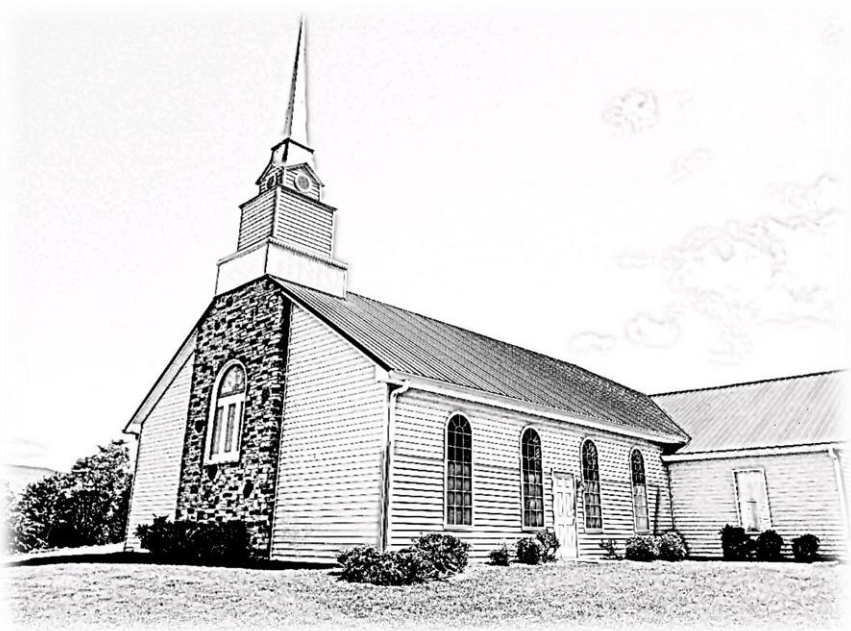


Bible Reading Guide 2020



Week 5

January 26-February 1, 2020

Written by Rev. William F. Hill, Jr.

Instructions

1. Pray
2. Read the assigned text of Scripture.
3. Answer the discussion questions as offered. Keep a notebook of your thoughts and answers.

Each chapter is a summary. It is not meant to be overly educational or intellectual. It is meant to give the reader a good thumbnail sketch of each chapter read.



~Lord's Day, January 26, 2020 ~

Reading: Psalm 7-8

PSALM 7

Psalm 7 is a psalm of lament. A lament is “sanctified complaining.” It is a plea or prayer offered to God who alone can help the penitent and helpless. King David authors the Psalm. About the context, James Montgomery Boice writes, “We have no other information about Cush, but the fact that he was from the tribe of Benjamin fits well with what we know of the opposition David faced from this tribe. David’s predecessor, King Saul, was a Benjamite. [Therefore] it was natural that the new king’s chief source of opposition was Saul’s tribe.”¹

This Psalm can be divided into four stanzas. The first stanza (7:1-2) shows that David directs his prayer to God. It also summarizes the issue facing him. The second stanza (7:3-5) demonstrates the humility of David. He is willing to accept the persecution of his enemies if he is deserving of it. The third stanza (7:6-11) calls on God to deliver David from the hands of his enemies, appealing to the righteous nature of a just God (7:11). The final stanza (7:12-17) shows what happens to the wicked when they attack the righteous.

Discussion Questions:

1. What made King Saul so angry with David?
2. Have you ever experienced unjust accusations and attacks from others? How did you respond to them?
3. Why is it so important that you direct your prayers to God, especially in the face of opposition?

1. James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, Pbk. ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 2005), 60.

4. Why does David appeal to the righteous justice of God in the face of opposition?
5. How does the Psalm conclude?

PSALM 8

Most scholars consider this Psalm as a “wisdom poem.” The central theme of this Psalm is the majestic name of Jehovah. Throughout the psalm, we see the glory of God as displayed in his works – especially creation.

8:4-6 are especially significant as they are eventually applied to the Lord Jesus Christ in Heb. 2:6-8. As the God-man, he alone can restore the created order and the fallenness of man to their rightful status.

Another feature of this Psalm is how it begins and ends in the same manner. Compare 8:1 with 8:9. That leaves little doubt that the Psalm is about the majesty of Jehovah.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean for something to be “majestic”?
2. Why does David ascribe majesty to the *name* of Jehovah?
3. At 8:1, we read, “O LORD our Lord.” Why the change in the lettering? Who is the first Lord, and who is the second Lord in the verse?
4. This Psalm should invoke praise from God’s people when they behold his creation. The next time you see a glorious sunrise or some other event of nature, remember to offer praise to God for His marvelous greatness and glory.

~Monday, January 27, 2020 ~

Reading: Genesis 23, Matthew 23

GENESIS 23

This chapter has a few significant items to consider. First, the death of Sarah, while important to the narrative, is ultimately secondary to the larger picture in view. The larger picture is that Abraham, a sojourner in the land, purchases a plot of land in a place that will ultimately be filled with many of his seed in the years to come. Second, by purchasing this plot of land (for a very high price), he demonstrated his future hope that would anchor his descendants in the land of promise. Throughout this chapter, the trust of Abraham in the covenant promise given to him by God in chapter fifteen and seventeen is exercised. It is exercised in the purchase of the land, and the burial of his beloved wife, Sarah.

Discussion Questions:

1. Compare the work of Christ as the one who purchased our future hope of a plot of land in a better country and the act of Abraham as offered in this chapter.
2. Why is Abraham a sojourner? See Gen. 11:31-32. In what sense are you a sojourner in this land, and what land do you long to live?
3. How did Christ purchase for us a place in a “better country?”

MATTHEW 23

Matthew 23 is a scathing chapter in the narrative, especially as it relates to the interaction between Jesus and his opponents. Throughout this chapter, the Lord points out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. These denunciations of these hypocrites commence with the word “woe.” That is a prophetic utterance – not in the sense

of “foretelling” (predicting the future), but in the sense of “forth-telling” (preaching). Jesus, in strong language, offers a list of prophetic woes in the direction of those who are phonies – hypocrites. The term “woe” is an “interjection expressing sense of profound grief, esp. in the face of impending disaster.” The target of these denunciations is those who would live a life of pretense, as hypocrites. Sometimes the term is doubled to elevate the doom of the issue. See Rev. 18:10. In one case, the term is tripled. See Rev. 8:13.

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you explain 23:1-3? Jesus tells the people to “practice and observe whatever they tell you – but not what they do.” If these people are such phonies, why should people listen to them?
2. What is a hypocrite? Come up with a working definition of the term.
3. How many “woes” are pronounced on the hypocrites in this chapter? What does that suggest regarding the attitude our Lord has regarding this sin?
4. In what areas, if any, are you living hypocritically before God and others? Be honest and confess it before the Lord and seek to move away from this gross sin.

~Tuesday, January 28, 2020 ~

Reading: Genesis 24, Matthew 24

GENESIS 24

This chapter highlights the ongoing narrative in the life of Abraham and now introduces the lives of Isaac and Rebekah as a bridge to the life of Jacob. A directive from Abraham introduces

the narrative (24:1-4), an objection from the servant (24:5), and a further elaboration from Abraham (24:6-9). These items set the stage for what occurs in 24:10-61. The main idea of these verses is the providence of God. The parameters are set by the servant (24:12-14) and the answer by Jehovah (24:15-28). The following section introduces Laban (a character we will take up in a few chapters). During the meeting with Laban, the servant retells the events that led him to him (24:29-49) and concludes with a striking proclamation from Laban, “The thing has come from the LORD; we cannot speak to you good or bad.” Upon the conclusion of this chapter, Rebekah goes with the servant and Isaac takes her as his wife.

Discussion Questions

1. A few items of practical importance are in view here. First, the nature and attitude of the servant before Jehovah. What does he do? See 24:12. Second, note the faithful discharge of the servants' duty to his master. Consider the 5th commandment and the answer to Shorter Catechism #64: “What is required in the fifth commandment?” Look up the answer and summarize how this servant obeyed this commandment.
2. What is your attitude towards superiors in your life? Who are they? Do you pray for them? Do you submit to their authority as you would submit to the Lord and as they submit to the Lord?
3. What does the lengthy and repeated narrative about the details of finding Rebekah say to you regarding the providence of God? What is providence, and how does that bring comfort to God's people?

MATTHEW 24

This chapter is one that has captured lengthy discussions throughout the history of the church. It is known as the Olivet Discourse because the discourse was delivered on the Mt. of Olives (24:3). There are several interpretations offered about this chapter. First, there is the “futurist” position that argues that Jesus is describing a tribulation period at the end of the age. That is, Jesus, while talking about the future, is talking about a future that has not, as of yet, been realized. That is the classic dispensational view. Second, there is the “preterist” position (the one to which this author holds) that argues that Jesus is describing both the destruction of Jerusalem and the coming of Christ. The issue centers on some key, important items. First, the context. The context of the discourse is the Temple and the city of Jerusalem (24:1-2). Second, the discourse seeks to answer two questions from the disciples (24:3). Jesus answers the questions of his disciples in the order that they are offered. The first question, “when will these things be?” is answered in 24:4-35. The second question, “what will be the sign of your coming and the close of the age?” is answered in 24:36-51.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is your view of this chapter? Write it down or think through it in light of the chapter.
2. Eschatology is the “doctrine of last days/end times,” and this chapter is dealing with that subject. It is, arguably, one of the more difficult issues presented to us in the Bible. Yet, there seems to be an infatuation with this subject (over many others) in the minds of men. Why do you think that is true?
3. How can you explain 24:36? How is it that the Son does not know “the day or the hour”?

~Wednesday, January 29, 2020 ~

Reading: Genesis 25, Matthew 25

GENESIS 25

This chapter opens with a summary of the life of Abraham after the death of his wife, Sarah. In 25:1-18, we read about the offspring of Abraham that was produced with his new wife. We also read of the generations of Ishmael.

The critical item of this chapter is that of the birth of Jacob and Esau. These two children were born to Isaac and Rebekah. There are some items to note within this narrative. First, we note that the Lord opened the womb of Rebekah (25:21), highlighting the sovereign act of God to grant children. In later chapters of Genesis, you will read of this happening again. Second, the struggle in her womb was a picture of what would come later (25:22-23). Third, we note something regarding the personalities of these two children. Esau was a hunter while Jacob was a “quiet man” (25:27-28). Fourth, we note the favoritism that was granted to Esau from his father and the favoritism Rebekah granted to Jacob. That is an important item and will show itself in later chapters. Fifth, this chapter contains the narrative of Jacob swindling his brother from his birthright. That is also a critical issue in the biblical narrative. Eventually, the words of 25:23 would come to pass.

Discussion Questions:

1. Where was Abraham buried?
2. Who blessed Isaac? Why is that a departure from the normal process?
3. How is it that Rebekah became pregnant? Name the two factors involved. What does that teach you regarding prayer?

4. How does the apostle Paul use this chapter in Romans 9? Cf. Rom 9:9-13.
5. What is a birthright, and why is the account given at the end of the chapter important to the overall story between Jacob and Esau?

MATTHEW 25

This chapter contains three important teachings from Christ. The first (25:1-13) highlights the need to be ready when Christ returns. That follows perfectly from the preceding chapter. The second (25:14-30) is a parable regarding the use of gifts that the Lord gives to men. The third (25:31-46) is about the final judgment and the fact that the Lord will separate the sheep from the goats on that day.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important to be ready for the Lord's return? What does it mean to be "ready"?
2. In light of 25:1-13, how does the parable that follows connect with the previous teaching on the need to be ready?
3. What is a talent as used in this parable? What is the desire of Christ for his people in the use of talents?
4. On the day of final judgment, Christ will separate the sheep from the goats. Why does He need to do so? Who are the sheep and who are the goats?
5. In the church today, there are sheep and goats. What distinguishes the one from the other?

~Thursday, January 30, 2020 ~

Reading: Genesis 26, Matthew 26

GENESIS 26

Two main items are presented in this chapter. The first (26:1-5) is the renewal of the covenant promise made with Abraham to his son, Isaac. The second highlights the family sin when Isaac lies about his relationship with his wife.

Discussion Questions:

1. The topic regarding “famines” shows up often in the early stages of the Pentateuch. How do these providential acts of God drive the narrative forward?
2. Why does God renew the covenant made with Abraham with his son?
3. What is the family sin that Isaac displays?

MATTHEW 26

There are several key items in this chapter. The first (26:1-5) is the plot to kill Jesus. That is followed by the anointing at Bethany and the plot by Judas to betray Jesus (26:6-16). The third is the celebration of the Passover meal with the disciples. That is commonly called the “Last Supper.” Here, at this yearly feast, Jesus gives the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to the church (26:17-29). The fourth section (26:30-25) is the foretelling of the denial of Peter. That is followed by the prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, the arrest, and trial before the Sanhedrin. Finally, the chapter closes with Peter denying Christ (26:36-75).

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is the woman praised for anointing Jesus?

2. How does the Passover meal and the institution of the Lord's Supper compare and contrast?
3. What is the nature of the prayer in the garden, and how does this prayer inform you as to how you should pray?

~Friday, January 31, 2020 ~

Reading: Genesis 27, Matthew 27

GENESIS 27

This chapter highlights the trickery and deception employed in order for Jacob to secure his father's blessing over his older brother, Esau. It is important to remember that this event establishes the words found at 25:23 and will carry the narrative forward to the end of the book. Esau will become a background figure in the narrative, though his influence as the father of Edom – an enemy of the people of God will be established (Gen. 36).

The event has three scenes. The first (27:1-17) contains the request of Isaac to his older son and the conspiracy to steal the blessing concocted by Rebekah. The second scene (27:18-29) culminates in the plan and the blessing of Jacob over his older brother. The third heighten the animosity between Jacob and Esau when the older brother realizes his blessing has been stolen.

The chapter closes with Jacob fleeing to his uncle. This act is one of the "exile" themes that is presented through the Old Testament. Later, Jacob would return, but now he flees to preserve his life from the anger of his brother.

Discussion Questions:

1. Retell the events of the stealing of the blessing in your own words.

2. What answer does Jacob give when he is asked how he was able to find the game so quickly? This was a lie. What else is of significance about this lie?
3. Why does Esau hate Jacob? (See 27:41). How does God protect Jacob?
4. The narrative contains sinful actions in nearly every scene. The first scene contains deception and lie. The second scene is the result of the lie and anger and hatred of Esau. The third contains the vow from Esau to kill his brother. Yet, God's providence is still working, in spite of the sin of man, to accomplish His purpose.

MATTHEW 27

This chapter contains the narrative of Christ before Pilate, the choosing of a criminal over Christ by the people, the mocking and eventual crucifixion, death, and burial of the Savior. There are some important items to note throughout this chapter. First, the attitude of Pilate is one of indifference. He finds no fault in Christ, yet is swayed by the crowd. Second, the crucifixion and the tearing of the veil in the temple. This act signifies the Father's acceptance of the perfect sacrifice for sinners and grants access to all who are covered by the blood of Christ. Third, the burial is one in a borrowed tomb. Thus, prophecy is fulfilled.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why does Judas hang himself?
2. Why do you think Jesus answered Pilate as He did?
3. The weakness of Pilate is demonstrated in 27:23. As a result, he gives in to the crowd. What does that teach you regarding your need to stand firm in the truth as it relates to Christ?

4. Consider and meditate on the crucifixion. The events are well-known, indeed. For God's people, this event is the climax of human history. Why?

~Saturday, February 1, 2020 ~

Reading: Genesis 28, Matthew 28

GENESIS 28

This chapter continues the narrative that began in the previous one. After receiving a second blessing from Isaac, Jacob is told not to take a wife from the Canaanite women. That will become a theme throughout the Old Testament and one, as we will see, is not obeyed resulting in disastrous consequences. The theme is continued into the New Testament when Paul exhorts God's people to not be "unequally yoked" with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14).

In contrast, Esau did not heed the instruction of his father and took a wife from the Canaanites (28:6-9). After receiving the blessing, Jacob goes to the land of Laban, his Uncle. In this, he goes into exile, into a land that is not his and to a people that will treat him poorly. That event is another picture in the life of God's people that they will experience throughout the New Testament.

The significant event in this chapter occurs as Jacob was traveling to his uncle. In a dream, the covenant made with Abraham and Isaac is now renewed with Jacob (28:10-22).

Discussion Questions:

1. Why does Isaac tell Jacob and Esau not to marry from among the people of the Canaanites?

2. One of the important images of Jacob's dream is the ladder then went up into heaven. What is that ultimately picturing? See John 1:51; 1 Tim. 2:5.
3. What is the response of Jacob after awakening from the dream? Is that the response you have when in the presence of God during corporate worship?

MATTHEW 28

The final chapter in Matthew's gospel has two main sections. The first (28:1-10) contains the record of the resurrection of Christ. The second (28:16-20) contains what is commonly known as the Great Commission.

The importance of the first section cannot be overstated. It is vital to all followers of Christ to know that they serve a risen Lord. In this, He conquered death and the grave. The framing of this chapter is such that it begins with the resurrection signaling Christ's triumph over death and ends with Christ's ascension signaling his entrance into the Most Holy Place there interceding for His people.

The second section is vital as here Christ passes on the mantle of responsibility to his apostles. They are now sent out to make disciples of all nations. They are to teach others about Him. They are to minister in His name.

Discussion Questions:

1. What day of the week does the resurrection occur? Why is that important in the life of the New Testament church?
2. What is the response of the women when he greets them? See 28:9.
3. What does it mean to "make disciples"?
4. What is the comfort extended in 28:20?

~Notes ~