

"The Introduction to the book of Ruth"

Ruth 1:1

Introduction: Today we are about to embark upon a new study. For the next several months we will slowly work our way through the book of Ruth. It is a book which we will be able to draw many lessons from.

The book of Ruth is a love story. It only contains 4 chapters but yet it is full of spiritual wealth. We do not know who the writer was but many believe the writer was Samuel. It was most likely written during the reign of David but that is not the setting for the book.

Now before we step into the verses of this book there are a few thoughts I want you to grasp which will really help us as we begin this journey. There is a verse in Psalms and Hebrews which I want you to see.

Psalm 40:7

⁷ Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,

Hebrews 10:7

⁷ Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

These are the words of the Psalmist but they are also the Words of Jesus Christ. So when I read these verses I can be sure that Jesus Christ is the central focus of the entire Bible and to be more specific I can be sure that Jesus is the central focus of the book of Ruth. As I say that I also remind you that Jesus will be seen in this letter in TYPE. In other words we will not read of Jesus directly in this letter but He will be seen in the life of another person within this letter.

I. The Setting of the Book

Now to get the setting we need to do a little research based upon the opening verse.

Notice Ruth 1:1a

Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled,

Here we see part of the setting for the book. It is in the days when the judges ruled. But what does that mean?

This was one of the darkest periods of time for the nation of Israel. The time of the judges extended from the death of Joshua until the reign of King Saul. That is a period of time that covers 335 years. The very past verse in the book of Judges sums up what it was like in those days.

Judges 21:25

²⁵ In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

This shines some light on the time of the judges but there is more. The time of the Judges was a time of backsliding for the nation of Israel. After the death of Joshua the nation fell into idolatry and lawlessness.

As Israel settled into the Promised Land they became very soft and decided it was much easier to allow the inhabitants of the land to live among them than it was to rid the land of them.

Judges 1:28-31, 33

²⁸ And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.

²⁹ Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

³⁰ Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants ...

³¹ Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants ...

³³ Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants ...

Now this was completely against the will and the commands of God.

Deuteronomy 20:16-18

¹⁶ But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth:

¹⁷ But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee:

18 That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God.

The Verse 18 was a warning to Israel and they were living the warning in the book of Judges. They had permitted the people to live whom God told them to execute and so they fell into the very sins of those people of Canaan.

Now let me show you how this affected the people of Israel. They fell into what we could call a "SIN CYCLE".

Judges 2:11-19

11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:

12 And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.

13 And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

14 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

15 Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

16 Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so.

18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.

19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

Here was the "SIN CYCLE" which Israel fell into. There were 5 steps:

1. Sin
2. Oppression
3. Crying out to God
4. Deliverance by a judge.
5. Obedience

Then it would start all over again and each time they entered into this "SIN CYCLE" they sunk lower and lower.

Application:

I need to stop here and point out to you the danger of allowing things to exist within our lives which God says are forbidden. There are some things of this world that can be used but there are other things which God says will drag us into sin and take us further and further away from Him.

I have seen people who have refused to CUT OFF certain things from their lives and the end result was death. If there is something that you have permitted to exist within your life that God says should not be there, then you better get it out of your life now. If you do not you will become a slave to it and it will take you down into a spiritual spiral. You will sink lower and lower. This is exactly what had happened to Israel.

- Now let me get your mind back to the book of Ruth. The book is set against a very dark background for it takes place in the days when the judges ruled.

But the book of Ruth itself is a "beaming light" in the midst of the darkness. Let me explain how this is so. The book of Ruth is a close up of a family during the days when the judges ruled. The days are dark and life is hard but in the book of Ruth we will see that in the midst of the darkness God is still at work and He is still in control. In this book we will see the sovereignty of God at work in the life of Ruth. Ultimately we will see that no matter how discouraging the days were God was at work to fulfill His Promise of the Messiah and He was at work to carry out His will.

Application:

I need to stop here for a moment and make the application for our day because we certainly live in some very dark days. If you are not careful in the days in which we live in you can become discouraged and full of despair. You look around today and you wonder

where God is in all of what we see happening? Let me just tell you that God is working out His plan even when the days seem to be the darkest.

Let me show you something that will encourage you from the life of Abraham.

Genesis 21:1-5

And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken.

² *For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.*

³ *And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac.*

⁴ *And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him.*

⁵ *And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.*

Abraham and Sarah were both beyond the child bearing years when Isaac was born. What does that have to do with us and the days we live in?

God's plan and God's power are not limited by human ability nor are they limited by human activity.

That means in our day when politics are completely out of control and the nation has turned to immorality and darkness continues to increase God is still at work to carry out His plan for our lives and for the world. This situation we are in today presents many opportunities for you and me to share the Truth of God's Word.

Illustration: The other day I spoke with a man who was so bitter because of the direction our world is headed. He did not understand that all of what is happening is bringing the plan of God together. It was a great opportunity for me to share with him how we are headed toward the Kingdom of The Anti-christ.

Let me show you some verses that show the sovereign control of God over nations and people.

2 Chronicles 20:6

⁶ And said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?

Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

Romans 13:1-2

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

² Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

Remember what Joseph said to his brothers when they stood before him after they had sold him into slavery?

Genesis 45:5-8

⁵ Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

⁶ For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

⁸ So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

Let me show you something else concerning the setting.

Notice Ruth 1:1a again.

Not only do these events take place in the days when the judges ruled but there was a famine in the land. Now this helps us to know that at the time when the events of this book were unfolding Israel was living in disobedience to God.

In the 5 points of the SIN CYCLE they are in the OPPRESSION stage. Let me show you how we can know this.

Deuteronomy 28:15-18, 23-24

15 But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:

16 Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field.

17 Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store.

18 Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.

23 And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron.

24 The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed.

Conclusion:

We live in a society that has turned its back upon the Lord. Today we are seeing more and more of the judgment of God upon our nation. God has lifted His hand of restraint but we must know that His plan is still being carried out. He is still bringing everything down to the tribulation and then the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

We do not need to fear. But we must be ready to point others toward the Hope that is found in Jesus Christ.