

Bible Study Lesson Summary, June 17, 2018

This Sunday, June 17rd, your readings should be Day 225: Chapter 2 of the 1st Book of Maccabees, Ecclesiastes 9, and Chapter 6: 1-31 of the Gospel of St. Luke.

THE GOSPEL OF ST. LUKE

Lk. 2:36-52: I love this story about Simeon and Anna. I see them as the unofficial Godparents of Jesus. They are a reminder to us of how important our prayers are. They would have been praying for salvation, specifically for a Messiah. They are the sign, in our bible, that Prayer Warriors make a difference. All the people who do adoration hours, seem to go unnoticed, are heard by God. In vs. 39-40 we are told that the Holy Family went from Jerusalem to Nazareth. The side-trip to Egypt is not important to Luke's rendition. He is more worried about detailing Jesus' connection with the temple and with the Father in Heaven, so he tells the story of the finding in the temple. Vs. 49 is another proof against the people who try to convince themselves that Jesus never said he was God. "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" Then in vs. 51-52 we read that Jesus was obedient and "advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man." Mary had to ponder all of these things in her heart.

Lk. 3: Luke gives bunch of clues that have helped scholars figure that John started preaching about 26-29 A.D. He becomes an Isaiah type prophet, which is a big deal, for that is high credentials. In vs. 7-9 John is harsh with the people, but they respond and try to repent. Since he is clear about preparing the way of the Lord, the people start getting excited about a coming messiah, who would "baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire." (vs. 16) In vs. 19-20, when he gives Herod a tough time he is arrested.

For Jesus' baptism in vs. 21-22 we read: "heaven was opened and the holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well please." Now we have the proud moment for Mary in the presentation and a proud moment for the Father in the baptism. Vs. 23, "He was the son, as was thought, of Joseph..." Then we have Joseph's genealogy back to Adam. This connects him with the sinful human race.

Lk: 4: Jesus prepares himself for His work with fasting and prayer in the desert. The devil gives him an easy way towards glory. The devil even uses scripture against Jesus. He still does, but he twists it. Jesus is not fooled and the devil "departs from him for a time." (vs. 13) Vs. 14 starts the story of Jesus' work. He starts in what is left of the northern kingdom. There is no legitimate temple, only synagogues, or teaching places. He declares Himself as God's appointed one. The people in his home territory reject him. Jesus explains that this is expected; "no prophet is accepted in his own native place." (vs. 24) Vs. 29-30 have them trying to kill or at least mess him up, and He is just beginning His ministry. Tough crowd. So Jesus heads into the area that Peter would have come from, Capernaum. He does a few miracles, including curing Simon's mother-in-law. I don't know if that made Peter happy or not. The demons He exorcised were not allowed to tell that He was the Messiah. (vs. 41) In vs. 42 it says he heads out of town and heads to Judea, which is the southern kingdom. The footnotes and other Bibles say he stays in Galilee, which is more likely since that is where the fishing towns are.

Lk: 5: Simon is impressed, called and is afraid. That sounds about right for many of us. In vs. 12-16 he cures the leper but he isn't supposed to tell anyone. It didn't seem to matter for there were too many witnesses. Vs. 17-26 have Jesus healing the paralytic. This story includes Jesus' words in vs. 20 and 23: "your sins are forgiven." He claims this power as the Son of Man, the amazing image from Ezekiel.

In vs. 27-32 Jesus explains he is here for the lost sheep, like Levi. Vs. 32, "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do." Vs. 33-39 are starting a new era. The bridegroom has arrived and so no more fasting for now and that new ways of think will be important.

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Here is a truly depressing book. If I weren't a believer in Jesus, this could make life totally worthless. It asks questions. It gives answers. It looks at all the different avenues that a person can follow in life and shows them to be vanity, or a waste. The only positive is shown to be following the Lord, but without the resurrection, that would be questionable.

Eccl. 2: He shows pleasure and enjoyment of good things to be a waste. Vs. 10-11, "Nothing that my eyes desired did I deny them, nor did I deprive myself of any joy, but my heart rejoiced in the fruit of all my toil. This was my share for all my toil. But when I turned to all the works that my hands had wrought, and to the toil at which I had taken such pains, behold! all was vanity and a chase after wind, with nothing gained under the sun."

Eccl. 3: Vs. 1-8 we have all heard. Vs. 9-11 are usually read at the same time but not always heard. "What advantage has the worker from his toil? I have considered the task which God has appointed for men to be busied about. He has made everything appropriate to its time, and has put the timelessness into their hearts, without men's ever discovering, from beginning to end, the work which God has done." Vs. 19-20, "For the lot of man and of beast is one lot... Both go to the same place; both were made from the dust, and to the dust they both return." He does not believe in heaven, but back in vs. 13-14 he says God's will is still the best for it is so God will be revered. "For every man, moreover, to eat and drink and enjoy the fruit of all his labor is a gift of God. I recognized that whatever God does will endure forever... Thus has God done that he may be revered."

Eccl. 4: Competition of being the best means nothing. Vs. 4, "Then I saw that all toil and skillful work is the rivalry of one man for another. This also is vanity and a chase after wind."

Eccl. 5: Unlike the Book of Job, this author believes God rewards certain good people, so don't anger Him. Vs. 3-5, "When you make a vow to God, delay not its fulfillment... Lest God be angered by such words and destroy the works of your hands." Vs. 18, "Any man to whom God gives riches and property... has a gift from God. For he will hardly dwell on the shortness of his life, because God lets him busy himself with the joy of his heart." This is not to say the God doesn't also allow some bad people to benefit from their sins; for now.

Eccl. 6: But even the blessing of God in this way doesn't mean much "For who knows what is good for a man in life, the limited days of his vain life? Because—who is there to tell a man what will come after him under the sun?" He again needs the Gospel.

Eccl. 7: Trying to correct wrongs is not the answer for him. "On a good day enjoy good things, and on an evil day consider: Both the one and the other God has made, so that man cannot find fault with him in anything." (vs. 14) This could be the root of relativism if it were taken out of context.

Eccl. 8: It doesn't even matter if you are a king. Vs. 8, "There is no man who is master of the breath of life so as to retain it, and none has mastery of the day of death. There is no exemption from the struggle, nor are the wicked saved by their wickedness."

THE BOOK OF JUDITH

Jdt. 12: He is so charmed by Judith, that he gets drunker than ever before.

Jdt. 13: Judith beheads Holofernes and put his head in her food bag and heads back to her people. Since she had been going to pray every evening it was not alarming that she was going out of camp. King Uzziah praises her with words that are used by the Church to describe Mary. Vs. 18, "Blessed are you, daughter, by the Most High God, above all the women on earth; and blessed by the Lord God, the creator of heaven and earth."

Jdt. 14: Because of what Judith has done, Achior, leader of the Ammonites, is not killed by Holofernes, so he gets circumcised and joins the house of Israel. Remember that he was the one that warned Holofernes and Nebuchadnezzar about the Israelites and their God. The troops from Assyria are disgraced by having a woman behead their head man.

Jdt. 15: Holofernes' army is in disarray because their leader has lost his head, so they are defeated when Uzziah attacks them. The high priest Joakim congratulates Judith with another line that is used to describe Mary, "You are the glory of Jerusalem, the surpassing joy of Israel; you are the splendid boast of our people." (Vs. 9)

Jdt. 16: The people sing a hymn of praise of Judith.

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

This book is not about history. It is set in Persia and is about a Jewish heroine who saves the Jews who are living there. There is no love of your enemies taught in this book. That comes later with Jesus. This is about God answering the prayers of many through the actions of one. But God has to do a lot of preparing for it all to happen, which is no problem for God.

Est. A: In the prologue we meet Mordecai, who has a dream of two dragons ready for war. In the middle of this is the “race of the just.” (vs. 6) Prophetically God answers the prayers of the race of the just with “a great river, a flood of water from a little spring. The light of the sun broke forth; the lowly were exalted and they devoured the nobles.” The dragons are the two great powers of Mordecai’s time wanting to rule the world. There have always been dragons around. We can understand through the NT that to answer the prayers, God sends the Son (sun) and the water is baptism.

Then we hear of Mordecai saving the king and gaining the hatred of Haman.

Est. 1: The king has a party and his queen, Vashti, doesn’t come as requested. In vs. 19, the king decides to find a new queen and in vs. 20 issues a decree that “all wives will honor their husbands, from the greatest to the least.” St. Paul teaches the same rule but also adds that husbands must love their wives as their own flesh.

Est. 2: The relative of Mordecai, Esther, becomes the new queen. Then we find out that Mordecai had actually foiled the plot to kill the king with the help of Queen Esther, which explains how Mordecai could have gotten word to the king.

Est. 3: Haman becomes a high official and wants everyone to bow to him. The king Okays this but Mordecai won’t do it for “he was a Jew.” So Haman decides to have all the Jews killed. The king agrees.

Est. B: The king writes a letter of decree which states that “there is one people of bad will, which by its laws is opposed to every other people and continually disregards the decrees of kings, so that the unity of empire blamelessly designed by us cannot be established.” The Church now has the role of following the rules of God’s kingdom rather than the whims of every new human ruler.

Est. 3: The decree goes out to kill the Jews.

Est. 4: Mordecai and his people pray. Then they seek Esther’s help, who knows that to go to the king in the inner court without being summoned, will be put to death. (vs. 11)

Est. C: So the Jews fast and pray.

Est. D: Esther risks personal danger and goes in to the king. He allows it.

Est. 5: Queen Esther invites the king and Haman to a banquet.

Est. 6: Esther reminds the king that he has never rewarded Mordecai for saving him.

Est. 7: Haman is revealed to be the problem. The king has him hanged. This foreshadows the death of another betrayer, Judas.

Est. 8: Esther then approaches the king to stop the decree to kill the Jews. He says he can’t.

Est. 9: Instead he sends out a letter allowing the Jews to fight back against anyone and their families who try to kill them and then suggests that it might be wiser for his own soldiers to disregard the first decree. This is all a sign of mercy.

Est. E: The letter goes out with the words from the king: “You will do well, then, to ignore the letter sent by Haman, son of Hammedatha, for he who composed it has been hanged...” (Chapter 8) In vs. 17, “And many of the peoples of the land embraced Judaism, for they were seized with a fear of the Jews.”

Est. 9: The Jews did fight back and win. Vs. 16, “They killed seventy-five thousand of their foes, without engaging in plunder...”

Est. 10: Mordecai is made next in rank to the king.

Est. F: Mordecai’s dream is fulfilled in his mind. Esther is the spring that grew into a river and he and Haman were the dragons. The bigger picture is the foreshadowing of Mary’s battle with the dragon, which is defeated with the help of baptism into her Son.

THE FIRST BOOK OF MACCABEES

1Mc. 1: It is about 169 B.C. and the Israelites have been back in their land for about 3 centuries. All has not gone well. They have been conquered several times. Now the Jews are making an alliance with the Gentiles, which will basically make their following of the Law of Moses extinct. Vs. 15, “They covered over the mark of their circumcision and abandoned the holy covenant; they allied themselves with the Gentiles and sold themselves to wrongdoing.” Antiochus, a Greek king, misleads the Jews into trusting him. In vs. 30-31, he won their trust but then destroyed Jerusalem and built a new version of it. In vs. 43, “and many Israelites were in favor of his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the Sabbath.” Anyone who didn’t was killed.