

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church
Bible Study Tobit
Session 4

Review of Chapters:

Chapter 4:

Tobit has previously asked to die and explains to his son Tobias that the money left in trust with Gabael can be used to bury him and his wife, making reference to the Commandments.

Tobit then lectures Tobias on living a righteous life including giving alms, staying away from wrongdoers, respecting the poor and when giving a gift to truly give as a gift with no expectations. He reviews proper sexual behavior and the sanctity of marriage especially in taking a wife from within their family tree. He warns of the evilness of pride and idleness.

Tobit continues his teaching on paying for services rendered promptly, behaving properly and the problems of drinking in excess. He again reminds Tobias of the righteousness of giving to the poor and hungry. He reminds Tobias to call upon the Lord for counsel.

Comments:

The lecture provided by Tobit to his son is part of a Hellenistic literary genre, as in the example of the “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.”

Levirate Marriage

The purpose of the law in Deuteronomy was to prevent loss of family property by the widow's marrying outside the clan. The law applied only to the case of brothers who had lived together and worked common property. The levirate marriage would ensure issue to the deceased and pass the inheritance to the firstborn of the new union. Later, levirate law applied only if no child was born, since daughters could inherit (Nm 27.8; 36.6–7). If the brother-in-law refused to marry, his sister-in-law took off his sandal publicly and spat in his face because he refused to build up his brother's house (Dt 25.7–10). In Ruth, in default of a brother-in-law, other relatives had the duty of marrying the widow in order of nearness of kinship to her. Both widow and relative could refuse to marry in this case without disgrace (Ru 3.10; 3.13).

Chapter 5:

Tobias is a compliant son and promises he will follow his father's wishes. Tobias then sets out to find someone to accompany him on the journey to retrieve his father's money. As he goes out in search of companionship he comes upon a stranger, Raphael the angel in disguise to accompany him to Media.

Tobit meets Raphael who is an angel in disguise and calls himself Azariah stating he is a distant relative. Tobit complains to Azariah about his pitiful condition and desire for healing. Tobit agrees to pay Azariah for traveling with Tobias.

Tobit's wife, Tobias' mother is upset with her son traveling and his safety. Tobit explains to his wife that Tobias will return because God is watching along with angels to bring him home safely.

Comments:

There is a possibility that the actual trip may take only two days to accomplish. This story is very loose with geographical accuracy as Ecbatana is not in the middle of the plain but actually in the mountains.

The names used by the angel have significance: Azariah means "God has helped" and Hananiah means "God has had mercy." All are in the past tense.

Chapter 6:

Tobias and Raphael along with a dog set out on the journey to Ecbatana and camp along the Tigris River. Tobias while washing his feet is attacked by a large fish and the angel asks Tobias to catch the fish cut it open and save the inner parts to provide protection from evil in future use.

The two then end up at the home of Raguel a relative with his daughter Sarah. It is explained that Sarah is a relative of Tobias, she is beautiful and sensible and Tobias should consider marrying her. Tobias voices his concerns as she has been with seven husbands, all who died before consummating the marriage.

Raphael instructs Tobias on how to conquer the demon that bothers Sarah using the parts from the fish. Raphael explains to Tobias that God has actually chosen Sarah for Tobias and Tobias' heart begins to warm towards her.

Comments:

Marrying Sarah will give Tobias access to Raguel's estate. Tobias is nervous about the marriage as his death would devastate his parents who expect him to return in well health.

Raphael is suggesting what is considered a fumigating exorcism technique for the demon that is preventing Sarah from consummating her marriages.

Consider the story and who reads (throughout history) this story and how it can affect them using the following introduction to Fowlers Stages of Faith

Stages of Faith Development

Based on the work of James Fowler, author of *Stages of Faith*

Pre-Stage: Undifferentiated Faith

Generally children from birth through about 2 years of age.

Have the potential for faith but lack the ability to act on that potential.

Through loving care from parents and other adults in their life young children start to build a lived experience of trust, courage, hope and love.

At this stage, children experience faith as a connection between themselves and their caregiver.

Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith

Generally pre-school aged children.

The cognitive development of children of this age is such that they are unable to think abstractly and are generally unable to see the world from anyone else's perspective. As Robert Keeley writes: "These children cannot think like a scientist, consider logical arguments, or think through complex ideas."

Faith is not a thought-out set of ideas, but instead a set of impressions that are largely gained from their parents or other significant adults in their lives. In this way children become involved with the rituals of their religious community by experiencing them and learning from those around them.

Stage 2: Mythic-Literal Faith

Generally ages 6 to 12.

Children at this age are able to start to work out the difference between verified facts and things that might be more fantasy or speculation.

At this age children's source of religious authority starts to expand past parents and trusted adults to others in their community like teachers and friends.

Like the previous stage, faith is something to be experienced. At this stage it is because children think in concrete and literal ways. Faith becomes the stories told and the rituals practiced.

Later in this stage children begin to have the capacity to understand that others might have different beliefs than them.

Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith

Generally starts about the age of 13 and goes until around 18. However, some people stay at this stage for their entire life.

Unlike previous stages, people at this stage are able to think abstractly. What were once simple unrelated stories and rituals can now be seen as a more cohesive narrative about values and morals. With abstract thinking comes the ability to see layers of meaning in the stories, rituals and symbols of their faith.

At this stage people start to have the ability to see things from someone else's perspective. This means that they can also imagine what others think about them and their faith.

People at this stage claim their faith as their own instead of just being what their family does. However, the faith that is claimed is usually still the faith of their family.

Issues of religious authority are important to people at this stage. For younger adolescents, that authority still resides mostly with their parents and important adults. For older adolescents and adults in this stage, authority resides with friends and religious community. For all people in this stage, religious authority resides mostly outside of them personally.

Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith

This stage usually starts in late adolescence (18 to 22 years old). However Robert Keeley points out that "people of many generations experience the kind of dissonance that comes with the real questions of faith that one begins to address at this stage of development."

People in this stage start to question their own assumptions around the faith tradition.

Along with questioning their own assumptions about their faith, people at this stage start to question the authority structures of their faith.

This is often the time that someone will leave their religious community if the answers to the questions they are asking are not to their liking.

Greater maturity is gained by rejecting some parts of their faith while affirming other parts. In the end, the person starts to take greater ownership of their own faith journey.

Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith

People do not usually get to this stage until their early thirties.

This stage is when the struggles and questioning of stage four give way to a more comfortable place. Some answers have been found and the person at this stage is comfortable knowing that all the answers might not be easily found.

In this stage, the strong need for individual self-reflection gives way to a sense of the importance of community in faith development.

People at this stage are also much more open to other people's faith perspectives. This is not because they are moving away from their faith but because they have a realization that other people's faiths might inform and deepen their own.

Stage 6: Universalizing Faith

It is a rare person who reaches this stage of faith.

James Fowler describes people at this stage as having "a special grace that makes them seem more lucid, more simple, and yet somehow more fully human than the rest of us."

People at this stage can become important religious teachers because they have the ability to relate to anyone at any stage and from any faith. They are able to relate without condescension but at the same time are able to challenge the assumptions that those of other stages might have.

People at this stage cherish life but also do not hold on to life too tightly. They put their faith in action, challenging the status quo and working to create justice in the world.

Robert Keeley points to people like Gandhi and Mother Teresa as examples of people who have reached this stage.