

Bible Study Lesson Summary, Nov. 19, 2017

This Sunday, Nov. 19th, your readings should be Day 57: Chapters 8-9 of Leviticus, Psalm 59, and Acts 2:1-21.

The question of how the bible was put together came up in the last class. Here is a very short summary. The Gospel and letters of John were the last of the NT to be written, about 100 A.D. These and the other writings of the apostles were circulating around to Christian communities. The problem is that other letters and gospels started to be written. This meant that the church leaders needed to sort out which were authentic. This went on for around 200 years. Guys like Jerome and Augustine each had their opinion. The factors they looked at were the intermediate writings by guys who knew the apostles, like Polycarp, Irenaeus, etc. The pretty much presumes that the OT was the books by the 70 writers that were used in Israel at that time. This made sense because they were almost all referred to by the apostles in their writings. That was definitive until Martin Luther came along in the 16th Century and didn't like some books. He decided he wanted a different set of Jewish books that were used by the Greek community of Jews, because they didn't include some of the things Luther disagreed with. He also wanted to get rid of the Letter of James, and Revelation but couldn't find a strong enough reason to eliminate them. So Protestant Bibles have less books than Catholic Bibles.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Matthew 26:26-75: Vs. 26-29 is all Matthew uses to cover the Last Supper, the words of consecration. Then in vs. 30 it is already time to leave after singing a song. Then in vs. 31-35 is the warning of the danger and Peter vowing his strength. Jesus obviously knows better. Vs. 36-46 finds Jesus in the Garden and wants prayers from his disciples, especially Peter, James, & John. They couldn't handle an hour of prayer. That is why we have a tradition in the church to spend an hour in church from sometime after the Mass on Holy Thursday to midnight, hoping we can do an hour without falling asleep.

Vs. 47-56 give Matthew's account of the betrayal and arrest. At this point Jesus seems fearless, determined. The disciples aren't. This goes back to what Jesus had just talked about with Peter and which refers to Zechariah 13:7: "Strike the shepherd that the sheep may be dispersed, and I will turn my hand against the little ones." But the next verse in Zechariah is also important: "In all the land, says the Lord, two thirds of them shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left." Vs. 57-68 is the illegal trial, but it gives Jesus a chance to declare himself as the Son of Man. This passage from the Book of Daniel is not talking about his humanness. This is his power as God. Then as predicted Peter denies him. Think about why Matthew inserted this in the Gospel. Peter is the leader of the Church when Matthew is writing this. It is not to put him down but to show how real faith can come about in a real person.

Matthew 27: In Matthew it seems like the trial must last all night for it is suddenly dawn. They bring Jesus to Pilate, but this is the beginning of another sandwich. The meat is the death of Judas. It is the idea that Judas and Pilate seem to be trapped into their actions, as if they had no freedom. This is the sinful state. The only way out is with Jesus.

The sentencing includes the story of Barabbas, or the son of the father. It is no coincidence that he is freed instead of the Son of the Father, Jesus. This again is to show that God has this planned. The crowning of thorns, mocking Jesus as the King of the Jews is also important. The Jews believed that the eternal kingdom promised by God to David would become the only kingdom, eliminating all others. The Book of Daniel has this in one of the dreams. Simon of Cyrene had no

choice either. The whole account of the crucifixion should sound familiar from Psalm 22, which Jesus actually recites, but because he can't breathe can only voice the first line. Notice that there is no mention of John, the beloved disciple; nor is the lance in the side mentioned. But the burial and the placing of the guards is clearly to set up the awesomeness of the Resurrection, for it takes away all doubt that there is any other possibility of what happened to Jesus.

Matthew 28: Mary Magdalene and the other Mary see the angel, who scares the guards. After that Jesus comes and appears to them. Matthew does not worry about Thomas or those other appearances. He is focused the Ascension so he just has Jesus telling the women to have the guys meet him in Galilee. The only thing mentioned about things in Jerusalem is the bribing of the guards. The Ascension is also the great commissioning, last words with final instructions.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 1: This is an extension of the Gospel of Luke, not Matthew so there is a switching of gears for us with this reading guide. Luke recounts that last part of his Gospel, which ends with the Ascension, which doesn't include the last instructions mentioned in Matthew. He does mention that the Holy Spirit gives the apostles instructions, and that Jesus appear to them during forty days. His second Ascension account includes the question of restoring the kingdom, since they still wanted to have a world-wide kingdom. That sets up this book because it is about them spreading the message to the world. Luke mentions the first community, which Mary is a part of. He places a lot of emphasis on the replacement of Judas, who didn't hang himself in this version as described in Matthew. Vs. 18, "He bought a parcel of land with the wages of his iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle, and all his insides spilled out." We don't have to worry about which one was correct, for it is a matter of writing him out of the scene like in the soap operas. How he died is not important, just that he was gone.

The Book of Psalms

Psalm 51: This psalm is the prayer of Jesus that fulfills what God said He wanted in psalm 50, an acceptable sacrifice. (vs. 17) "Lord, open my lips; my mouth will proclaim your praise.... (vs. 19) My sacrifice, God, is a broken spirit; God, do not spurn a broken, humbled heart."

Psalm 52: God will strike down a liar, but the righteous must trust in God to be saved. In the NT Jesus reminds us that it is not what goes into a man that defiles him but what comes out of his mouth. I am thinking Jesus was praying this as he dealt with scribes, Pharisees, and high priests.

Psalm 53: This psalm follows the same pattern as 52. But note that vs. 4, "All have gone astray; all alike are perverse. Not one does what is right, not even one." This is used by some to say that Jesus could not have been sinless if this line in scripture is true. But in verse 2 it is clear that "Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God." So the psalm is letting us know that fools think and say these things. Jesus can be sinless and scripture true because fools are wrong. I once heard that this means that April 1st could be the Atheist's National Holiday.

Psalm 54: A prayer that Jesus probably thought during His Passion.

Psalm 55: This is also Jesus during His Passion. In vs. 14-15 we have reference to the sorrow that Judas will cause with his treachery. “But it was you, my other self, my comrade and friend, you, whose company I enjoyed, at whose side I walked in procession in the house of God.”

Psalm 56: In this prayer of Jesus vs. 12 takes on a powerful meaning. “What can mere mortals do to me?” Because vs. 14 lets us know that God will act, “Once you have snatched me from death, kept my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living.”

Psalm 57: Jesus prays with confidence that the Father will answer Him. He is confident that a new day will come.

Psalm 58: Jesus lets us know that the pagan ways or the “gods” mentioned in vs. 2 lead to horrible things. Following them is foolishness. But in the last verse, “Truly there is a reward for the just: there is a God who is judge on earth!”

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

Ex. 31: Notice that God wants the best of artisans to do the work of His dwelling place. “Take care to keep my Sabbaths, for that is to be the token between you and me throughout the generations, to show that it is I, the Lord, who make you holy. Therefore, you must keep the Sabbath as something sacred. Whoever desecrates it shall be put to death. If anyone does work on that day, he must be rooted out of his people.” (vs. 13-14) Note that this is a “perpetual covenant.” (vs. 16) Break the commandment concerning the Lord’s Day at your peril.

Ex. 32: Notice in this chapter that Aaron was a part of the problem. He gets into trouble before all the information from God can even be put into action. Aaron has not become a priest at this point. While Moses is gone he is a leader but goes the wrong way. Now we can see why God is insistent on the cleansing of sin before ordination. In verse 19 Moses broke the stone tablets. The people had broken the commandments so Moses gave them what they had worshiped. He made them drink the gold from the calf. In verse 24 Aaron sounds like a kid: “They gave it (gold jewelry) to me, and I threw it into the fire, and this calf came out.” Verse 4 told us how he had actually fashioned it. In verse 26 Moses says, “Whoever is for the Lord, let him come to me!” In other words that had to make a visible sign of the sorrow and repentance. If not they were killed. Sounds a little like confession, only the priest doesn’t have to do the killing.

Ex. 33: Moses had found favor with God and wanted to see God’s glory. God said, “When my glory passes I will set you in the hollow of the rock and will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand, so that you may see my back; but my face is not to be seen.” Only Jesus could know God in His glory. But Moses interceded with God to appeal to His mercy. Divine Mercy Sunday is all about Jesus fulfilling the intercession of mercy.

Ex. 34: “Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write down these words, for in accordance with them I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”” God had made a covenant with Noah, a family. God had made a covenant with Abraham to make him a big family. God made a covenant with Moses, for a tribe. Each covenant is with a bigger group. Observe that nothing in the OT is as big

or as great as what it foreshadows in the NT. In verse 29 we find out that Moses' face shown in glory. In the Transfiguration, all of Jesus shown in glory and Moses is just a side-kick.

Ex. 35: In Ex.35:3 we have a reminder of how seriously God takes the day of rest. "Anyone who does work shall not even light a fire in any of your dwellings on the sabbath day. Notice it doesn't say anything about lighting a fire in God's dwelling, altar servers are safe.

Ex. 36-38: In the rest of these chapters we have a repeat of many of the instructions from earlier and then the people making offerings so that the work can be done. Notice that they are out in the desert and they don't have a department store to pick up some extra things. This was probably the last of the things many of them had brought out of Egypt. But the important thing was that the Lord was with them. They had obviously not given Aaron all of their gold to make the calf.

Ex. 39: Notice that the vestments are decorated with violet, purple, scarlet and gold. Still the main colors of the church vestments. I'm thinking green has been added in gratitude that we are not in the desert anymore.

Ex. 40: You should have realized that the main focus is the Ark of the commandments, which are the word of God. We still anoint priests, a new church and/or an altar with oil. The glory of the Lord came upon this tent. The people moved when it moved. God was their guide.

Leviticus

Notice that 'Leviticus' has to do with Levi or the priestly class. This book is about priesthood. Much of the Letter to the Hebrews seems like this.

Lev. 1: Every culture that I know of, that has a god figure in their tradition, has sacrifices. We are always trying to please god. God is showing them that sacrifice is important. He does not allow blemished or damaged sacrifices. These sacrifices must be offered over and over again because they are not perfect. That perfect sacrifice will only come when the people are ready to understand Him. Several times in chapter one it mentions washing the inner organs. (vs. 13) Having butchered animals I know this is not a random washing but to wash the fecal material from the intestines so it will actually be a sweat smelling oblation to the Lord.

Lev. 2: Notice that this is already focusing on unleavened bread. In the 1970s some parishes were starting to make their own unleavened bread to make it more realistic than the hosts we use. Some were adding honey for taste. Verse 11 will tell you where the church looked back to in order to decide if this was a good idea or not.

Lev. 3: These "peace offerings" might be for a blessing of a wedding or other celebration so it could be male or female. The other offerings all had to have been male. God seemed to be focusing the responsibility of sin on the men; or from the beginning of time to the fullness of time on one man, Adam and then Jesus.

Lev. 4: "Thus the priest shall make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven." (vs. 20, 26, 31, 35) This is repeated again and again. The need for forgiveness for offenses against God's law and the role of the priest in dealing with that is such an important part of how God wants things done. The price for sin for a priest, the whole community, or a prince was a male animal. The price for a private person (vs. 27-28) was a female animal. In my personal thoughts I wonder if this was to

foreshadow individuals seeking Mary's intercession, whereas the community approaches God through the Eucharist.

Lev. 5: In verse 11, "If he is unable to afford even two turtledoves or two pigeons,..." we find out that the offering that Mary and Joseph gave when presenting baby Jesus in the temple is an offering typical of poor people but not the poorest of the poor, that would be one tenth of an ephah of fine flour. Verse 14-15 the missing of "sacred dues" is more important again and demands a ram.

Lev. 6: Almost everything that is sacrificed to God is to be burned. But in vs. 11 "All the male descendants of Aaron may partake of the unleavened cereal offerings. That is why Jesus made us a "priestly people" through baptism so we could partake. Vs. 15-16 confuses the issue because it seems to reverse the previous laws and makes it seem that even the priests can eat the bread. Since it has to do with the "anointing" of a priest it might have to do with Holy Thursday when "the anointed" or the Christ was the sacrifice and did not partake of it and this is a perpetual ordinance or all time. Jesus said He would not partake of the cup until He drank it new in the kingdom which for Him is as He died on the cross. Scott Hahn says that last cup was the cup of fulfillment, which was why Jesus said it was finished.

Lev. 7: Much of this chapter sets up the share that the priests are to receive. This is partly what they live on. Many priests still depend on stipends for special events like weddings and funerals, etc. The bishop even gets a stipend for each Confirmation he does in a parish. The parish takes care of this.