

Reading Schedule for February 18-24, 2019

Genesis is such a worthwhile book to read. It is so important to realize how God launched this world and his interaction with the people. It can be disappointing to see the sin and selfishness of mankind, but then the Lord is always at work, even as he raises up a man named Abram. You will enjoy the story of Abraham.

February 18 – Genesis 10 & 11: “Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.’” (11:4) I think this summarizes the condition of the human heart. We want to make a name for ourselves. Even as the serpent tempted Adam and Eve to be like God, this is still the impulse of sin. Rather than submit to God, we want to make a god of ourselves. We had just read about God intervening through the flood, and now he intervenes again. This human pursuit is contrary to God’s plan for the people to fill the whole earth. They were doing this for their own greatness. It reminds me of the first commandment, “Have no other gods before me.” How might you be tempted to build a tower in your life?

February 19 – Genesis 12: “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (v.3) This is the beginning of several blessings offered to Abram as God was building relationship with him and Abram was responding in faith. But he wasn’t as courageous as you might think, because he feared for his own life and offered his beautiful wife to Pharaoh. Very disappointing and we’ll read another story that is very similar in Abram’s life. Nonetheless, God would fashion this man in such a way that he would become the father of many; which means he is not only the father of the Jews, but for all people. How does his beginning story affect you? How does Abram’s blessing from God also spill into your own life as well? Hint: How much has God blessed you?!

February 20 – Genesis 13: “And quarreling arose between Abram’s herders and Lot’s. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.” (v.7) I’ve been thinking about the importance of unity. It seems hard for me to believe that it would be God’s plan to have so many different kinds of Christian churches. That doesn’t seem very unified to me. But I can’t do anything about that necessarily. Yet, there are situations in my life where I could have a stronger effort to be unified with others. James said, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?” (James 4:1) He goes on in that letter, leading up to the importance of humility. It seems like Abram was willing to be humble, but not so much for Lot. When they divided, they became weaker. The consequences will be evident as we read tomorrow. What does unity mean to you? Did you know that one of Jesus’ primary prayers was for us to be unified? As he is one with the Father, so he would want us to be one with each other. This would show his presence. Are there divisions and quarrels going on in your life? How might you be a peacemaker?

February 21 – Genesis 14: “‘And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.’ Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.” (v.20)

There are several points that could be highlighted in this story, but I am remembering Melchizedek. He was mentioned three or four times in the Book of Hebrews, and that has been our study on Sunday mornings. Melchizedek portrays a godly man who blessed Abram. The Lord delivered Abram, and he rescued Lot, so in recognition, Abram gave Melchizedek (a representative of the Lord) a tithe. This is such an interesting principle for us to contemplate. When God is good to us, how do we express our gratitude? Well this is an expression of gratitude that comes from Abram, and I want to suggest to you that it is essentially a worshipful and God-honoring approach to offer God a portion of his provision for you. I know you know this, but give it a try and I think the kind of blessings God has in mind for you will continue to flow in your life.

February 22 – Genesis 15: “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.” (v.6) This is one of the most famous verses in this section because it is repeated in the New Testament several times. The Apostle Paul was especially fond of it, but James utilizes it as well. Abram’s faith made him right with God. That is the essential meaning. Just think of this idea of righteousness being a reflection of a godly life that obeys the Lord. It is the righteous who enjoy God’s favor. But here, the underlying significance is about faith. Before Abram had proved himself righteous by his deeds, he is counted as righteous because of his faith. The Apostle Paul would make this his main support for the reality of being justified in God’s sight through faith. Romans 4 highlights this truth. What stands out to you in this chapter?

February 23 – Genesis 16: “She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: ‘You are the God who sees me,’ for she said, ‘I have now seen the One who sees me.’” (v.13) I have to admit that I have some empathy for Hagar. I don’t think any of these circumstances were by her choice. God shows himself to her and she takes comfort in the all-knowing God who watches over her. She calls God El Roi, which means, “The God who sees me.” This would give her comfort. Did you know that God watches over you? Psalm 121 is worth a read, as the Lord sees both your coming and going now and forevermore. How does this point to God working all things out for the good? Do you see that promise woven into this complicated situation?

February 24 – Genesis 17: “But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.” (v.21) When God makes a promise, you can be sure it will be accomplished. How would Abraham be a father of many nations without an offspring? Abraham may have doubted God, but he followed through nonetheless. It is interesting to realize that Isaac’s name means “He laughs,” as would be a reminder to Abraham about his unbelief, and yet God’s faithfulness. The Lord is developing the heart and mind of this man of faith through these circumstances. We sometimes call hardships, “learning opportunities.” I see the hand of God involved in Abraham’s life as he, God, affirms the covenant, promises the child, and still blesses Ishmael. What truth surfaces for you in this significant Old Testament chapter?

PRAYER: Pray for the next generation as we minister to children, reach out to students and empower young adults to live for Christ.