

Bible Study Lesson Summary, May 20, 2018

This Sunday, May 20th, your readings should be Day 203: Chapters 9-101 of the Ezra, Proverbs 25:15-28, and Chapter 6 of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians.

ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Rom. 15: Vs. 1-13 continue the theme of watching out for each other and giving good example to Jew and Gentile alike. Vs. 14-21 are the start of his conclusion. Vs. 23-33 are his travel plans which focus mostly on going to the holy ones in Jerusalem.

Rom. 16: Here he starts with special greetings to individuals, adds another warning against factions in vs. 17-20, and ends with a praise to our wise God and His Son Jesus Christ.

ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

Eph. 1: In this letter Paul calls himself an apostle of Christ Jesus, rather than a slave. But remember his description of apostles in 1Cor.4. You will see more Theology and less exhortation in this letter. Vs. 5, we are destined for adoption to God through Jesus. Vs. 7, "In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions." Vs. 13, "In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised holy spirit..." Vs. 22, and the Father "put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body,..."

Eph. 2: Vs. 8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast." Vs. 13, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ." Vs. 19-20, "you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone."

Eph. 3: Vs. 1, now he is no longer just an apostle, or a slave but a prisoner for Christ. The notes say that this means he is definitely in prison. I tie it into his idea of being a slave. Vs. 7 ties into this: "I became a minister by the gift of God's grace that was granted me in accord with the exercise of his power." He is not saying he is an unwilling prisoner but recognizes the power non-the-less. Vs. 14-21 are his prayer for them.

Eph. 4: Since he is held in check by the power of the Lord he wants us to accept the same and be good to each other because of the one God. Vs. 8; "Therefore, it says: 'He ascended on high and took prisoners captive; he gave gifts to men.'" This is from psalm 68:19 which is about not having rebels in heaven. Vs. 11-16 are about building up the body of Christ by each doing what we are gifted to do. Vs. 17-24 is a warning that the old way of life will not help the body of Christ so we must give up our former way of life, which was free to be sinful. Vs. 25-32 are practical ways of working toward this.

Eph. 5: This starts by asking us to be imitators of God (beloved children) and not idolaters who go against the Father, for then you don't get the inheritance. (vs. 5) In 6-20 he gives more general practical ideas for being good children. Then in vs. 21-33 he gives more specific thoughts for husbands and wives. These ideals would be outlandish if we are not focused on the inheritance. They would be too hard to follow.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Prv. 22: Vs. 2 is a simple reminder, "Rich and poor have a common bond: The Lord is the maker of them all." This is why Jesus taught us the "Our Father" and not the My Father.

Prv. 23: One of the scary parts of this wisdom is that some of it can be taken too far. (23:13-14) "Withhold not chastisement from a boy; if you beat him with the rod, he will not die. Beat him with the rod, and you will save him from the nether world." Vs. 31-35 are good sayings on alcohol and drugs. Vs. 33 says "Your eyes behold strange sights..." You might see pink elephants."

Prv. 24: Vs. 17 was my downfall for a while: "Rejoice not when your enemy falls, and when he stumbles, let not your heart exult..." I didn't rejoice but I would get angry when their failure made my life miserable. But God taught me. Every time I would get made like that, I would end up doing something just a thoughtless and would have to seek forgiveness.

Prv. 25:1-14: You can get a sense of how this book affected the culture of the Jews when you notice how so much of it fits with Jesus' teaching. He would have used it because of its familiarity. Vs. 6-7, "Claim no honor in the king's presence, nor occupy the place of great men; for it is better that you be told, "Come up closer!" than that you be humbled before the prince." Jesus fleshed it out with a story or parable. (Lk. 14:7-11)

SECOND BOOK OF CHRONICLES

2Chr. 30: The northern territories were invited to celebrate the Passover but few came. Those from Judah came in better numbers. In vs. 17-20 we hear that many of the people did not prepare themselves for celebrating the Passover worthily. Luckily Hezekiah prayed for them and the Lord spared them.

2Chr. 31: The author of Chronicles is really praising Hezekiah's work. For he take down the sacred poles and pagan altars and other high places and sacred pillars used in idol worship. He reestablished Levitical Priesthood. So vs. 20 says: "This Hezekiah did in all Judah. He did what was good, upright and faithful before the Lord, his God.

2Chr. 32: Sennacherib, King of Assyria, wants to attack so Hezekiah reinforced the walls (vs. 5). In vs. 8 he encourages the people by saying: “For he has only an army of flesh, but we have the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles. In vs. 8-19 Sennacherib does some smack talk to put down Hezekiah. It is a guy thing. In vs. 21 we see that the angel of the Lord takes care of Assyria. In vs. 24-26 Hezekiah gets sick but is proud so God is angry, but eventually the king humbles himself, so God holds off punishment until the next generation. In vs. 30 Hezekiah has his famous underground water system set up. I got a chance to go there and see this engineering feat. It was done through solid stone. That was a great engineering feat.

2Chr. 33: Manasseh succeeds his father as king and reverses all the good. In vs. 11, we hear the price for that: “Therefore the Lord brought against them the army commanders of the Assyrian king; they took Manasseh with hooks, shackled him with chains, and transported him to Babylon.” Manasseh decided he better pray, so the Lord freed him from captivity in Babylon and he figured out that the Lord was real. He was partly good. Amon took his place when his father Manasseh died. He was evil and did not humble himself before the Lord.

2Chr. 34: Josiah was next and pleased the Lord by getting rid of the altars to idols. They must be like weeds and keep popping up. He restored the temple and found the book of the Law of Moses. Hilkiyah was the priest who found it and eventually read it to the people and the king, thus averting the wrath of God.

2Chr. 35: Josiah started up the Passover again and in vs. 7 it mentions that he even donated lambs to poor families so they could celebrate Passover. Starting with vs. 20 we hear that Neco, the king of Egypt came by Judah to wage war on someone else and Josiah tried to get in the way, thinking he was a bigshot. They fought at Megiddo. That is the namesake of Armageddon, because so many wars happened there. Josiah was hit with an arrow and died.

2Chr. 36: Jehoahaz became king but the king of Egypt made Jehoahaz’s brother the king instead. So Eliakim, was renamed Jehoiakim, and was a terrible king. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon captured him and took him to Babylon, along with vessels from the temple. His son Johoiachin took his place. He lasted a few months as an evil king and so Nebuchadnezzar made his brother Zedekiah king. He was evil in the sight of God and didn’t listen to Jeremiah the prophet. The Lord made bad things happen. Vs. 21: “All this was to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah: “Until the land has retrieved its lost Sabbaths, during all the time it lies waste it shall have rest while seventy years are fulfilled.”” Vs. 22 is the end of those 70 years and King Cyrus of Persia frees the people and promises to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. The evil ways of the people, especially of the leaders, is the breaking of the covenant. But not all is lost for there is always a remnant that holds on, as you will be seeing in some of the next books. Vs. 15-16: Early and often did the Lord, the God of their fathers, send his messengers to them, for he had compassion on his people and his dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised his warnings, and scoffed at his prophets, until the anger of the Lord against his people was so inflamed that there was no remedy.” This pretty much sums up the books of the Bible so far.

THE BOOK OF EZRA

This book is about the life of the Jewish people after the Babylonian exile. It is the period of the Restoration.

Ez. 1: This chapter outlines the good news that the Jewish people can come back and rebuild. On the first level it is in fulfillment of God's promise to bring the remnant back. On the second level is to help us to understand how Jesus is going to bring the remnant, the faithful ones, back to paradise.

Ez. 2: The importance of family records is shown in vs. 62. "These men searched their family records, but their names could not be found written there; hence they were degraded from the priesthood, and His Excellency ordered them not to partake of the most holy foods until there should be a priest bearing the Urim and Thummim. This gives us an idea of why the Catholic Church is so set on apostolic succession. If no standards are upheld, all standards fall. By the way, we don't know what Urim and Thummim are.

Ez. 3: Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, seems to be acting as king. He is listed in the Gospel of Matthew as an ancestor of Jesus. Vs. 6 "From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer holocausts to the Lord, though the foundation of the temple of the Lord had not yet been laid." If the temple had not been there previously, this would have not been possible. The reality of it had already been set for sacrifice. Rebuilding is different than building. Just like getting your life back together after Confession is different and only spiritually possible after Baptism.

Ez. 4: This chapter sounds like a neighborhood fight about building permits. But it is more like the type of prejudice that the Catholic Church deals with in many areas. When anyone is trying to push something good, there will always be people who fight it because it will make them look worse. Either way it caused a delay in the rebuilding of the temple until they could get permits from King Artaxerxes.

Ez. 5: The prophets Haggai and Zechariah got the work started again on the temple. There were more complaints from the neighbors. Letters were sent to Babylon.

Ez. 6: King Darius of Babylon had to look up the old records to find the building permit. He solved the problem in vs. 11, "I also issue this decree: If any man violates this edict, a beam is to be taken from his house, and he is to be lifted up and impaled on it; and his house is to be reduced to rubble for this offense." I bet that stopped the complaints. The temple was rebuilt and dedicated and Passover was celebrated by the exiles. That had to have felt like coming home and being able to celebrate Christmas for the first time after being released from a Communist prison.

Ez. 7: This part of the book focuses on Ezra himself. He is a scribe who knows the law of Moses. He was obviously a favorite of Artaxerxes, king of Persia. He was commissioned to do this rebuilding.

Ez. 8: Ezra is the one who really knew that they needed Levites for the temple.