

## Blended Week 2

January 4: Genesis 9-11 and Matthew 4

God establishes His covenant with Noah in Genesis Nine. He again tells them to be fruitful and multiply. God also informs them that the animals will be terrified of them. The animals are placed under their authority and they are now allowed to eat the animals. Prior to the flood, they were on a vegetarian diet. One caveat to eating the meat is that they are not allowed to eat anything with its blood still in it. God also promises that He will not flood the earth again. We certainly still deal with floods today. As bad as the flooding can be, it is not global. Genesis 10 provides us with the Table of Nations, explaining the descendants of Noah's sons.

We read about the Tower of Babel. The people had not spread out throughout the land like they were supposed to. They all shared the same language and enjoyed many conveniences of centralized. However, that ease of life leads them to some wayward thinking. Collectively, they decide that they are going to build a city with a tower that reaches all the way to heaven. Their intent is to make a name for themselves and not be scattered over the face of the earth. The LORD comes down and sees what the people are doing. He changes their language and they all scatter across the earth. Ironic since this is exactly what they did not want to happen!

Matthew Four deals with the temptation of Jesus. Jesus is led into the wilderness by the Spirit. He remains in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. When he is hungry, the devil tempts Him to make some bread out of the stones. Jesus certainly could have done that. The enemy goes right after where he knows the most temptation will be, to fill a hungry stomach. Jesus does not give in to the temptation. Instead, He quotes Scripture to the devil to ward him off. Then the devil takes Jesus to a high point and tells Him to throw Himself down, citing Scripture trying to get Jesus to fall. Jesus fights back with more Scripture. Finally, the enemy takes Jesus and shows Him all of the kingdoms and promises them to Jesus if He will simply bow down and worship. Once again Jesus does not fall for it. The ridiculous part of this third temptation is that Jesus is already King of Kings. He has ultimate authority over them.

Some things we can learn about sin from here. In the first temptation, it is going to meet an immediate need. However, it would require Jesus to go against the Father's will. Sometimes we will be presented with the idea that we need something, there is something lacking in our lives that needs to be fulfilled, and we can be tempted to fill that void with sin. Sin over promises and under delivers. Another thing we learn is that sometimes folks will come along with Scriptures to try to justify sinfulness. As believers, we need to know exactly what the Word says so that when someone tries to bamboozle us we will know better. Finally, sin sometimes will tempt us to take the easy way. The easy way is not always the best way.

January 5: Genesis 12-14 and Matthew 5:1-26

Abram is called by the LORD. He is told to leave his father and everything he knows and go to the land that God will show him. Abram follows the command and takes his family along with his nephew Lot and his family. He had been in the land for 75 years, but he willfully did what God had told him to. They came to the oak of Moreh. The Canaanites are there, but God

promises that He will give this land to Abram and his descendants. In response to God's promise, Abram builds an altar to The LORD. Time goes by and famine breaks out. So Abram follows along with what the other people are doing and heads to Egypt. Since his wife is so beautiful, he fears for his life and asks that Sarai tell everyone that she is his sister. Pharaoh takes a romantic interest in Sarai, but God strikes him with severe plagues. He kicks Abram out of Egypt, but he also sends Abram with all that he had acquired during his time in Egypt.

Times are good for Lot and Abram. They are both so wealthy that a dispute breaks out between their workers due to a shortage of land for their livestock to graze on. They decide to separate. Abram had every right to take the first pick and send Lot wherever. However, Abram gives Lot the first choice. Lot looks out and sees the lush lands and the opulence of Sodom and Gomorrah and chooses that land for himself. He first sets his camp up outside of the city, but will eventually move into the city walls. Over time, kings rise up and decide to go against the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. They rush the land and take many captive, including Lot. Abram goes and rescues Lot. When the kings are defeated, Melchizedek, a priest of the Most High, brings out bread and wine and blesses Abram. The king of Sodom tries to bless Abram afterwards, but Abram refuses anything from the king.

Matthew five contains the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus starts with what are known as the Beatitudes. He delivers a message of hope to the hopeless, comfort to those that are mourning, and the gentle because they will inherit the earth. Jesus calls the people to be salt and light. Salt when it is no longer salty is not useful and it is thrown out. A light bulb isn't useful when it no longer gives light and it is thrown out. My hope and prayer is that we will continue being the salt and light that God has called us to be.

January 6: Genesis 15-17 and Matthew 5:27-48

God establishes His covenant with Abram in Genesis 15. He promises that Abram will receive a great reward. Abram is not interested in the reward since he does not have a son to pass the reward onto. Instead, his servant Eliezer will inherit everything. God assures Abram that he and Sarai will have a son. Abram is super happy about the news and takes it to Sarai. Sarai says that there is no way that she will be giving him a child since she has been barren and offers up her concubine Hagar. This is where Abram really messed up. Rather than say, "Oh no, Sarai, the child is going to be with you" he goes along with Sarai's plan. Hagar becomes pregnant with Ishmael and now Sarai shows her disdain. Hagar leaves the house because Sarai is so abusive. In her travels, she encounters the Angel of the LORD. He tells her to go back to her mistress and He will greatly multiply her offspring. However, her son Ishmael will be like a wild donkey and he will live at odds with all of her brothers. One thing to note about this is that the unrest in the Middle East was prophesied all the way back here in Genesis. We see the result of this prophecy today in Israel and the surrounding areas.

At the age of 99, God appears to Abram and tells him that he is going to establish his covenant. This covenant would require that every male, sons and servants, must be circumcised. Abram takes all of the men in his household and has them circumcised. Anyone that did not submit to this was sent away. God also promises a son through Sarai. Abram laughs because he thinks it is impossible for his wife to give birth at such an advanced age. He wishes that Ishmael would be a

suitable heir instead. God promises that Ishmael will become a great nation. But He will confirm His covenant with Isaac, the son to be born of Sarai.

Our reading in Matthew continues with the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus explains that sin is born in the heart. To merely think of killing someone or lusting after someone is to commit the act of murder or adultery. For so long, the law was focused on not committing sins in the flesh. Jesus is warning here that sin begins in the heart. The heart has to be clean in order to live a holy life. Jesus warns the people that it would be better for them if they cut their eye out or their hand off if it caused them to sin. Sin is just that serious. As believers, we are to cut out the sinful things in our lives. If we want to get away from sin, we must take it seriously!

January 7: Genesis 18-19 and Matthew 6

Abraham (formerly Abram) is sitting at the entrance of his tent when he sees three visitors at the oaks of Mamre. One of them was God Himself and the other two were angels. Abraham immediately runs to them and bows. He asks them to stay and freshen up with some water and have some bread. They agree. Abraham goes above and beyond. He has Sarah (formerly Sarai) take out three measures of fine flour and make the visitors bread. Abraham also ran to the field and got a tender choice calf and had it prepared. He fed the visitors remaining in a servant position. They ask where Sarah is. She was in her tent at the time. The LORD tells Abraham that Sarah is going to be pregnant within the year. Sarah laughs when she hears what is said. God asks her why she laughed, but she denied laughing. He simply responds, “No, you did laugh.” We cannot hide anything from God.

Abraham is brought in on what is about to happen to Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham asks if God will spare the city if He finds 50 righteous people. God agrees to not destroy the city. Eventually, Abraham whittles that number down to ten righteous people in the city. The men depart and arrive in Sodom. Lot tries to play host to the two visitors that enter the city. However, he does not have the same kind of time that Abraham had to prepare a meal. Instead, he gives them unleavened bread. Lot enjoyed a prominent position in Sodom. As he is in his house, all of the men demand Lot send them out. Lot tries to give his daughters instead. The angels let Lot know they are about to destroy the city. Lot goes to his would be sons in law and tells them what is about to happen. They do not believe it. To a degree, it looks like Lot and his family do not believe it either because they have to be led out of the city. As they are leaving, Lot’s wife looks back on the destruction and turns to salt.

Matthew six continues on with the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus encourages the people to be careful when they are giving. They should not strive to appear righteous in front of people. Instead, they should just be righteous. If they are giving to the poor to gain accolade from other people, then that is their reward. Jesus also gives them the model prayer. This prayer is the basis for the ACTS model of praying. Adoration- give God the glory! Confess- confess your sins to God. Thanksgiving- give thanks for all He has done! Supplication- ask Him for what you need. God hears and answers all prayers. He either says “yes”, “no”, or “wait”. Jesus also encourages the people not to worry about what they will eat or drink. God provides for the birds of the air and He cares about us a lot more than them. No need to fear, God will take care of us!

## January 8: Genesis 20-22 and Matthew 7

Abraham travels to the Negev, settling between Kadesh and Shur. Having learned absolutely nothing from his time in Egypt, he once again tells the people in Gerar that Sarah is his sister. Abimelech, the king of Gerar had Sarah brought to him. God came to Abimelech and told him what sin he was about to commit since Sarah was a married woman. Abimelech has Abraham brought to him and confronts him about the lie he had told. Abimelech then returns Sarah, giving Abraham 1,000 pieces of silver and servants.

Sarah became pregnant with Isaac. As Isaac grew, Sarah catches Ishmael mocking him. She goes to Abraham and demands that he and Hagar be sent away. Abraham struggles with this at first, but God promises to take care of them and tells him to go with what Sarah wants. Hagar and Ishmael depart and then God sends a big test to Abraham. He is told to take Isaac out to the land of Moriah, build an altar, and sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering. Abraham dutifully packs up what he needs to and heads out with Isaac. Isaac asks Abraham where the lamb for the burnt offering is. Abraham declares that God will provide the offering. God had promised Abraham that Isaac would have a lot of offspring. He must have held onto that promise, he just did not know how God would keep His promise if Isaac was sacrificed. Abraham begins performing the sacrifice and is told to stop at the last minute. Abraham has proven that he loves God and obeys Him before anything else. After that, they see a ram caught in a thicket and sacrifice it.

Matthew seven closes out the Sermon on the Mount. It begins with one of the most often quoted Scriptures. The people are told not to judge. I have heard “do not judge” thrown around a lot. As believers, we are not to judge. If we judge others by our standards then that is a standard that we will be judged by. As it stands, everyone is sinful. Everyone struggles with sinfulness and wickedness. Everyone is guilty of offending God. However, there will be judgment one day. We are not to judge one another, but we should hold one another accountable. Folks that hold us accountable are not looking to judge us. Instead, they are looking to help us get better. As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. (Proverbs 27:17)

## January 9: Genesis 23-24 and Matthew 8.

Sarah, Abraham’s wife, passes away at the ripe age of 127. Abraham goes into mourning and then approaches the Hittites about a burial site for his wife. Though the Hittites were a pagan people, they recognized Abraham as “God’s chosen one” among them. Abraham had a lot of money and status at this time, but he approaches in humility, bowing to them. They reach an agreement to for Abraham to purchase the field at Machpela.

In Abraham’s culture, the surviving family members were required to preserve the deceased bones, preferably in a cave. The cave would become a family burial tomb where other family members would rest. This tomb for Sarah was no different. Abraham buries Sarah in this cave. He too will rest in that cave one day.

Abraham is getting older. So is Isaac. One mark of Abraham’s life is his concern about his posterity, preserving his family line. He makes his servant pledge an oath that he will not allow Isaac to take a wife from among the Canaanites. Instead, he is to go back to Abraham’s land and

family to find a wife for Isaac. He assures the servant that a bride will be found for his son there. The servant sets out for Aram-naharaim. Sure enough, he finds Rebekah. She willingly returns with Abraham's servant even though it was customary for a bride to wait several days before leaving her family.

Matthew gives us information about what Jesus did after the Sermon on the Mount. A man with a serious skin disease (most likely leprosy) approaches Him and proclaims that if Jesus is willing, He can heal him. Jesus says that He is willing and heals the man. He also tells the man not to tell anyone what He has done. Instead, he is to show himself to the chief priests so that they can proclaim him clean. This was a customary Levitical Law practice. When a person had a skin disease, it was the priests that determined whether the person was clean. It may seem odd that Jesus tells the man not to tell anyone who healed him. However, when we remember to earlier in our reading in Matthew, Jesus warned the people that if they are practicing righteousness to be seen by people, then that is their reward (Matt 6:1-2). This is just one example of many where Jesus practices what He preaches!

January 10: Genesis 25-26 and Matthew 9:1-17

Abraham married another woman. He fathered children with her, but he did not have the same devotion to these children as he did to Isaac. He gave everything he owned to Isaac, whereas he only gave gifts to the sons of his concubines. One way to phrase it would be to say that these other children had been taken out of the will. He gave them things, but they would not inherit anything from him. They are sent eastward to the Arabian peninsula. Abraham passes away at 175 years. Ishmael and Isaac unite briefly to bury their father. The descendants of Ishmael are recorded.

Isaac's wife becomes pregnant with Jacob and Esau. Though Esau will be born first, he will serve Jacob. Esau was a hunter and favored by Isaac. Jacob was favored by his mother. Esau is a lesson in why it is important to not make rash decisions. When he comes back from a hunt, Jacob is making a stew. At this point, Esau decides that he is so hungry that if he does not eat anything then he will die. So, he offers up his birthright in exchange for the "red stuff". Esau was impatient and it costs him dearly.

There is a famine in the land. When famine hit during Abraham's time, he went to Egypt. God warns Isaac not to go to Egypt. Instead, he is to go where he has told him to go. Isaac winds up in Gerar, just like his dad did in Genesis 20. Unfortunately, we see Isaac make the same mistake Abraham did. He tells Abimelech that his wife is his sister.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus heals a man. This time He does it in front of some scribes and tells the man that his sins are forgiven. The scribes accuse Jesus of blasphemy. From there, Jesus meets Matthew, a tax collector and tells him to follow him. Matthew obeys. This displeased the "religious" types. Tax collectors were a hated group. They were disliked by the Israelites because they were notoriously greedy. The tax collector was able to collect whatever he wanted to from a family. The Romans did not simply give them a paycheck from the taxes these men collected. Instead, the tax collectors took their paychecks from the people. Jesus is

caught dining with more tax collectors and sinners. The religious elite are upset by this. Jesus informs them that He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

The trick here, of course, is that the "righteous" that Jesus was talking to were not righteous at all. They were in need of cleansing from the Messiah as well. They were just too wrapped up in themselves and their position to see it. All fall short of the glory of God.

January 11: Genesis 27-28 and Matthew 9:18-38

Isaac has grown older and it is time for him to bless Esau. He sends Esau away to bring him back some game. We see just how calculating Jacob and Rebekah are. Rebekah warns Jacob that Isaac is about to give the blessing to Esau. She hatches a scheme. Isaac's eyesight is failing in his old age. She puts some goat skins on Jacob's arms and dresses him in Esau's clothes. Jacob goes to his father with some lambs that his mother prepared. Isaac questions whether it is really Esau or not, stating that the voice is Jacob's but the hands are Esau's. Jacob keeps up with the lie and Isaac gives him the blessing. As soon as Jacob leaves, Esau shows up and Isaac trembles as he realizes what he has just done. Esau is enraged!

This is one event where I question how anyone can think that the Bible is a boring book! This has all the makings of a modern-day drama with deceit and treachery amongst family members!

Jacob leaves having been instructed to not take a wife from the Canaanites (just as Abraham had commanded for Isaac). Esau learns this. Thinking that it is his father that despises the Canaanite women, he goes to Ishmael and married several women of Canaanite descent. A relationship is forged between Isaac's descendants and Ishmael's descendants all based on spite for his father and the lost blessing.

In the New Testament, we read about more healings. Jesus heals a young girl that is dying. He also heals a woman that has been suffering with bleeding for 12 years and restores the sight of two blind men. In chapter 9:36 we see the compassion that Jesus has for the people. He sees that there are so many that do not have a shepherd. He doesn't have anger toward them. He doesn't look down upon them for being lost. Instead, Jesus has compassion for them.