

Today's destination Thursday, April 10, 2019

- Genesis 10
- Isaiah 10
- Matthew 10
- Psalm 10

We begin the adventure anew! I'm reading through this year in the ESV version. I've only crossed over from the NIV twice before in all of these years. But in any case, some of my verses will read a little different than the NIV, if that is what you are using. Remember that the biggest challenge to reading will be changes in your routine, *e.g.*, vacations and so forth. I found myself on vacation on Day 2! But I actually found and used some spare time to read ahead each day, so that if I became distracted and missed a day or two, I wouldn't fall behind.

I have been trying to play catch up with my notes for five days. Sorry if this got too long for one round, but I encourage you to read through it.

It's great to see all of the input from many of you already. Let's keep that up this year.

Notes on Genesis

In the beginning, Elohim, the Exceeding Great God. The name of God most often used in the Old Testament is Yahweh (Jehovah). We see the Trinity in the very opening of The Book. The wording of John 1.1 is correlated to this verse: "In the beginning was the Word (easily verified to be Jesus) and the Word was with God." Then we see the Spirit hovering over the face of the waters.

There are very few appearances or references of the Three together throughout the Bible. So these events are special!

When we think of a day, 24 hours, this time frame is based on one rotation of the earth in relation to the sun. However, the sun was not created until day four (16-19). An argument could be made for what "day" really meant or how long it lasted on the first three or four of them. But before anybody launches into a full-blown evolutionary defense, we need to remember that there was no death before the creation of Adam and Eve (see Romans 5.12).

In 2.22, we find that God brought the woman to the man. This is the best way for healthy relationships/marriages to form.

The nature of sin and temptation tied into the weakness and vulnerability of the human spirit are on full display in Genesis 3. The serpent/Satan asks, "Did God actually say..."

challenging his authority. But then he misquotes: "...'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden'?" This is NOT what God said.

Eve tries to correct him, but she misquotes the rule as well: "You shall not eat...neither shall you touch it." That second part was not in God's original command.

The serpent then says, "You will not surely die." What credibility does he have? What authority? None whatsoever. But he cast doubt on God, alluding to a higher understanding or enlightenment of something that God had been hiding from them. And there was even some truth in this (isn't that how Satan works?). They did not realize that there were things God did not want them to know about. But once "enlightened", their entire world fell apart. Maybe God did know better, after all. And notice, neither the serpent nor Satan ever came back to apologize. He knew his target well, and completely ruined the original plan.

God asks Adam what happened, and he framed his wife. When God confronted her, she blamed the serpent. Blame really solves things.

Bearing children (for women) and working hard (for men) are actually both blessings of our existence. It is the extreme pain in childbirth and the difficulties associated with work (thorns, thistles, and sweat) that are the results of the fall of man, not the tasks themselves. See 3.16-19.

The first Messianic promise is given to the serpent in 3.16: "...he (Eve's offspring) will bruise (crush) your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

Since Adam and Eve now needed clothes, the Lord provided them with garments of skins (3.21). This means that God had to kill one of his created beings to provide this, a first graphic illustration of the cost of sin and the need of a blood sacrifice to cover us.

The first murder in history occurs just four chapters in, and in the second generation. Cain murdered perhaps a fourth of the current world population when he slew his brother Abel. However, it is likely that there were other children alive at this time already.

The ugly nature of sin is explained to Cain by the Lord in 4.7: "...sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it." Spiritual gravity will always work against us, and we will need to be aware and prepared to fight against it every day of our lives.

In 4.15, God puts a mark on Cain, "lest any who found him should attack him." The only people in the world at this point would have been his own siblings, yet there was already danger in the streets.

Jubal, our first musician! (4.21).

In Matthew 18.22 when Jesus told Peter to forgive, not seven times, but seventy-seven, he was alluding to Genesis 4.24. The intent of Lamech is “however many times it takes.” This is exactly the point Jesus was making.

Adam lived 930 years, a very long time. He and Noah would have been alive at the same time.

Methuselah lived 969 years (5.27), the longest of any human that we know of, and certainly the longest in the Bible. His name literally means, “When he dies, it shall come.” If you do the math, as Todd pointed out, he died the year of Noah’s flood. His name seems to imply that he died before, not during the flood.

Satan tried to thwart God’s promise against him from the beginning (who would not, if God said he would crush your head?). One way to spoil the human race was through intermarriage with non-humans. This seems to be his doing and motive as we read about the Nephalim in chapter six (vv 1-4).

Some translations take the biblical measures (such as cubits) and translate and convert them into modern measurement units, such as feet or meters (see 6.15). However, the numbers of the measurements themselves (e.g., 30, 500, 40) may be significant. So it may not be best to make the conversion.

We know that Noah took two of every animal. However, he actually took seven of those God recognized as clean (7.2-3).

Covenants are a major theme throughout the Bible. God establishes a covenant with Noah (and all of us, for that matter) to never destroy the earth with a flood again (9.12-15).

Tokens are often used as reminders of covenants made. In the Old Testament, altars were often built. But here, God establishes the rainbow as the token of this covenant, and even today when he sees a rainbow, he remembers this covenant with us (14-15).

In chapter ten, still in the very early days of the family of Noah, from whom we all descend, we see the beginnings of the ancient civilizations named for Noah’s

descendants. For example, Egypt and Canaan (6); Babel and Assyria (10-11). In verse 21, we find Eber, from whose name the word "Hebrew" would emerge.

Notes on Isaiah

A very quick Old Testament history lesson is in order here: After Moses led the Hebrews for forty years through the wilderness, they came upon the Promised Land. Joshua took them in, and after his death, they were led by judges. Then they asked for a king. The first three were Saul, David, and Solomon. Solomon's son Rehoboam made some bad choices (we will read of later) and the kingdom split into north (called Israel, or sometimes referred to as Ephraim), and the south, called Judah.

Isaiah (1.1) prophesied to the kings of the southern kingdom in the waning days of the northern kingdom. Israel would fall to the Assyrians during the time of Hezekiah, the last of the kings that Isaiah prophesied to.

God is never pleased with rote worship that is absence of heart. He is not impressed with correct worship forms when the heart is dark. If we persist with such false worship, there even comes a place where he will not listen to our prayers anymore. That's a bad place to be! See 1.10-15.

Many Messianic and Millennial prophecies are found in this book (and Isaiah is my personal favorite). One of the latter is found in 2.4. The phrase "beat their swords into plowshares" is found in the opposite way in other places in the Old Testament: "beat their plowshares into swords." We'll find those later.

Idolatry is a continual problem for the people of Judah. Idolatry is always tied up in worshiping things that we have made with our own hands and things that represent us. In other words, we are indirectly worshiping ourselves. See 2.8. Idolatry is alive and well today as many worship the things that they have and do.

The branch of the Lord found in 4.2 refers to the Messiah. This analogy points back to the promise that he would be a part of the Jewish people, their family tree.

Make sure you read carefully Isaiah's powerful revelation of God when they meet up in chapter 6.

Ahaz was the only thoroughly ungodly king of the four that Isaiah prophesied to. Yet some of the most powerful Messianic promises are delivered to him. "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (7.14). The word "virgin" has two meanings, one is that of a young maiden, the other our traditional understanding. The prophecy was fulfilled

according to both definitions, first with the birth of Isaiah's son in 8.1, and the second, of course, in the birth of Jesus.

The Messianic prophecies regarding Zebulun and Naphtali (9.1-7) refer to the territory in the northern kingdom, where Nazareth (and Capernaum) are located. The time was drawing near for the Assyrian invasion that would erase that part of Israel off the map. But the promise given here was for future restoration and for the home of the coming Messiah.

This invasion for the northern kingdom Israel (Ephraim) was already in God's plan, and no brave words would save them (9.8-12).

Though Assyria would be used as God's rod of anger against his own people, they themselves would suffer judgment because of the king's "heart to destroy...arrogant heart... and boastful look in his eyes" (10.5-7, 12).

Notes on Matthew

The verification of the human line unbroken from the promise to Satan in the garden of Eden to the birth of Jesus is pronounced in the opening of the first gospel. And Jesus is identified as the son of David, and the son of Abraham, the two given promises so clear that the Messiah would always be identified with them.

You can see in the list of names the royalty, the kings of Judah, lined up in 1.6-11, from the time of David through the exile to Babylon, the end of the dynasty as kings.

In Isaiah 9 that we read this week, the prophet did not know the name of the Messiah, and said his name would be Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. But Joseph is the first one to hear the name: Jesus!

Joseph was a man of faith, and had to trust that his angelic visions were truly from God, since they all were in dreams (1.20, 2.13, and 2.19).

I say this every year, but I just can't get away from it: It blows my mind to see the Bible scholars with all of the answers knowing exactly where the Messiah is to be born. And yet when dignified visitors show up in Jerusalem from a thousand miles away, having followed a supernatural star and ask about him, they answer the question...then turn back to the Temple to resume their studies to try to figure out when the Messiah will be born (2.1-6). Lord, help me in my own unbelief!

Egypt plays so many roles in the life of the nation of Israel, both positively and negatively. Here they are host to infant Messiah and his family as a protection (2.13-15)

The prophecy cited in 2.13 “that he would be called a Nazarene” does not appear anywhere in the Old Testament.

John the Baptist is introduced in chapter 3. He is not to be confused with the young man who would eventually be one of Jesus’ disciples as well as the author of the gospel. This John would be the only person during Jesus’ lifetime on earth who truly understood who Jesus was.

His prophecy that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire would be reiterated six times in the New Testament: in each gospel, and twice in Acts. It’s important!

We see one of the very infrequent incidences of the Trinity together in 3.16-17 at Jesus’ baptism: Jesus, of course, being baptized; the Holy Spirit descending like a dove, and the voice of the Father.

As he began his ministry, Jesus left his home in Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum, a city right on the Sea of Galilee. Matthew points out that this in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, which fulfills the prophesy of Isaiah 9 that we just looked at.

The calling the first of his disciples in 4.18 was probably a year after Jesus had first met them. We read about the very first few days with them in the beginning of the gospel of John.

Matthew is the most anachronistic of the gospels. The Sermon on the Mount from chapters five through seven probably took place later in Jesus’ ministry.

Jesus would call himself the light of the world. But here in 5.14 he tells us that we are the light of the world!

The verse regarding “turning the other cheek” (5.39) is something to think about. The first slap is physically painful. The second is a backhand and (it’s easy to see this is you go through the motions with someone and try this) really is a humiliation slap, intended to give emotional pain.

The Father knows what we need before we even pray (5.8). This tells us something significant about prayer: it’s more about our connection with God than getting stuff or having things done for us.

The Lord's Prayer (6.9-13). Every Bible translation in the world uses "debts", not "trespasses." Yet the vast majority of churches that recite the prayer use the "trespasses" version. That version comes out of the Common Book of Prayer (1549).

Let us always, always bear in mind the most sobering and/or terrifying words Jesus ever uttered in 7.13-14 and 21-23. Most people will not be saved. And many who think they are a shoo-in to the kingdom will face a horrific time of judgment.

I posted a file with reflections on 7.24-27 called "The Houses Built on Rocks and Sand."

Jesus command to the healed leper in 8.4 is based on Leviticus 13.1-6.

Anyone else find it unusual that Jesus would accuse the disciples of having little faith when they are nearly drowned in a massive storm? (8.23-26).

Jesus' power was amazing, so much so that he was beginning to be asked to leave places. He was scaring people (8.34, 9.8).

Notes on Psalms

If you ever get angry when you see political power opposing the purposes of God, remember that God doesn't get angry: he laughs at them! He will eventually terrify them with this awesome fury. See 2.2-5. See also 9.19-20.

A reminder that most of the psalms are written out of distress and turmoil. When we find ourselves in hard places, there is so much to draw from here! See, e.g., 3.1-2. See also Psalm 10: "Lord, why do you hide?"

Chapter 8 is worthy of memorization in its entirety. It's only nine verses.