstborn from the dead. Vs. 39-52 is how Jesus would have talked after He took on our sins in the garden. Vs. 53, He celebrates this role of His to take on this punishment for sins. All of this should help you understand that it was prophecied that an extension of David would be Son of God. Realize that Americans are the only true "rugged individualist" culture. All the other cultures were family cultures. Each person was to be an extension of their family.

Psalm 90: Vs. 3, "But humans you return to dust, saying, "Return, you mortals!"" In this psalm Jesus lets us know what we are without God. I really like this psalm because it is so blunt about what we are without God. Old age makes it even more real, that we each need God.

Psalm 91: The song, On Eagles Wings, is based on this psalm. The first part of this psalm is about God's love for Jesus and is what was on Jesus' mind as he was tempted by the devil in the desert. The last three verses are there to help us realize that God loves us all the same way. They are the promise of a good king.

BOOK OF NUMBERS

Num. 34: Moses is told by God how to divide out the Promised Land to each remaining tribe. He even appoints supervisors, kind of like bishops of different dioceses.

Num. 35: Since the Levites work on a different basis than the other tribes, they do not get an area of land but are given specific cities throughout the territory so they can do their priestly work. This is like giving each priest a parish that is not something they own but are given a house to live in, within that parish. In vs. 9-15 God sets up asylum cities. This is close but still different than penal colonies. Vs. 15, “These six cities of asylum shall serve not only the Israelites but all the resident or transient aliens among them so that anyone who has killed another unintentionally may take refuge there.” This may sound strange but these are warriors who are taking possession of a land that was inhabited by enemies. They would probably be a little tense for a few years. Someone who entered a house without knocking effectively could surprise the owner and get killed. Think of our Post Traumatic Stress disorders.

Num. 36: With the division of the land, tribe by tribe, an immediate problem would be intermarriage between tribes. This chapter takes care of that. It also takes care of all the widows which exist because of all the battles.

DUETERONOMY

(By the time you are finished with this book you will realize why so many people give up the quest to read the whole Bible by going from the beginning to the end. Hang in there. As you will notice in the introduction to the book, it was written after the people had been in the Promised Land for could centuries. It is a kind of tribute to Moses, describing what he did in the last 40 days before he died and the people entered the Holy Land. It is like the way the Gospels describe the last three years of the life of Jesus because of their critical nature.)

Dt. 1: This book repeats much of the last books. This chapter includes the appointment of more judges to help Moses with the leadership responsibilities and God’s response to threats of a revolt. It also repeats the story of the scouting of the Promised Land and how the scouts, except Caleb, turned against God and the consequences. (Num. 13-14)

Dt. 2: Vs. 5 lets us know that even though God had not chosen Esau, that He had not forgotten him or his children. Vs. 9 lets us know that God is also taking care of the descendants of Lot. So understand that being chosen by God for His messages, like the Israelites were, does not limit salvation.

Dt. 3: This repeats the defeat of King Sihon and King Og, Vs. 23-27 show how the Lord would not change His mind about Moses going into the Promised Land. During the Agony in the Garden Jesus said, “They will be done.” Moses, a Jesus figure, asked God about changing the plans but had to go with God’s will, just as Jesus did.

Dt. 4:1-24: This is a long version of my Dad's line, "Do what I tell you and you will live." Vs. 24, "For the Lord, your God, is a consuming fire, a jealous God." Notice that this concept of fidelity is not primarily likened to a fidelity to a spouse but to a king. Lack of fidelity to a king is treason which is punishable by death.

Dt. 4:25-49: Vs. 27-31, God is making it very clear that He fixed our waywardness by making things bad for us. It is the discipline of a father. Some consequences will come naturally from the sins we commit but some will come from God to let us know we are going the wrong direction. This is His way of encouraging us to go the correct direction, to Him. Vs. 32-40 describe how this is truly a sign of God's love. We call it tough love. But I still hear the echo of my Dad as I read in vs. 40: You must keep his statutes and commandments which I enjoin on you today, that you and your children after you may prosper, and that you may have long life on the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you forever. My Dad just shortened it: Do what I tell you and you will live. A king is basically a dad for a really big family.

Dt. 5: This chapter gives another reminder of the 10 Commandments. It then expressed how important it is for us to follow them. Vs. 32, "Be careful, therefore, to do as the Lord, your God, has commanded you, not turning aside to the right or the left, but following exactly the way prescribed for you by the Lord, your God...."

Dt. 6: In vs. 4 we find out what Jesus was quoting when He gave the great commandment. "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." Jesus added a second commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves. The first already fulfilled the first three of the Ten Commandments. The second fulfilled the last seven. Vs. 8, "Bind them at your wrist as a sign and let them be as a pendant on your forehead." As the notes say; some of the Jews actually do this with phylacteries, or little boxes containing strips of parchment on which the words were inscribed. Vs. 20-25 remind us that we should follow these commandments because we owe it to God, who has saved us. In the OT it was from slavery in Egypt. In the NT it is from slavery to sin.

Dt. 7: This chapter reminds us of the dangers of intermarriage with someone who does not believe in the same way, for in the Promised Land those who do not follow the Lord, our God will be doomed (vs.2). Vs. 10, God "repays with destruction the person who hates him, he does not dally with such a one, but makes him personally pay for it." Jesus is willing to give us chances until we die because that is when we either enter the Promised Land or don't. Vs. 14-15: "You will be blessed above all people; no man or woman among you shall be childless nor shall your livestock be barren. The Lord will remove all sickness from you; he will not afflict you with any of the malignant diseases that you know from Egypt, but will leave them with all your enemies." Would this have been true if every Israelite had been faithful? We will never know but it is a promise renewed by Jesus about heaven. I just want to know who is going to have to milk the livestock in the new earth.

Dt. 8: Vs. 3 says, "He therefore let you be afflicted with hunger, and then fed you with manna, a food unknown to you and your fathers, in order to show you that not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord." This tells us why God sometimes allows suffering. This is something that Jesus understood for He quoted it in Mt. 4:4 & Lk. 4:4, as He was being tempted by the devil.