

Bible Study Lesson Summary, Jan. 14, 2018

This Sunday, Jan. 14th, your readings should be Day 99: Chapters 27-28 of Deuteronomy, Psalm 100, and Acts 27:27-44.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 22: 17-29: As Paul finishes his conversion encounter with Christ he ends with how he became an apostle or one who was sent. Vs. 21, “God, I shall send you far away to the Gentiles.” The idea that Paul is a Roman citizen scares them for the Jews were controlled by the Roman occupation. But Paul’s father must have been a Roman.

Acts 23: Paul is good at his mission because he understands the culture of these people and their beliefs. His mixed background would have made him more conscious of this kind of thing. So he was able to work the Sadducees against the Pharisees.

The plot against Paul’s life starting with vs. 12 shows how passionate these people are about their faith. It also lets us know that Paul has a sister and a nephew. He did not just appear out of thin air. As for the 40 guys who weren’t going to eat until they killed, Paul; I presume they starved to death.

Acts 24: In vs. 5 Christianity is referred to as the “sect of the Nazoreans.” In vs. 14 Paul calls it “the Way.” Notice Paul’s calm demeanor. He does not go crazy like so many do because they feel persecuted in some way. That dignity comes from God. So Paul spends two years in Caesarea, a Roman town in Israel. You would think people would have calmed down by then.

Acts 25: In the notes you can see that Paul’s appeal to be tried before Caesar meant he would go before Nero. Paul’s rational discussions before governors and kings in Israel must have seemed nice compared to the craziness of some of the radical sects like the Sadducees and Pharisees. This Agrippa was one of King Herod’s grandkids.

Acts 26: In vs. 11 Paul mentions that he used to tortured people to get them to blaspheme God. Then he tells his conversion story again. King Herod had to have been rolling over in his grave as he heard his grandson say in vs. 28, “You will soon persuade me to play the Christian.”

Acts 27: 1-26: The trip to Rome was during a bad season for sea travel and they were about to wreck when Paul has a dream of an angel letting him know that they would all survive.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Psalm 92: This psalm is a beautiful prayer of thanksgiving for God saving the good people. It is a reminder of why we pray the “Alleluia” so often. It may not be great for us now but the knowledge we have of the ways of the Lord help us to join in His glory in heaven.

Psalm 93: This psalm is about Jesus glorifying the Father who is king. The Father is the King of heaven. Jesus is the King of kings of this earth.

Psalm 94: These words of Jesus in this psalm should be helpful to us when we are feeling discouraged. This is how we should be looking at all the wicked things that go on every day, because ultimately the bad guys will not win.

Psalm 95: Jesus is teaching us to praise the Father rather than being blockheads, like at Meribah and Massah.

Psalm 96: This is beautiful song of praise. If it hasn't already been put to modern music, it should be. Of course each of the psalms was written to be sung. One of the early Church Fathers explained how, "Sing to the Lord a new song..." meant letting our lives be a song of praise to the Lord and since we are each unique, each will be a new song.

Psalm 97: This is another song of praise but note that in vs. 10 "The Lord loves those who hate evil, protects the lives of the faithful, rescues them from the hand of the wicked." This is why I have problems with the new Theological phrase of "God's unconditional love." God the Father is king of the universal kingdom. If the wicked are not in his kingdom His love for them will mean nothing for they will not be in His kingdom. The wicked will be in the devil's kingdom.

Psalm 98: This psalm is about the glory of the second coming of Christ. Vs. 3, "All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God." Then will come the new heavens and the new earth, which is what His victory accomplishes.

Psalm 99: A song of praise to Our Lord God, who is king. This is God the Father. We usually think of Christ as our Lord and King, which is also correct but Jesus the King of kings on earth and will offer the Kingdom of Heaven built on earth back to the Father at the Second Coming.

DUETERONOMY

Dt. 9: Vs. 4: "After the Lord, your God, has thrust them out of your way, do not say to yourselves, 'It is because of my merits that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land'; for it is really because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out before you." This would explain why God commanded so much killing. Vs. 18: "Then, as before, I lay prostrate before the Lord for forty days and forty nights without eating or drinking, because of all the sin you had committed in the sight of the Lord and the evil you had done to provoke him." Moses, like Christ, can make the difference between being destroyed and getting another chance. Jesus spent His forty days in the desert as a part of His plan to save us.

Dt. 10: Vs. 8-9 let us know that the tribe of Levi will not receive land to live on because they will have another source of income, being the priests for the other 11 tribes. Vs. 14-15; "Think! The heavens, even the highest heavens, belong to the Lord, your God, as well as the earth and everything on it. Yet in his love for your fathers the Lord was so attached to them as to choose you..." This is the incredible inheritance that God is offering us.

Dt. 11: Vs. 11-12 lets us know that the Promised Land is not like Egypt. It receives rain all year round. The main part of the land around the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River Valley is fruitful all year round. It is like Florida in which they have three growing seasons per year. They also have one of the biggest citrus crops, which provides citrus for most of Europe. The last few decades they

seem to have been overdoing it for the water supply has not been adequate for the crops they want to have, so they have been draining the Jordan River and so the Dead Sea is no being refilled at water evaporates. The land around the Dead Sea is now filled with sink holes because there isn't enough water flowing into it. The basic message of the second half of this chapter is follow the law and good things will be the result. If you don't, you will not enjoy the curse.

Dt. 12: Vs. 8-9, "You shall not do as we are now doing; here, everyone does what seems right to himself, since you have not yet reached your resting place, the heritage which the Lord, your God, will give you." This is a great reminder of the true meaning of freedom. In heaven we will be totally free but it is because we will be ready to do things God's way. Vs. 15-16 was confusing to me at first because I thought it was giving permission to eat unclean animals but it actually is giving permission for the people who are unclean to eat meat, which normally they would not have been able to afford. Keeping them from consuming blood was critical in preparing them to consume the one blood source that would truly give them life, the Son of God (vs. 16 and vs. 23). The last part of the chapter warns them to stay away from the pagan gods. Vs. 30, "Do not inquire regarding their gods..." Curiosity could kill them like a cat. Vs. 31 mentions one of the reasons God was angry with the pagan nations, "because they offered to their gods every abomination that the Lord detests, even burning their sons and daughters to their gods."

Dt. 13: The first few verses of this chapter has us watch out for prophets or dreamers who promise signs or wonders urging us to follow other gods. This is a test of our faithfulness. In vs. 6: "But that prophet or that dreamer shall be put to death." This would have made 1st century Jews wonder about whether to kill Jesus or not. The test would have been if He tempted them toward another God.

Dt. 14: The first part of this chapter outlines which food is clean and what is unclean. Most of it makes sense when you think of the limitations they had in food preparation. Cooking pork was dangerous. Animals or birds that ate other animals would carry strange bacteria and many people might have had problems with fish without scales and fins, shell fish. At least I know that I am allergic to them. I don't know if they understood that cows chew cud. Also vs. 27 is an example of several places in which it lets the Israelites know that they had better not forget to take care of the Levites (priestly class). I like those parts. Realize a normal tithe would be an animal but it says they can change that into money and then change it back when presenting it to the priests. (vs. 24-26)

Dt. 15: The section in this chapter on Hebrew Slaves is interesting because it doesn't seem to fit our concept of slavery as being cruel and horrible. Vs. 17 has them taking an awl and thrusting it through a slaves ear and into the door, if the slave likes his situation and wants it to be permanent. But it is not because the slavery sounds horrible, but the ear-piercing that women do today seems strange to me, and that is what they are doing. Realize that this has a lot to do with St. Paul's and even the early church's not being against slavery. They were just against the mistreatment of slaves. It is just our version of slavery that was so evil. Theirs didn't seem to be that way. It was a matter of paying off debts, whereas ours was the owning of a person.

Dt. 16: A simple list of feasts until vs. 21-22 in which sacred pole of wood or sacred pillars are banned. These are bad because is it a form of worship to the Canaanite god, Baal.

Dt. 17: The first part is that it is a death penalty to worship a false god. That is because it is treason to their true king, God. Then we have rules for any judges or kings who are to be in charge over Israel when they get to the Promised Land. He must not be a foreigner. He cannot take the people

back to Egypt and must not have a lot of horses, silver, gold, or wives. I think David and Solomon seemed to have a problem holding to the last three of those, and it caused problems.

Dt. 18: Priests must be fed and so they get part of the sacrifice. Vs. 10-11 – “Let there not be found among you...a fortune-teller, soothsayer, charmer, diviner, or caster of spells, nor one who consults ghosts and spirits or seeks oracles from the dead.” We still have kids playing with Ouija boards and their parents buying them for the kids. This is not just an abomination, as the Bible says, it is dangerous. Horrible things have happened with these “games”. Vs. 15-20 are powerful. Vs. 15: “A prophet like me will the Lord, your God, raise us for you from among your own kinsmen; to him you shall listen.” Vs. 18-19: “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kinsmen, and will put my words into his mouth; he shall tell them all that I command him. If any man will not listen to my words which he speaks in my name, I myself will make him answer for it.” All of this comes over 1000 years before Jesus fulfills it.

Dt. 19: Cities of Refuge are a concept that we don’t hear about anymore, but it sure makes sense for them when someone is killed accidentally. This must have happened a fair amount for this to be set up. It shows that these men were warriors and were on high alert. A negative way of describing this is hot-headed, plus accidents happen. Vs. 8-9 talks of the territory being enlarged but with a condition; “that you carefully observe all these commandments which I enjoin on you today, loving the Lord, your God, and ever walking in his ways...” The Church will expand according to the same rules. It is interesting to note that about 80% of the Jews in Israel are agnostics or atheists and their territory is not expanding. This is a very sophisticated judicial system, but notice that when you break the law seriously then vs. 21 gives us something we are more used to hearing: “Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, and foot for foot!”

Dt. 20: Vs. 5-8 gives possible excuses for soldiers to not go into battle. These should sound familiar because they are the same ones that Jesus used in His example about the King’s feast that people excused themselves from, using the same excuses. Vs. 10-18 sound as brutal as the Koran which came later. So if they are not willing to serve as forced laborers then kill them. But note the reason, “lest they teach you to make any such abominable offerings as they make to their gods, and you thus sin against the Lord, your God. This is obviously critical to God, commandment number one. If you think in terms of Satan’s kingdom as the alternative, this is actually a blessing. Vs. 19-20 gives an ecological tone to the Bible. Do not kill trees when besieging a city, especially fruit trees. The hardwoods can be used for material to build siege works. This is about looking to the future.

Dt. 21: Vs. 1-9 deals with the way to deal with an unsolved murder. God’s wisdom really shows itself in all this. The heifer’s death basically closes the door on the death so more violence does not come, like happens in gang territory where the fighting goes on and on. The same wisdom comes in vs. 10-14 with a marriage to a female captive. It balances mercy and justice in ways they can understand. Vs. 18-21, has instructions for dealing with an incorrigible son, stone him. How many of us would have survived our youthful stupidity, or would we have all behaved better if we knew there were more severe consequences. If you would like to know, just study life in Singapore, where there are severe consequences and few crimes. The bad news is that Singapore is becoming more like us now. Also you can watch teenagers in Israel, men and women, who must serve in the army. They walk around the streets with semi-automatic rifles and behave very well, for the punishments are very severe. Vs. 23, “since God’s curse rests on him who hangs on a tree”. This is quoted by St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians 3:13. It is probably why the devil thought crucifixion was perfect for Jesus.

Dt. 22: The first twelve verses are about justice and caring for right order to the world, or having a sense of how God has made us. This is a version of do unto others as you would have them do to you. Vs. 20: “But if this charge is true, and evidence of the girl’s virginity is not found, they shall bring the girl to the entrance of her father’s house and there her townsmen shall stone her to death, because she committed a crime against Israel by her unchasteness in her father’s house.” This could have been the death sentence for Mary the Mother of Jesus if Joseph had not accepted the information of his dream. Vs. 22-26 are important when we remember the woman caught in the act of adultery that was brought to Jesus. With vs. 22 both are expected to be killed. He was on the prowl and she did not cry rape. In vs. 23-26 it is even clearer. So if the man is not brought forward in the case before Jesus, something must have made him less innocent as in she was prostituting herself. That is my guess anyway. Contemplate women’s rights when you read this stuff and realize this culture has far more rights for women than any other for centuries.

Dt. 23: Starts with lots more rules about being Jewish and who can become one. Vs. 13-14, “Outside the camp you shall have a place set aside to be used as a latrine. You shall also keep a trowel in your equipment and with it, when you go outside to ease nature, you shall first dig a hole and afterward cover up your excrement.” Can you start to get the idea that these people were starting from scratch, so God has His work cut out for Him. We take so much for granted. Vs. 21, don’t demand interest from family but it is okay with foreigners.

Dt. 24: Jesus is later confronted with vs. 1: “When a man, after marrying a woman and having relations with her, is later displeased with her because he finds in her something indecent, and therefore he writes out a bill of divorce and hands it to her, thus dismissing her from his house: . . . This all sounds awful for divorced women unless you read vs. 19 or the book of Ruth which shows that widows or others who are on the margin are taken care of through specific charity, like letting some grain in the fields for them. Vs. 16 was still being contested in the time of Jesus. “Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children for their fathers; only for his own guilt shall a man be put to death.”

Dt. 25: Vs. 3, “Forty stripes may be given him, but no more; lest, if he were beaten with more stripes than these, you kinsman should be looked upon as disgraced because of the severity of the beating.” This was obviously in the minds of the Pilate, when he had Jesus scourged. Vs. 9-10 can shed some light on why the father, in the Prodigal Son story, made sure he had sandals put on his son’s feet. “This is how one should be treated who will not build up his brother’s family?” And his lineage shall be spoken of in Israel as ‘the family of the man stripped of his sandal.’” One of the more interesting meditations you can have is to realize that laws happen because of real problems that exist. Since Adam, Eve, and Cain, people have been coming up with very creative ways to sin and hurt each other.

Dt. 26: Vs. 12, “When you have finished setting aside all the tithes of your produce in the third year, the year of the tithes, and you have given them to the Levite, the alien, the orphan and the widow, that they may eat their fill in your own community, you shall declare before the Lord. . . .” The churches rule of thumb on tithing in our time is 5% for the church and 5% for other charities. The Israelites were obviously to deal with more than the Levites, who would be like giving to the church. But this is why we have so many second collections.