

view

January 16, 2005

This Week's Agenda

January 16, 2005

The Lord's Day

8:30AM & 10:15AM

Sermon: David Posey

5pm Sermon: David Posey

5:30pm: Classes for all ages from 18 months and up

Adult Classes

- Auditorium: Sunday - David Carrozza, Various Topics.
- "Basics" Class (see Dennis Wade)
- Room 11-12: Young Adults, Topics - David Posey, Sr.

Wednesday

10 AM Wednesday: OT History, at building.

7:30 PM - Classes for all ages 18 months and up.

Adult Classes

- Auditorium: Dan Hamilton, Discipleship
- "Basics" Class (see Dennis Wade)
- Room 11-12: Young Adults, Topics - David Posey, Sr.



Bible Reading This Week

Sunday - Genesis 40-42; Psalm 14

Monday - Genesis 43-46; Psalm 15

Tuesday - Genesis 47-50; Psalm 16

Wednesday - Mark 1-3; Psalm 17

Thursday - Mark 4-6; Psalm 18:1-24

Friday - Reflection

Saturday - Mark 7-9; Psalm 18:25-50

People to Pray For

Sickness, Injury, Continuing Health Problems

Dave Fulton's mother, Monica (Monroe, WA), Tom Royston; Ken McClelland (cancer); Karen Gorden; Sharon Jones; Becky Woolpert; Margaret Everett (cancer); Phil Roberts (cancer); Laurie Ann Reagan (cancer); Cheryl Wilson (cancer); Bill Fling (heart problems); Chris Hamilton (friend of Justin Ivie, cancer); Peggy Olsen (Cameron Carrozza's friend's mother).

Christians Serving in Iraq

Philip Cain, just deployed to Iraq, and the other men who are serving in Iraq: Trey Cain, Steve Reis, Titus Cain, Travis Dusenberry (Joanne Garner's grandson), Paul Hitchen.

Expectant Mothers

Allison Horak, Amy Mowrer, Kimmie Warshaw, Sally Deschler, Kristen Sanderson, Melissa Fields and Michelle Caisse.

Out of Town

Wayne and Shirley Terry.

A joyful heart is good medicine. . .

Proverbs 17:22



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Notes on our Daily Bible Readings

Given that so many of you are reading your Bibles on a daily basis, I thought it might be worthwhile to review some of the texts we have just finished reading, while it is fresh in our minds. We can't review all of it, of course, but we'll make an attempt to cover some of the highlights. We'll start with a few notes on the life of Abraham.

Abraham

Genesis 11– 25:11

The nations that descended from Noah stayed fairly close to one another, apparently, and had the same language. Someone got the bright idea that what they should do is build a great tower into the heavens that would serve as a monument to their unity. It may also have doubled as a temple of worship.

The Tower of Babel

In any case, as they built upward, the “Lord came down” (11:5), meaning either that He appeared to them in a vision of some kind or that He “came down” in a symbolic sense. In any case, He didn't like what He saw since He knew that man would not be satisfied with a tower. The aim of the plan, after all, was to “make a name” for themselves (11:4). The Lord does not condone such self-serving attitudes so He confused the languages and the people scattered throughout the world. The unfinished tower became known as *Babel*, which means “confusion.”

Abram's Call

Some of Shem's descendants ended up in Ur of the Chaldees, in the area of modern southern Iraq. Ur was the religious center of Chaldean kingdom, which excavations have revealed to be one of the greatest cities of the orient. The land was given over to idols; even Abram's father, Terah is said to be an idolater (Joshua 24:2). It was there, in the midst of a corrupt and idolatrous land, that Abram (“exalted father”) was born. Later, God changed his name to Abraham, “father of a multitude,” to reflect the promise made to him.

Abraham received the call to leave his country and go “to a land that I will show you” (12:1). This call came to Abraham when he was still in Ur, according to Acts 7:2-3. The comment in 11:31 is a summary statement referring to sometime after the call. That passage also tells us that Terah, Lot and Sarai also left Ur and went as far as Haran where they stayed until Terah's death (Acts 7:4). At the age of 75, Abram departed from Haran and came into Canaan (Gen. 12:5). As Abram journeyed south through the land, the Lord repeated His promise that He would give the land to Abram's descendants (12:7).

Abram in Egypt

Because of a severe famine in Canaan, Abram decided to go to Egypt. Because his wife, Sarai, was very beautiful, even at 65 years old, he was afraid that the Egyptians would kill him for her. So he decided to tell them she was his sister (which was a half truth—she was his half-sister: 20:12). Pharaoh immediately took notice of Sarai, and sent for her. Abram's plan back-fired, however, because God brought plagues on the house of Pharaoh

until he found out what Abram had done, and released Sarai.

Abram & Lot Separate

After a few years in the land of Canaan, the possessions of both Abram and Lot began to grow until the land could no longer support them both. The herdsmen of each began to fight, until Abram told Lot to choose for himself which part of the land he would like to live on. Lot made a fateful choice, for he chose the best land, in terms of fertile soil, but which was also worst land in terms of moral climate, since it was up against Sodom, an exceedingly wicked city (13:10-12).

The Lord again repeated His promise to Abram (13:14-17), and Abram settled in the area of Hebron, making altars to God there. From there, he heard about Lot's capture by some warring nations which sacked Sodom and Gomorrah, and mounted an army which eventually recovered Lot and his possessions.

In the midst of this, Moses records an event which takes on great importance when completed by the writer of Hebrews (see Hebrews 7:1-10). A man named Melchizedek, described as “king of Salem” (“king of peace,” Heb. 7:5) and a priest of God Most High, blesses Abram and Abram pays a tithe to him. Who was this Melchizedek? Very little is known about him except what is supplied here and by the writer of Hebrews. From the Hebrews commentary, we know that he was a very important person and a type of Christ.

Promise Repeated Again

In Genesis 15, the Lord came to Abram and told him not to be afraid, since He was his “shield, your exceedingly great reward” (v. 1). But Abram was beginning to wonder

about the promise God had made, since he remained childless. In response, God took Abram outside and told him to look at the stars of heaven. “So shall your descendants be,” said the Lord (15:5). Based upon this word of God, Abram believed, and this faith was accounted to him as “righteousness” (15:6).

When Abram asked for a sign, God sent him a dream of horror and darkness (15:13). This was a prophecy about the 400 years that the Hebrews would spend in Egyptian bondage. But after this time, the Lord said, the nation would come in to possess the land. Verses 18-21 describes the extent of that possession, a promise, the fulfillment of which we can read about in Joshua and Judges.

Hagar and Ishmael

It seems that we are forever trying to improve on God’s plans, or at least we try to hasten them along. Sarai, knowing she was not getting any younger, proposed that Abram take her handmaid, Hagar, and bear a child by her. Abram obliged, and a son was born named Ishmael, when Abram was 86 years old (16:15). But this was not the child of promise, because it was not the child God had promised.

In Genesis 16, when Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him again and restated His promise. This time, he changed his name to Abraham (“father of a multitude”) and established the covenant of circumcision as a sign of the promise. Every male in the household was circumcised that very day (17:26ff).

Sarai’s name was also changed to Sarah, meaning “princess” because she would be a mother of nations. Abraham was nearly 100 years old and Sarah nearly 90 years old when this promise was made, and Abra-

ham couldn’t contain himself: he laughed at the idea that such old people could bear children (17:17).

Later, Sarah also laughed when she heard the news that she, a ninety year-old woman, was going to be a mother (18:12).

To this, the Lord replied, “Is there anything too hard for the Lord?” (18:14).

Abraham intercedes for Sodom

The Lord revealed to Abraham His plans to destroy the cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, because they had become so wicked (18:18ff). At that, Abraham began to bargain with the Lord, asking if He would be willing to spare it if he could find fifty righteous people there. The Lord agreed that He would not destroy the place if He found fifty righteous people. This continued until the Lord agreed that if Abraham could find ten righteous people in the whole city, God would spare the place.

Meanwhile, two angels showed up at the gates of Sodom and Lot saw them and persuaded them to spend the night at his house (19:1-3). What follows is a graphic illustration of the gross perversity that characterized Sodom. Some of the homosexual men of the city, knowing that the angels were in Lot’s home, went to the door and demanded that they be brought out so that they could have sex with them (19:5). Lot was horrified, and even offered his daughters instead, but they would not even go for that. Even after they were struck blind by the angels, they continued to try to get at the men, getting tired trying to find the door (19:11).

Experience shows that once a person is “given over” to a depraved mind, that nothing is too

perversed for him. For example, Earvin Johnson’s claims to the contrary, it is unlikely

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that he didn’t experiment with some homosexual acts, since he admitted to being totally immersed in sexual promiscuity. If he had no scruples about sleeping with hundreds of women, it is unlikely he would have scruples about any other kind of sexual activity. The men of Sodom had become so depraved, that even blindness didn’t stop them. Such is the consequences of unchecked wickedness.

After this, the men warned Lot to hurry out of the city with his wife and daughters. Even though he lingered, the men took him and his family and ushered them to the outskirts of town (19:16). Of course, you know the story about Lot’s wife, a nameless pillar of salt, who became a monument to the danger of “looking back” (19:26). Obviously, the daughters of Lot may have got out of Sodom, but Sodom didn’t get out of them. The rest of chapter 19 deals with their sin of lying with their father and having children by him. The pagan nations, Moab and Ammon, came from these unholy unions, and these nations became arch-enemies to Israel throughout her history.

Abraham in Gerar

Abraham took a little trip South, and dwelt for a time in Gerar, a district about forty miles southwest of what would become Jerusalem.



Then Abraham did it again. Sarah was still a knockout beauty at 90 years old, and the king of Gerar, Abimelech, desired to have her. So Abraham told him she was her sister (20:2), resurrecting that old half-truth, because he was afraid they would kill him for her (20:11).

By and by, finally, Sarah conceived and bore the son of promise. Abraham named him Isaac, which means “laughter.” Meanwhile, Ishmael was mocking the whole affair and Sarah told Abraham to kick him and his mother out of the house (21:9-10). Abraham was not willing to do this at first, but the Lord told him to go ahead, since he would make Ishmael a great nation also.

Abraham’s most severe test

Chapter 22 records what is perhaps the most famous event in Abraham’s life. God told him to take his son, Isaac, and offer him as a burnt offering to the Lord. The passage records no response by Abraham other than immediate obedience. Abraham was being asked to do the most difficult thing in his life. Sometimes, we must obey simply because we love God, even though we have no desire to do the thing we are commanded to do. There is virtue in obedience for its own sake, when motivated out of love for God.

As Abraham and Isaac traveled to the spot where the sacrifice was to take place, Isaac asked his father where the ram for the burnt was. Abraham’s response was that the Lord would provide (22:8). Later, Abraham named the place “The

Lord Will Provide” (v. 14) in commemoration. When they arrived, Abraham bound Isaac and placed him on the altar. As he prepared to slay his son, an angel of the Lord stopped him (22:11-12).

We learn that Abraham was asked to do this specifically as a test of his faith (22:1, 12). The test was difficult at a couple of different levels. Besides the obvious problem of

being asked to kill your own son (which, by the way, is what God did for us), there was also a trying paradox: God had specifically told Abraham that Isaac was the son of promise (21:12). So there was an intellectual test as well: “How is God going to keep His promise to me if I sacrifice the son of the promise?” Abraham, however, never questioned God, but did exactly as he was commanded. He had come a long way since going along with Sarah’s plan to “help God” fulfill his purpose by having a child by Hagar.

At the end of chapter 22, the promise to Abraham that he will be a great nation and that all nations will be blessed in his seed is repeated. V. 18 says that this would happen because “you have obeyed my voice.” James 2:21-23 says that Abraham was justified by works, as well as faith. A faith that does not obey is an empty faith. But Abraham, throughout his life, proved his faith through his obedience. It is only that kind of faith that justifies or is “accounted to righteousness” (Gen. 15:6; see Romans 4).

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The death of Sarah and the last years of Abraham’s life

Sarah died at the age of 127 and was buried (23:19). After his mother’s death, Isaac hunted for a bride, and found a beautiful girl named Rebekah, and married her (24:67). Even though “advanced in years,” Abraham was not too old to remarry. His second wife’s name was Keturah and they had six children together (25:2). He died at the age of 175, a “good old age, an old man and full of years” and he was buried in the same grave as Sarah (25:8-10).

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