

Day 13 of “Through the Bible in 2016 with Pastor Don”

Jan. 13, 2016

- Genesis 24 – Divine providence in the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah.
- Matthew 16-17 – Jesus: from the Pharisees and Sadducee to Peter and the Rock.
- Ecclesiastes 5:8-11 – The insatiability of covetousness.

Reflections:

1. Genesis 24. This chapter illustrates the providence of God working behind the scenes in every detail. There are at least four principles regarding the sovereign providence of God:
 - a. God is the ultimate cause behind all events in bringing Isaac and Rebekah together. Note the motto, “The Lord has led me” in verses 27 and 48. Even Laban, Rebekah’s brother, recognized this was of the Lord (vss. 50-51).
 - b. Even though God is intimately behind the scenes throughout this chapter, there is no direct word from God, no prophecy, no miracle. God is invisibly working behind the scenes for the good for those who are living in recognition of His will. This same is true today: He continues to work behind the scenes in our lives in every single detail. If we are seeking Him, He will always move us to greater good, which is more of Himself, and all of the blessings that that entails. If we do not seek Him, He will use the evil we sow in our lives to manifest His goodness in different, and often painful, ways.
 - c. Note the perfection of God’s providence. What if the servant had failed? What if the sign was missed? What if Laban refused? What if Rebekah was unwilling? All it would take is one mishap in these events to keep things from smoothly fulfilling God’s plan—a plan that was designed to bless mankind.
 - d. God’s plan is always for the good of every one. He never allows any evil to happen to anyone unless He has a greater good in mind, a good that is not possible apart from the “permitted” evil (cf., Job)
2. Matthew 16-17. In Matthew 16:18 Peter is called a rock. Roman Catholics use this passage to support their belief in the primacy of Peter as the rock upon which the church is built. However, Paul said that the church is built on Christ, not Peter (1 Cor. 3:11). So in what way could Peter be called a rock of the church? While there are several different ways to understand this passage, none of them support the Roman Catholic view that the church is built on St. Peter, who became the first Pope—infallible in all his official pronouncements on faith and doctrine. There are at least six reasons that make the Catholic position untenable. First, Peter was married (Matt. 8:14), and Popes do not marry. If the first Pope could marry, why later pronounce that no priest (or Pope) can marry? Second, Peter was fallible regarding Christian doctrine (Gal. 2:14). Third, the Bible clearly teaches that Christ is the only foundation (1 Cor. 3:11). Fourth, the keys given to Peter were also given to the other apostles (Matt. 18:18), who were also instruments as

foundation stones of the church (Eph. 2:20), and who also provided doctrine—“apostle’s doctrine” (not just Peter’s), Acts 2:42. Fifth, there is no indication that Peter was the head of the Early Church (cf., James in Acts 15:6-11; note the “pillars” (plural) such as James, Cephas, and John,” Gal. 2:9)—note that Cephas/Peter is not even listed as *first* among these pillars. Sixth, careful consideration of the context of the passage (Matt. 16:18) indicates that Peter was “a” rock in the sense of his rock-like testimony that “Christ is the son of the living God” (16:16). The Bible not only teaches that he is not the *only* apostolic rock, Peter himself admitted that Christ was the chief rock (1 Pet. 2:7).

3. Ecclesiastes 5:8-11. After Solomon shows how money can be lost to corrupt officials in verses 8-9, he shows the inner frustration of a person who lives for money (10-12). He makes it clear that a covetous person by nature is incapable of enjoying his wealth because increased wealth brings increased anxiety (12b). It is interesting that last Sunday, at lunch, a few of us believers were discussing all of the problems that would be created if one of us won the Powerball. We all agreed that gaining such wealth would create a *host of problems* the likes of which we have never seen. We also agreed that the best thing to do would be to give *all* the money away as quickly as possible. A covetous person would never think this way, which means that a covetous person would live with the “*host of problems* the likes of which we have never seen” for the rest of his life, whether he was able to keep the money or lose it all in a few years like most. Mammonism is very deceitful. The people of God are warned repeatedly about the destruction of their own faith by making finances or details of life the top priority (Matt. 6:19-24; 1 Tim. 6:3-10; 1 Jn 2:15)—a destruction of a faith that no apologetics or any *rational* argument could ever remedy.

In ‘Ehyeh,

Pastor Don