

APRIL 20

I had a little mini insight in today's reading. It didn't come because I'm smart, but because I've been reading like this for so many years and the bell finally went off. I'm saying all this because if you read The One Year Bible year after year, the Spirit will do the same thing for you.

I mentioned yesterday that one of the cities the Levites were given is a city of refuge: Ramoth in Gilead. I mentioned that there is a place in the Bible where the three words are spelled as one: Ramoth-gilead. This is the scene of a very spooky portion of Scripture. Actually, a lot of things happen there. You see Ahab (not from Moby Dick, but similar) getting set up to fall into God's judgment and you see a godly king, Jehoshaphat, making a devastating mistake. Then you witness Michaiah, a lone, starved prophet, open a window to let us see what actually takes place spiritually before the throne of God in heaven as He uses the demonic to judge the disobedient and rebellious on earth. The entire event is in 2 Chronicles 18, but look particularly at vs. 18-22. You can get some real insight out of this. I have always been intrigued by this story, but I never realized that what Ahab was using to lure Jehoshaphat into fighting with him had once been a spiritual city, a city of the Levites, a city of refuge. What a noble cause to use to entice Jehoshaphat into bonding with him and his evil. You can imagine Jehoshaphat thinking, "Of course God will bless us if we try to recapture this city from Syria, that had once been a godly and holy city of Israel." This makes sense to me why a good man like Jehoshaphat was fooled. I think that's pretty cool and very instructive. And it is only because of reading The One Year Bible, year after year.

Joshua 21:1-22:20

Joshua 21

Vs. 1-45 This is the final act of establishing the people in the land. The Levites were given cities to live in, with land to plow and keep their animals. God spread the Levites throughout Israel. Since they no longer needed to pack up the tabernacle, they would be organized to minister at the tabernacle in shifts. In the meantime, they were to have a teaching ministry among the people. So, rather than gathering the Levites around the tabernacle in Shiloh, they were spread out. According to the Bible Knowledge Commentary, "someone has estimated that no one in Israel lived more than 10 miles from one of the 48 Levite towns." (p. 364)

V. 11 We have heard of this city before. It is Hebron, but when Caleb conquered it, it was the city of a giant among giants. I don't think Caleb had a problem giving this city to the Levites. The Levites were to be a good influence in Israel.

V. 17 I never noticed this before, but the city of Gibeon, where the guys tricked Joshua and made a covenant with him, became a city of Levites.

V. 18 This is the future city of the priests and the hometown of the prophet Jeremiah.

V. 38 This is Ramoth-gilead.

Vs. 43-45 This states the completion of the administration of Joshua and the essential conquest and division of the land. If only the people would have continued to follow the Lord.

This summary didn't mean that the fighting was over, and it didn't signal the completion of the Abrahamic covenant. Everything here is still partial, but the doors are open for the people to take the land by following God in faith.

Joshua 22:1-20

This is an interesting event. It hints to future problems, but at this point, it shows Israel's very solid focus on obeying the Lord.

Vs. 1-6 Notice what Joshua says in v. 5, and see how many individual commands you can get out of this. If you have trouble, find the infinitives introduced by the word "to." This verse would not only make a great sermon or devotional, but it also describes the life of a disciple. And what is all this about love? I thought we didn't hear about loving God in the Old Testament.

Vs. 7-9 As Joshua sent them back, he commanded them to share with those who had been left behind to protect their families and property and to begin farming the land. God and Moses had already laid the groundwork for this.

Vs. 10-20 Tomorrow we'll read the answer of the 2.5 tribes as to why they built the altar. That these people built an altar is interesting. They could have built a Mt. Rushmore of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. This altar showed that they regarded the worship of God at the tabernacle to be the unifying symbol of Israel. It was still a bad idea.

Notice that the people are totally unified in their response in vs. 11-12 and 16.

V. 13 Notice that they sent Phinehas to lead the people in understanding what had happened.

Notice the references to how the sins of a few hurt the *whole congregation* in 17, 18 and 20.

V. 19 They offered the solution of letting the 2.5 tribes join them on the west side of the Jordan.

Since there is no mention of Joshua, it seems that Joshua has retired and that the new guys like Phinehas were leading the people. More on this story tomorrow.

Regarding discipleship, the thing I see in this account is the necessity to be constantly training the next generation of leaders. Phinehas had good family connections, but we also see him in action as a man who had a heart for God. When he mentions the fiasco at Baal-Peor in v. 17, it was because he himself took the lead in that situation when everyone else was paralyzed. It is interesting for me that the priests had an up-and-coming leader in Phinehas, but the nation had no one to follow in Joshua's footsteps. The next leader we will see is Othniel, who was close to Caleb and who was probably influenced by Caleb. In the case of the rest of the judges, no one looks like they were "discipled" for leadership.

Since our focus in this life is to be constantly making more and better disciples, it shouldn't be rare to find leaders who have come up in a group to assume leadership from the past generation and groom leaders for the next generation. In working in the harvest, making disciples, who make disciples, we should be pros at developing men and women who have hearts for God, and who are convinced that their mission in life is to follow Christ in the harvest, making disciples, who make disciples. It is hard to break that chain of generational preparation if we embrace our mission as makers of disciples from and for the harvest.

Luke 20:1-26

We have read these events before in Matthew and Mark. Jesus is close to His crucifixion, and here, He's in the pressure cooker of controversy and conflict.

Vs. 1-8 So, as a disciple advising other disciples, what principle would you pull from this event that would arm people in your group to give a good answer in this kind of conflict?

Vs. 9-19 I don't know about this one. Would you advise your guys to be this pointed? It kind of cuts against our cultural sense of being "politically correct."

V. 16 One note here is that Luke records the Pharisees saying, *Surely not*. In Romans, Paul (a former Pharisee) uses this all the time. In Romans 3:6 it is *by no means*.

Vs. 20-26 I'm always amazed when I read this. I wish I could teach myself to come up with these kinds of answers. As a "near" application, I think it is fair to tell the people we are helping become disciples, not to complain about government and to do the work of a disciple in the

harvest, bearing much fruit, glorifying the Father and so proving to be disciples of our Lord. Jesus said that if we seek His kingdom first, He'll take care of the rest.

Psalm 89:1-13

Ok, so this is interesting. This guy, Ethan, is the brother to the guy who wrote the psalm yesterday, Heman. Names are hard to track down, especially since the names vary in spelling over years and books. Some guys even had more than one name. Also, it is hard to know when they lived because sometimes the head of the clan is named and then only the "famous sons" are mentioned with names skipped in between. But check this out, look at 1 Kings 4:13 and then at 1 Chronicles 2:6. You find the same names together. These men were known to be wise, and so it's mentioned that Solomon was more of a wise guy than both of them put together. It means that they probably lived before Solomon and during the time of David.

Now, it says that they were together (if it's the same guys) when David brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem in 1 Chronicles 15:15-19.

This psalm will be spread over today, tomorrow and the next day. If both men were with David during the time he fled from Absalom, I wonder if (and this is just pure speculation) these psalms were meant to complement each other somehow. In the betrayal of Absalom and the civil war that took place, Psalm 88 seems to capture the extreme darkness of the days of running and uncertainty, and Psalm 89 seems to remember the glorious establishment of David by cries to God to restore David again.

(In v. 51, which we will read on April 22, it sounds like the verbal abuse David took at the hands of Shimei in 2 Samuel 16:5-9. I'm saying this now to suggest that that event might be the framework of this psalm.)

All of this is a bit harder when a psalm is spread out over so many days. Then on the 23rd we get two psalms because they were both written by Moses. Go figure.

Vs. 1-4 Notice how God's *steadfast love* and *faithfulness* are linked to God's sworn promise to David. Implied in what is said here is that God should be praised as a result of all of this. This sounds very much like David.

Vs. 5-7 The heavens praising the Lord here are the angelic realms where God is ruling and served.

Vs. 8-10 Even the dangerous forces of nature are subject to God. Their subjection to His power is seen as His faithfulness to mankind.

Vs. 11-13 Even the majesty of creation praises the name and sovereign power of God.

Tune in tomorrow for the rest of the story.

Proverbs 13:15-16

Amen!