

Day 15 of “Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”

Jan. 15, 2016

- Genesis 26 – Abraham’s covenant blessing on Isaac illustrated with Abimelech; Esau.
- Matthew 19:1-20:16 – Same rewards in Heaven for all?
- Ecclesiastes 6:1-4 – Better to be a stillborn than an unsatisfied rich person?

Reflections:

1. Genesis 26. In the first 33 verses we see the Abrahamic blessing enjoyed by Isaac. The lesson is: don’t mess with the Jews, to whom God has given unconditional promises. In verses 34-35 we see the failure of Esau in that he married two Hittite women. It demonstrates how unfit he was for God’s blessings and the folly of Isaac’s later attempt to bless him.
2. Matthew 19:1-20:16. In this section Jesus covers divorce (19:1-12), children (13-15), riches (19-26), and rewards (19:27-20:16).

On rewards: In chapter 20, Jesus tells a parable of His Kingdom in which each servant received the same pay even though each had worked a different number of hours. This seems to teach that everyone will receive the same rewards in Heaven. However, there are other places where the Bible speaks of different degrees of reward (cf., 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12). The solution to the apparent contradiction is found in recognizing there are different degrees of reward in Heaven, but it all depends upon faithfulness not just the amount of time logged. For example, Jesus said, “I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one *according to his work* (Rev. 22:12). Moreover, Paul said each believer’s work will be tried by fire and “if anyone’s work which has built on it endures, he will receive a reward” (1 Cor. 3:14). In 2 Corinthians 5:10, he says we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ “that each one may receive the things done in the body, *according to what he has done* where good or bad.” Clearly, there are different rewards that correspond to a believer’s life on earth. The point in the parable in Matthew 20 is not that all rewards will be the same, but that all rewards are *by grace*. It is to show that God rewards on the basis of *opportunity*, not on accomplishment. Not all servants had the same opportunity to work for the master for the same amount of time, but all, nevertheless were given the same pay. God’s rewards take into account a person’s *disposition and motivation* as well as *actions* and judges accordingly. For example, a person who is faithful to living as unto the Lord, the Christ-centered life, but does not have the same opportunities as a pastor who reaches tens of thousands, may very well receive the same rewards due to proper motives in living for the Lord. Of course, this does not work with conduit view of spirituality.

3. Ecclesiastes 6:1-4. From a temporal perspective, Solomon notes that it is better to be a stillborn than an unsatisfied rich person. Why? because the stillborn has more rest than the rich person whose soul is never satisfied due to all of the toil, anxiety, and misery that goes with being rich without capacity for life. No one but Jesus Christ can truly fill the soul of any human being. There have been many enormously talented people who believed that if they could just achieve the ultimate in their earthly goals, then they would be happy. Mike Tyson thought if he could just be world champion, the “baddest man on the planet,” he would be happy. O.J. Simpson thought that if he could be the greatest halfback in football and then the greatest and most like TV personality, then he would be happy. The beautiful and talented Whitney Houston, a Christian who got caught up in the world, thought she could be happy with the world’s success and recognition of her talent for singing. However, they all crashed—albeit in different ways. Will man ever learn? Only God can satisfy man’s spiritual and intellectual cravings.

In ‘Ehyeh,

Pastor Don