

“Christmas Publicity”

How would an event planner of today choreograph the arrival of Jesus? Perhaps it would be better to ask, how would it not be planned. It would not be planned in a little insignificant village like Bethlehem. It would not take place in a barn. It would not have welcomed sheep herders as the first guests, and the graveyard shift at that.

But then perhaps God had a different plan. He wanted to prove that His coming was not an elitist event, but that He would be the Savior of even the lowest of people.

An entourage of Gentile kings who later came bearing gifts, proved He also came for the wealthy and powerful.

Jesus came for all of us. Praise the Lord, and thank You!

How does your life demonstrate your gratitude and humility for the gift of Jesus Christ?

“between Sundays”

Pastor Mike Fast

I have also attached the second week’s reading schedule. If you did not receive the first week, please let me or Illis know. Thanks, and enjoy God’s word.

Devotional and Reading Plan for 2022, Week Two

Week 2 – January 8th – 14th, Genesis 25:1-39:23 and 1 Chronicles 1:28-2:8

The theme for this week has to do with choices. We will read of the choices made by Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, Esau, Rebekah, Laban, Rachel, Joseph and his brothers, and even of the choices God sovereignly makes. The practical aspect of choosing God’s will becomes a predominant theme this week.

January 8th

Genesis 25:1-26 and 1 Chronicles 1:28-34. “Choices”

Abraham had several wives and children. Yet, God chose Sarah, not Hagar or Keturah, to be the mother of Isaac, the child of promise. Likewise, God chose Isaac long before he was ever born to be the heir of Abraham.

We also read of God choosing Jacob as the child of promise as opposed to his twin brother Esau, the one who, traditionally speaking since he was the firstborn, should have been the heir of promise.

In Romans 9, the Apostle Paul uses the story of Jacob and Esau to illustrate God’s choices. It’s interesting to remember that years later Jacob was used to bless Joseph’s son Ephraim instead of the older one Manasseh as even another example of God’s choosing.

According to Romans nine, God’s choices are determined by His will. Prayerfully our choices are in line with His will as well.

January 9th

Genesis 25:27-28:5. “What’s in a Name?”

Yesterday we were introduced to someone before they were born, namely, a boy who was wrestling within his mother’s womb (25:22). The boy was born grasping the heel of his older twin brother.

He was given the name, Jacob. The meaning of the name had somewhat to do with his “heel catching” event, but it also has to do with “tricking” or “deceiving.” Did Jacob do anything in his life to earn the title “deceiver”? Well, yes, there was the time he carried out an underhanded plan for acquiring his brother’s birthright. Then, he deceptively received his father’s blessing, generally reserved for the oldest. Later, there was the reason he would leave Esau’s presence, which was not presented as pure truth.

Jacob’s life of deceit is beginning to catch up with him. A life of deceit will catch up with us as well if our actions are deceptive and our choices are self-seeking.

January 10th

Genesis 28:6-30:24. “New Life, New Lessons”

The character of Jacob is beginning to change, from deceiver to believer. There does not appear to be any evidence of Jacob’s conversion before chapter 28. In Genesis 27:20 Jacob referred to the God of Abraham and of Isaac as “your God.” Now, in chapter 28 Jacob affirmed, “The LORD will be my God” (v. 21). When you read through chapter 32, you find that Jacob, who was a deceiver, is not only now a believer, but his name is changed by God to Israel.

Jacob was over 70-years-old when he takes off on his 400-mile journey north to Haran. He works seven years for his Uncle Laban in exchange for Rachel’s hand in marriage, but Laban deceives Jacob and obligates him to an additional seven years.

Now, Jacob, who had deceived others, has felt the pain of deceit himself. As the story continues, we find a few other unfortunate consequences of his earlier life of mistakes, some of which was that others had learned the art of deception (31:35).

January 11th

Genesis 30:25-31:55. “Ethics”

By chapter 32 Jacob has transformed spiritually, but here in chapter 31, Jacob lacked any ethical system in his life. For Jacob, legality was equated with morality, and there are many people who fall into this category. That is, anything which was not contrary to the law was no problem for his conscience. Jacob has not broken the law in anything he did, but he trifled with ethics. Jacob’s contract with Laban and his manipulation of the flocks in order to prosper at Laban’s expense was hardly ethical, but it was strictly legal—so much so, in fact, that he could later challenge Laban to accuse him of any infractions of their agreement (31:36-42).

Laban had lived and worked closely together with Jacob for 20 years, and he was convinced of Jacob’s lack of integrity. He had felt cheated by him before. Now Jacob leaves at a time when Laban is off busy elsewhere. Laban comes back and finds that his precious idols have been stolen and Jacob is gone. When he does catch up with him, the first tent he searches is Jacob’s.

January 12th

Genesis 32:1-35:27. “Expectations and Assumptions”

It is almost hard to imagine the amount of anxiety Jacob was experiencing as he prepared to meet his brother, Esau. Chapter 32 lets us in on some of that anxiety. After all, it had been 20 years since they had last met, and at that point Esau was prepared to kill Jacob.

But when they meet... things could not have gone better. Perhaps it was just the passing of time, perhaps it was God at work on two hearts, perhaps it was a realigning of values and

understanding the importance of their relationship over anything else, or perhaps it was a combination of all the above.

Jacob and Esau had both seen the blessings of the LORD in the years gone by. They had both learned the value of forgiveness, and the ugliness of bitterness.

Jacob's false expectations and assumptions put off an event that he should have perhaps done much earlier. Sometimes we are guilty of justifying something in our mind and putting something off that we should be doing.

January 13th

Genesis 36:1-43 and 1 Chronicles 1:35-2:2. "God's Course"

Prior to the births of Jacob and Esau, the LORD said to Rebekah, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger" (25:23).

The descendants of Jacob were the Israelites, while the descendants of Esau were the Edomites. Though both were descendants of Isaac there were not many similarities. During the Exodus, God told Israel to leave the Edomites alone because they were relatives. But Edom refused to let them enter the land, and later they became bitter enemies of King David.

God's prophetic words rang true once again. God's plans will not be thwarted (Job 42:2).

January 14th

Genesis 37:1-39:23 and 1 Chronicles 2:3-6, 8. "Godly Direction"

Joseph was a man of integrity, ethics, and conviction. God had unique, although specific, direction for Joseph's life. And furthermore, God gave Joseph's life direction. Has God given your life direction?

At 17, Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. He became a servant in the house of Potiphar. The Lord blessed his work and faithfulness. The direction of Joseph's life changed again as Potiphar's wife actively pursued Joseph, and when she found his convictions and integrity to be so well grounded that he would not sin with her she decided to lie about him committing a terrible act of sin upon her. And, because of her lie Joseph wound up in prison.

After yet a few more years Joseph will go from pit to palace again. His life was far from comfortable, yet God honored his steadfastness and obedience to Him.