

Bible Study Lesson Summary, Dec. 2, 2018

This Sunday, Dec. 2nd, your readings should be Day 351: Chapter 12-14 of the Book of the Prophet Hosea, Chapter 43:13-35 of the Book of Sirach, and Chapter 19 of the Book of Revelation.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

I suggest when you read this last book of the Bible, that you pretend that you are at Mass. But don't think of being at Mass in SEAS but in heaven, and that it is the eternal Mass that we all participate in each time we celebrate Mass. As you can read in the introduction this book is written in a particular style called apocalyptic literature. It was a helpful style in times of severe persecution because, if the bad guys got a hold of it and tried to read it, they wouldn't be able to understand it. When I can't understand it, then I feel like a bad guy. But if I think I am at Mass it makes sense again.

Rev. 12: Our Mass is celebrated in linear time to help us keep orientated. The Wedding Feast of the Lamb is celebrated in eternal time, which is how God sees things. The Book of Revelation is John being given a glimpse into eternal time. So he gets to see many glimpses of the plan of salvation. Here we have a glimpse of what was going on in the spiritual realm during Christmas and beyond. The great eagle would have been John. It is not hard to imagine him having to get her out of Jerusalem because of persecution.

Rev. 13: This chapter has a glimpse of that persecution. In vs. 1-10, the first beast is seven Roman emperors. Vs. 11-17 is about the false prophets who misled the people. Vs. 18 is about a specific evil person that could be a false prophet or more likely Emperor Nero. His name spelled out in Hebrew numerals, not Roman numerals, would be 666. They couldn't use the actual Roman numerals to show that wisdom is needed here as in vs. 18. Wisdom to not get yourself killed.

Rev. 14: Vs. 1-5 are about the Lamb, Jesus, and 144,000 "who were not defiled with women: they are virgins. I hope that counts me as a celibate, but it is probably more about them never having false gods or false wives, which I hope I am still included in. Vs. 6-13 are about the fall of the beast, or Babylon the great. This could be the Roman Empire or symbolic of all evil empires. Vs. 9: "Anyone who worships the beast or its image, or accepts its mark on forehead or hand, will also drink the wine of God's fury, poured full strength into the cup of his wrath, and will be tormented in burning sulfur before the holy angels and before the Lamb." Is this vivid enough? Vs. 14-20 are another perspective on judgment day and who is in charge of it.

Rev. 15: Vs. 1 is a quick mention of the seven last plagues. Then is an amazing image heaven. Imagine all the different lights reflecting on the glassy sea. That would be all the Saints reflecting the light of Christ who will be the lamp that replaces the sun and moon in heaven.

Rev. 16: Now we get more details of the seven angels with their plagues. The seventh is the completion of it all.

Rev. 17: Vs. 1-6 describe the city of Rome as Babylon the great, the harlot. That Rome no longer has power, only ruins and the Catholic Church is strong. This is part of what I have been mentioning that this is in eternal time for at the time this was written the Roman Empire was very strong. The rest is a description of the vision of Rome.

Rev. 18: Remember that Rome was the oppressor of Israel at the time this was written and this would have been good news for the Jewish converts, and the Gentile converts would have been astounded but, since most of them were poor and also oppressed, they would also have been happy I think. This whole chapter is about Rome's destruction as it is seen from the heavenly viewpoint.

THE BOOK OF SIRACH

Sir. 39:17-35: The writer has tremendous confidence in God. Starting with vs. 16: "The works of God are all of them Good; in its own time every need is supplied." Notice that it is not every desire only need. Vs. 19: "The works of all mankind are present to him; not a thing escapes his eye." Vs. 21: "No cause then to say: 'What is the purpose of this?' Everything is chosen to satisfy a need." Vs. 27: "For the good all these are good, but for the wicked they turn out evil." Vs. 35: "so now with full joy of heart proclaim and bless the name of the Holy One."

Sir. 40: Vs. 1+2 set the stage, from birth to death we have fear in our hearts and troubled thoughts. But in vs. 7: "As he reaches safety, he wakes up, astonished that there was nothing to worry about." Vs. 30: "In the mouth of the shameless man begging is sweet..." I suggest we don't beg from God. Scripture shows that bargaining is better. That means we have to offer something to get something.

Sir. 41: The first part of this chapter is about death. I like vs. 3-4: "Fear not death's decree for you; remember, it embraces those before you, and those after. Thus God has ordained for all flesh..." Shameful behavior is the discussion of the rest of the chapter. Vs. 21: "Of gazing at a married woman, and of entertaining thoughts about another's wife; of trifling with a servant girl you have, and of violating her couch..." Jesus say, don't even think it.

Sir. 42: This chapter starts with things we should not be ashamed of, like the "law of the Most High and his precepts..." Then vs. 9-14 are about a father worrying about his daughter. This chapter finishes with awe for God's works.

Sir. 43:1-12: This continues the awe for God's works. Vs. 11: "Behold the rainbow! Then bless its Maker, for majestic indeed is its splendor..."

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

The book is about a young Jewish man who was taken to Babylon with the exile. It shows that living according to God's law can help one to survive the greatest difficulties for God will help. This is another side to the questions of the Book of Job. In Job God allows suffering. In Daniel God rewards goodness. Both are a part of the picture that Jesus gave us. According to the scholars the book is written four hundred years after the exile, which was the time of Daniel. Some of this book is only in the Greek version of the core Jewish Scriptures and so was eliminated by Martin Luther. So Lutherans are not as familiar with the story of Susanna, Bel, and the Dragon.

Dn. 6: Daniel makes enemies because he succeeds more than others and they are jealous. They set a trap for him by getting a law passed that it is illegal to pray to anyone but the king. Daniel doesn't obey and is thrown into the lion's den. He survives so King Darius has those who trapped Daniel killed in his place.

Dn. 7: Daniel has a dream of four beasts that are similar to those in Ezekial and Revelation. Vs. 4, "The first was like a lion, but with eagle's wings... The second was like a bear... another beast, like a leopard... the fourth beast, different from all the others, terrifying, horrible, and of extraordinary strength." The vision continues when he sees in vs. 13-15, "One like a son of man coming, on the clouds of heaven... He received dominion, glory, and kingship... his kingship shall not be destroyed." The last verse of the chapter should give us an idea of the impact this dream interpretation should be: "The report concluded: I, Daniel, was greatly terrified by my thoughts, and my face blanched, but I kept the matter to myself."

Much of the rest of the book is filled with images like this which makes it similar in writing style to the Book of Revelation, apocalyptic writing. It is also only found in the Greek translations of Jewish scripture with means it is the part the Protestants reject.

Dn. 8: This is a longer and more detailed dream of the overturning of kingdoms before the eternal kingdom. Vs. 19 is a key line because we Christians take it for granted. "'I will show you," he said, "what is to happen later in the period of wrath; for at the appointed time, there will be an end.'" Not all faith think in terms of the end of the world.

Dn. 9: This chapter is about Daniel pleading in earnest prayer to God, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. Those are his offerings so he isn't just begging. He recounts how the Israelites got into trouble with God and how the punishment came. In vs. 21 Gabriel shows up and lets him know God's plan for rebuilding.

Dn. 10: Part of his visions included Michael. Vs. 21, "No one supports me against all these except Michael, your prince, standing as a reinforcement and a bulwark for me." This chapter explains the four creatures from chapter 7. They are kingdoms that will rule at different times. The good guy is described in vs. 5-6: "As I looked up, I saw a man dressed in linen with a belt of fine gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face shone like lightning, his eyes were like fiery torches, his arms and feet looked like burnished bronze and his voice sounded like the roar of a multitude."

Dn. 11: We had the good guy described in the last chapter but in this chapter we have a bad guy describes that is really taken the path of the devil in vs. 38: "Instead, he shall give glory to the god

of strongholds; a god unknown to his fathers he shall glorify with gold, silver, precious stones, and other treasures.”

Dn. 12: Vs. 1-3, “At that time there shall arise Michael, the great prince, guardian of your people; it shall be a time unsurpassed in distress since nations began until that time. At that time your people shall escape, everyone who is found written the book. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some shall live forever, others shall be in everlasting horror and disgrace.” Vs. 10 is our cue: “Many shall be refined, purified, and tested, but the wicked shall prove wicked; none of them shall have understanding, but the wise shall have it.

Dn. 13: The story of Susanna and the two deceitful judges is another great story of encouragement to follow God’s law and to trust in him.

Dn. 14: These are cool stories. Daniel knows better than to believe in hand made gods like Bel or weird beasts like the dragon. The book ends with Daniel being saved in the lion’s den again. King Cyrus the Persian even seems to become Jewish because of this.

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET HOSEA

Hosea began his prophetic career in the last years of King Jeroboam II of the northern kingdom, Israel. His wife is unfaithful and Hosea used that image to portray the infidelity of the people to God. The content of the prophecies are not new.

Hos. 1: Hosea takes Gomer for his wife. It doesn’t say that she was unfaithful when they married but God had a point to make about Israel being unfaithful. They have two children who become the image of the consequences of infidelity. One is punishment and the other is lack of pity. This is Israel, the northern kingdom right before its fall.

Hos. 2: God does not like the wild partying that is the worship of Baal. The thing to pick up from this is the image of marriage that is intended between God and his people.

Hos. 3: Obviously the marriage does not start well.

Hos. 4: Vs. 1b should read: “No fidelity, no mercy, no knowledge of God; no heaven. Obviously they had problems with priests back then also.

Hos. 5: More bad news concerning priests and leaders. Then God lets them know he does not appreciate that they tried to go around his wrath by making alliances with other countries.

Hos. 6: Vs. 1-2: “Come, let us return to the Lord, for it is he who has rent, but he will heal us; he has struck us, but he will bind our wounds. He will revive us after two days; on the third day he will raise us up, to live in his presence.” As St. Paul says, if we die with him we will live with him.

Hos. 7: Vs. 1b-2: “They practice falsehood, thieves break in, bandits plunder abroad. Yet they do not remind themselves that I remember all their wickedness.” Too many still don’t remind themselves today. Vs. 7b: “All their kings have fallen; none of them calls upon me.” Only the King of kings did and he still reigns.

Hos. 8: Vs. 1: “A trumpet to your lips, you who watch over the house of the Lord! Since they have violated my covenant, and sinned against my law...” I suppose this is a message to Archangel Gabriel who will sound the last trumpet.

Hos. 9: Here Hosea is reminding the people of all the horrible things they and their ancestors have done, since they will not remind themselves.

Hos. 10: Vs. 8b is quoted by Jesus when he talked to the daughters of Jerusalem on the way to Calvary: “Then they shall cry out to the mountains, “Cover us!” and to the hills, “Fall upon us!”

Hos. 11: Vs. 1: One line of prophecy is a very critical clue to the Messiah: “out of Egypt I called my son.” In Mt.2:15, “He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, “out of Egypt I called my son.”