

Reading Schedule for March 25-31, 2019

We are obviously going to wrap up the Book of Genesis and then jump all the way forward to the New Testament and the Gospel of Mark as we prepare for Easter.

March 25 – Genesis 47: “So Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses, as Pharaoh directed.” (v.11) Joseph’s reliability and character had impressed Pharaoh, so that Pharaoh showed kindness to Joseph’s family. This outcome is especially meaningful as we recall the history of Joseph being thrown in a pit, being sold as a slave, and being imprisoned for many years. Let God’s blessing on Joseph’s life encourage you on your journey. Yesterday we learned that faith isn’t always rewarded in this life; but we can be sure that it will be rewarded in the next. I like the phrase, “Jacob blessed Pharaoh.” No doubt he was grateful to this world leader for his generosity and accommodation of his son. It seems as if Jacob freely blesses him, which is also a great example for us. As you read this chapter, what stands out to you?

March 26 – Genesis 48: “But his father refused and said, ‘I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations.’” (v.19) All I can say is that our God does the unexpected. He led Jacob to bless the younger with the greater blessing. History reveals that the Ephraimites became one of the leading tribes, with Joshua guiding the people into the Promised Land. The blessings that we anticipate in the next chapter are initiated in this chapter as Jacob blesses Joseph, his favorite son. He uses the blessing of Joseph to affirm the significance of Joseph’s sons. Jacob was delighted to respond to Manasseh and Ephraim as their grandfather. This is a touching moment in the story. What do you learn about legacy and passing down a blessing from this chapter? We will enjoy even more words of blessing tomorrow. Why is it important to bless those who are following behind us?

March 27 – Genesis 49: “Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall.” (v.22) He read a blessing for Joseph in the previous chapter and now his father affirms him again. Joseph would have some heroic descendants. Among them were Joshua, who would lead the Israelites into the Promised Land; Deborah, Gideon and Jephthah were Judges of Israel from the tribe of Ephraim, as well as Samuel, sometimes thought of as the greatest prophet. It is not surprising that Joseph would receive the longest blessing, as his life is a miracle. But it is interesting to realize that Judah receives the second longest blessing, and would be an ancestor of the Messiah. What do you learn about blessings in this chapter? I would encourage you to write out a blessing for each of your children and share it with them at an appropriate time.

March 28 – Genesis 50: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” (v.20) Obviously, I have to pick the theme verse for the whole book, or at least for Joseph’s life. Other theme verses are: God created man in his own image (Genesis 1:27) and God making a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:2&3). But this principle, from 50:20, is one to be assured of by faith. God is in control and you can trust him. He is notorious for making something good happen out of a bad situation. Joseph

learned that God can overrule people’s evil intentions to bring about his intended results. But according to Hebrews 11, Joseph was most concerned about passing on a legacy to his boys. This great man in Egypt wanted good things to happen in his sons’ lives, and so enlisted his father to bless his children. It seems to me that Joseph had a loose grip on the things of this world, but a very tight grip the assurances that God gives us for all eternity. As we conclude Genesis today, what is your greatest takeaway?

March 29 – Mark 1: “And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’” (v.11) I wonder if you are as thrilled about reading this Gospel account as I am?! We are focusing on the Son of God, who entered this world for the purpose of saving mankind. His life represents the kind of character that the Holy Spirit wants to produce in us. This is a lengthy chapter that firmly engages our sense of appreciation and anticipation of reading this whole Gospel for the next 24 days. The kind of affirmation that Jesus receives from his Father is the kind of affirmation I believe the Father duplicates for each of us. He is pleased when we respond to him in faith. He is pleased when we stand up for him in the waters of baptism. I think the whisper of God in your heart could be exactly the same. What else inspires you from this first chapter?

March 30 – Mark 2: “When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’” (v.5) If you come to Jesus with a certain expectation, and then realize that all you received is forgiveness, you might be disappointed, especially if you are paralyzed. But Jesus said these words on purpose, and he made a very significant statement about what would be the priorities of the Kingdom of God. To the people surrounding Jesus in this chapter, a miracle is what they looked for, but what Jesus cared about most was this man’s heart. This is clearly portrayed in this first story. But he also demonstrates the authority to forgive sins by performing a miracle in this man’s life. I am inspired by so many different statements in this chapter, even the last one that says, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” This means that the gift of the Sabbath was meant for us. We tend to do life 24/7, but that is not the way God intended. The gift of the Sabbath was to enjoy rest, friendship, worship and contemplation. These are nourishing to our souls. What did you think as you read this chapter?

March 31 – Mark 3: “Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him.” (v.13) Jesus chooses the disciples as he goes up to a mountainside. In another Gospel it says that he spent the night in prayer. These are the men who are going to spend the most time with him. Jesus would equip his disciples to take the message to the ends of the earth. He realized the significance of this moment. Jesus chose twelve to be his apostles. There were so many other possibilities, but may you take encouragement because he chose you as well. Many people are interested in Jesus, but you have received a calling to be Christ’s representative in this world. The Apostle Paul called us his ambassadors. I want you to contemplate the fact that the Lord has called you his disciple as well. What else stands out to you?

PRAYER: Pray for our hearts to be receptive to what the Lord wants to teach us as we focus on Christ and anticipate celebrating his resurrection.