



**COVER THE EARTH MINISTRIES
BIBLE STUDY NOTES
SESSION 2
THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
OLD TESTAMENT**

INSTRUCTOR

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EXODUS

A Suggested Outline of Exodus

I. Redemption — God's Power (1-17)

- A. The slavery of sin (1-4)
- B. The stubbornness of Pharaoh (5-11)
- C. The salvation of God (12-17)
 - 1. Passover — Christ the slain Lamb (12-13)
 - 2. Crossing the sea — resurrection (14-15)
 - 3. Manna — Christ the Bread of Life (16)
 - 4. Smitten rock — the Spirit (17:1-7)
 - 5. Amalek — flesh vs. the Spirit (17:8-16)

II. Righteousness — God's Holiness (18-24)

- A. The nation prepared (18-19)
- B. The law revealed (20-23)
 - 1. The commandments (Godward) (20)
 - 2. The judgments (manward) (21-23)
- C. The covenant ratified (24)

III. Restoration — God's Grace (25-40)

- A. The tabernacle described (25-31)
- B. The tabernacle needed — Israel sins (32-34)
- C. The tabernacle constructed (35-40)

Introductory Notes to Exodus

I. Name

In the Greek language, exodus means "the way out." (See Heb 11:22, "departing.") This book describes Israel's bondage in Egypt and the wonderful deliverance (or "way out") that God gave them. One of the key words in Exodus is redemption, since "to redeem" means "to set free." The book presents many pictures of our salvation through Christ. The word exodus is used in two places in the NT: Luke 9:31 ("decease"), where Christ's redeeming work on the cross is the theme; and 2 Peter 1:15, where "decease" means a believer's "death." In other words, there are three exodus experiences in the Bible — Israel's deliverance from Egypt; Christ's deliverance of the sinner through the cross; and the believer's deliverance from the bondage of this world at death.

II. Author

There is no reason to doubt that Moses wrote this book. The unity of the book (see outline) suggests that there was one author, and the eyewitness accounts indicate that the author was present at those events. Christ affirmed the Mosaic authorship of the book (John 7:19: 5:46-47).

III. Purpose

Genesis is the book of beginnings; Exodus is the book of redemption. It records the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and presents the basic historical facts about the origins of the Hebrew nation and its religious ceremonies. These accounts are also pictures of Christ and the redemption He purchased at the cross. There are many types and symbols of Christ and the believer in Exodus, especially in the tabernacle furnishings and ceremonies. Exodus also records the giving of the Law. It would be impossible to understand much NT doctrine apart from an understanding of the events and symbols in Exodus.

IV. Types

There are several basic types in Exodus: (1) Egypt is a type of the world system, opposing God's people and trying to keep them in bondage. (2) Pharaoh is a type of Satan, "the god of this world," who demands worship, defies God, and thinks to enslave God's people. (3) Israel is a type of the church — delivered from the bondage of the world, led on a pilgrim journey, and protected by God. (4) Moses is a type of Christ, God's Prophet. (5) The crossing of the Red Sea is a picture of the resurrection, which delivers the believer from this present evil world. (6) The manna pictures Christ the Bread of Life (John 6). (7) The smitten rock is a type of the smitten Christ, through whose death the Holy Spirit is given. (8) Amalek is a picture of the flesh, opposing the believer in the pilgrim journey. The key type in Exodus is Passover, picturing the

death of Christ, the application of His blood for our safety, and the appropriation of His life (feeding on the lamb) for our daily strength.

V. Moses and Christ

Here we could list many comparisons and one major contrast between the two, since Moses is a wonderful picture of Jesus Christ. In his offices, Moses was a prophet (Acts 3:22); a priest (Ps 99:6; Heb 7:24); a servant (Ps 105:26; Matt 12:18); a shepherd (Ex 3:1; John 10:11-14); a mediator (Ex 33:8-9; 1 Tim 2:5); and a deliverer (Acts 7:35; 1 Thess 1:10). In his character, he was meek (Num 12:3; Matt 11:29), faithful (Heb 3:12), obedient, and mighty in word and deed (Acts 7:22; Mark 6:2). In his history, Moses was a son in Egypt and was in danger of being killed (Matt 2:14 ff), but was providentially cared for by God. He chose to suffer with the Jews rather than reign in Egypt (Heb 11:24-26; Phil 2:1-11). Moses was rejected by his brothers the first time, but received the second time; and, while rejected, he gained a Gentile bride (picturing Christ and the church). Moses condemned Egypt, and Christ condemned the world. Moses delivered God's people through the blood, as did Christ on the cross (Luke 9:31). Moses led the people, fed the people, and carried their burdens. The contrast, of course, is that Moses did not take Israel into the Promised Land; Joshua had to do that. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

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LEVITICUS

Outline

A Suggested Outline of Leviticus

I. God's Provision for Sin (1-10)

A. The sacrifices (1-7)

1. Burnt offering (1; 6:8-13)
2. Meal offering (2; 6:14-23)
3. Peace offering (3; 7:11-34)
4. Sin offering (4; 6:24-30)
5. Trespass offering (5:1-6:7; 7:1-7)

B. The priesthood (8-10)

II. God's Precepts for Separation (11-24)

A. A holy nation (11-20)

1. Clean and unclean — laws of purity (11-15)
2. The Day of Atonement (16-17)
3. Various laws of separation (18-20)

B. A holy priesthood (21-22)

C. Holy days — the feasts of the Lord (23-24)

III. God's Promise for Success (25-27)

A. The Sabbath of the land (25)

B. The importance of obedience (26)

C. The seriousness of vows (27)

Introductory Notes to Leviticus

I. Name

Leviticus means "pertaining to the Levites." The Levites were the members of Aaron's family who were not ordained as priests but were responsible to help the priests in the service of the tabernacle (Num 3:1-13). This book contains the divine instructions for the priests concerning the various sacrifices, the feasts, and the laws of separation (what was clean and what was unclean).

II. Theme

Genesis explains man's sin and condemnation, while Exodus is the book of redemption. Leviticus deals with separation and communion. The nation was led out of Egypt and brought to Sinai in Exodus, but in Leviticus the Lord speaks from the tabernacle (Lev 1:1) and explains how sinful man may walk in communion with God. The words "holy " or "holiness " are found more than eighty times in this book. The first section of the book deals with the sacrifices, for we cannot approach God apart from the shed blood. The word "blood" is found eighty-eight times in Leviticus. The second half of the book covers the laws of purity, explaining how the people must live separated lives to please their Lord. God had redeemed the nation from bondage; now He wanted to see that nation walk in holiness and purity for His glory. If we have been saved by the blood of the Lamb and delivered from the bondage of the world, then we too ought to walk in fellowship with our Lord (1 John 1:5-10). We need the blood of Christ, the Perfect Sacrifice, to cleanse us from sin, and we need to obey the Word and walk in purity and holiness in this present evil world. All of this is seen in type and symbol in Leviticus.

III. Sacrifice

Leviticus is a book of sacrifice and blood, themes that are repulsive to modern minds. People today wants a "bloodless religion," salvation without sacrifice, yet this is impossible. Lev 16 is perhaps the key chapter of the book, and chapter 17 makes it clear that the shed blood is what takes care of the sin problem (17:11). The word "atonement" means "to cover"; it is used about forty-five times in the book. The blood of the OT sacrifices could never take away sin (Heb 10:1-18). This was accomplished by the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The blood of the OT sacrifices could only cover sin and point ahead to the Savior whose death would finish the work of redemption. By itself, the bringing of sacrifices could never save the sinner. There had to be faith in God's Word, for it is faith that saves the soul. David knew that sacrifices alone

could never take away his sins (Ps 51:16-17); the prophets also made this clear (Isa 1:11-24). However, when the sinner came with a contrite heart, putting faith in God's Word, then his sacrifice was acceptable to God (see Cain and Abel, Gen 4:1-5).

Leviticus presents many pictures of Christ and His work of redemption on the cross. The five sacrifices illustrate various aspects of His Person and work, and the Day of Atonement beautifully pictures His death on the cross. Do not try to press every detail of each type. Some of the instructions for the sacrifices, for example, had practical purposes behind them and need not be made to carry special spiritual lessons.

IV. Practical Lessons

We do not practice the Levitical sacrifices today, but this book still carries some weighty practical lessons that we would do well to ponder.

A. The awfulness of sin.

There must be the shedding of blood to atone for sin. Sin is not something light and unimportant; it is hateful in the eyes of God. Sin is costly-every sacrifice was an expensive thing to the Jewish worshiper.

B. The holiness of God.

God makes a distinction in this book between the clean and the unclean. He also warns His people, "Be holy for I am holy" (11:44).

C. The graciousness of God.

He provides a way of forgiveness and restoration! Of course, this "Way" is Christ, "the new and living way" (Heb 10:19 ff). The OT sacrifices pointed to the coming Savior. The phrase "it shall be forgiven" is used at least ten times in Leviticus.

NUMBERS

A Suggested Outline of Numbers

- I. The Old Generation Set Aside (1-20)
 - A. Counted (1-4)
 - B. Counseled (5-10)
 - C. Chastised (11-12)
 - D. Condemned (13-20)

- II. The New Generation Set Apart (21-36)
 - A. Their journeying (21-25; 33)
 - B. Their numbering (26-27)
 - C. Their offerings (28-30)
 - D. Their dividing of the inheritance (31-36)

Introductory Notes to Numbers

I. Name

The book takes its name from the two numberings of the men of war in chapters 1-4 and 26-27. The first census was made the second year after the nation had left Egypt, and the second was made thirty-eight years later when the new generation was about to enter Canaan. These numberings were not of the entire nation, but only of the men able to fight. The first census revealed that there were 603,550 available men; the second, that there were 601,730.

II. Theme

Numbers is the wilderness book of the OT. It describes the failure of the nation at Kadesh-Barnea and their wanderings in the wilderness until the unbelieving older generation died. Someone has described Israel's wilderness wanderings as "the longest funeral march in history." Only Caleb and Joshua of the older generation were permitted to enter Canaan, because they had trusted God and opposed the decision of the nation to turn back at Kadesh-Barnea. Even Moses was forbidden to go into the Promised Land because of his sin when he smote the rock instead of speaking to it.

III. Spiritual Lesson

Numbers has an important spiritual lesson for Christians today, as explained in Heb 3-4 and 1 Cor 10:1-15. God honors faith and punishes unbelief. At the root of all of Israel's sins in the wilderness was unbelief: they did not trust God's Word. At Kadesh-Barnea they doubted God's

Word and failed to enter into their inheritance. Instead of claiming Canaan by faith, they wandered in the wilderness in unbelief. Many Christians today are "in between" in their spiritual lives. They have been delivered from Egypt by the blood of the Lamb, but they have not yet entered into their inheritance in Christ. Canaan is not a picture of heaven. Rather, it is an illustration of our spiritual inheritance in Christ (Eph 1:3), an inheritance that must be claimed by faith. Canaan was a land of battles and blessings, as is the Christian life today. Alas, too many Christians come to the place of decision (their own Kadesh-Barnea), and they fail to enter into their inheritance by faith! Instead of being conquerors (as described in Joshua), they become wanderers, as described in Numbers. Yes, they are saved, but they fail to fulfill God's purpose for their lives. They will not trust God to overcome the giants, knock down the walls, and give them the inheritance that He has promised. They will not cross Jordan (which illustrates death to self) and step out by faith to claim what Christ has promised them.

It is interesting to note that the nation did not grow during their wilderness wanderings. In fact, the second census showed 1,820 fewer men of war. The nation wasted thirty-eight years, endured unnecessary afflictions, failed to grow, and failed to honor God all the while they were on their "death march." This is what unbelief does to Christians. It wastes time, effort, and manpower and brings no real blessing. How sad it is when churches fail to step out by faith and, as a result, start to degenerate spiritually, numerically, and materially. May God help us to trust His Word!

DEUTERONOMY

A Suggested Outline of DEUTERONOMY

- I. Historical Concerns: Moses Looks Back (1-4)
 - A. The tragedy of unbelief (1)
 - B. Journeys and victories (2-3)
 - C. Closing appeal that they obey (4)

- II. Practical Concerns: Moses Looks within (5-26)
 - A. The testimonies (5-11)
 - 1. The Law proclaimed (5)
 - 2. The Law practiced (6)
 - 3. The Law preserved (7-10)
 - a. Dangers from without (7)
 - b. Dangers from within (8-10)
 - 4. The closing appeal (11)
 - B. The statutes (12-18)
 - C. The judgments (19-26)Outline

- III. Prophetical Concerns: Moses Looks Ahead (27-30)
 - A. Blessings and curses (27-28)
 - B. Repentance and return (29-30)

- IV. Personal Concerns: Moses Looks up (31-34)
 - A. A new leader (31)
 - B. A new song (32)
 - C. A new blessing (33)
 - D. A new home (34)

Introductory Notes to Deuteronomy

I. Name

"Deuteronomy " in Greek means "second law." It comes from Deut 17:18, and also from the fact that in this book Moses was restating the Law to the new generation. This book does not contain a new Law, it is a second stating of the original Law.

II. Purpose

There are several reasons why Moses restated the Law on the border of Canaan.

A. A new generation.

The old generation (except for Caleb and Joshua) had perished in the wilderness, and the new generation needed to hear the Law again. We all have short memories, and these people were twenty years of age and under when the nation failed decades before at Kadesh-Barnea.

It was important that they know God's Word afresh and realize how important it is to obey God.

B. A new challenge.

Up to now, the nation's life had been unsettled; they had been pilgrims. But now they were to enter their Promised Land and become a settled nation. There would be battles to fight, and they needed to be prepared. The best way to prepare for the future is to understand the past. "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," a famous philosopher has said. Moses wanted the nation to remember what God had done.

C. A new leader.

Moses was about to die, and Joshua would take over the leadership of the nation. Moses knew that the success of the nation depended on the people obeying God, no matter who their human leader might be. If they were grounded in the Word and loved the Lord, they would follow Joshua and win the victory.

D. New temptations.

A settled people in the land would face different problems than a pilgrim people in the wilderness. Moses wanted them not only to possess the land, but also to maintain that possession, so he warned them of the dangers and gave them the way of success.

In a spiritual sense, too many Christians stand with Israel in Deut 1:1-3. They are redeemed from Egypt, but they have not yet entered into their spiritual inheritance. They stand "on this side of Jordan" instead of in the Promised Land of blessing. They need to hear God's Word again and step out by faith to claim their inheritance in Christ.

E. A deeper message.

As we read Deuteronomy, we cannot help but be impressed with the deeper message Moses gives concerning the spiritual life of his people. We find the word "love" repeated at least twenty times in the book, an emphasis not found in Genesis through Numbers. "Love for God and God's love for the people" is a new theme in Deuteronomy (4:37; 6:4-6; 7:6-13; 10:12; 11:1; 30:6,16,20). While the previous books certainly speak of love and prove God's love for Israel, Deuteronomy emphasizes this theme as never before. The word "heart" is also important: the Word must be in their hearts (5:29; 6:6); sin begins in the heart (7:17 ff and 8:11-20); and they must love God from the heart (10:12). In other words, Moses makes it clear that blessings come when the heart is right. In order for the people to possess and enjoy the land, their hearts had to be filled with love for God and His Word.

F. A book for everyone.

Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers were "technical books" belonging in a special way to the priests and Levites, but Deuteronomy was written for everyone. While it repeats many of the laws found in previous books, it gives a new and deeper meaning to these laws and shows what they meant in the everyday lives of the people. All of us today can learn much from Deuteronomy about loving God and obeying His will.

We list here several of the key words of this book and the number of times they are found in the King James Version: land (153); inherit (36); possess (65); hear (44); hearken (27); heart (46); love (20). Putting these repeated words together, we can quickly see the emphasis of the book: you will go in and possess the land if you hear God's Word, love Him, and hearken (obey). If we love God, we will obey Him; and if we obey, He will bless.

JOSHUA

A Suggested Outline of Joshua

- I. Crossing the River (1-5)
 - A. The commission to Joshua (1)
 - B. The covenant with Rahab (2)
 - C. The crossing of Jordan (3-4)
 - D. The circumcision at Gilgal (5)

- II. Conquering the Enemy (6-12)
 - A. The central campaign: Jericho; Ai; Gibeon (6-9)
 - B. The southern campaign (10)
 - C. The northern campaign (11)
 - D. The defeated kings (12)

- III. Claiming the Inheritance (13-24)
 - A. The tribal territory assigned (13-19)
 - 1. Eastern Canaan (13-14)
 - 2. Western Canaan (15-19)
 - B. The special cities appointed (20-21)
 - 1. The cities of refuge (20)
 - 2. The priestly cities (21)
 - C. The border tribes allotted (22)
 - D. The entire nation admonished (23-24)

Introductory Notes to Joshua

I. Theme

It has been pointed out before that Canaan is a type of the Christian's inheritance in Christ. Canaan is not a picture of heaven, because the believer does not have to battle to gain his heavenly home. Canaan represents God's inheritance, given to the believer and claimed by faith. The victorious Christian life is a life of battles and blessings, but it is also a life of rest. In Heb 4-5 we see that the entering of the nation into Canaan is a picture of the believer entering into a life of rest and victory through faith in Christ. Too many Christians are "in between" in their spiritual lives — between Egypt and Canaan. They have been delivered from the bondage of sin, but they have not by faith entered into the inheritance of rest and victory. How to enter and claim this inheritance is the theme of Joshua.

II. Joshua the Man

Joshua was born in Egyptian slavery. His father was Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim (1 Chron 7:20-27); we know nothing about his mother. Originally his name was Oshea or Hoshea, which means "salvation," but Moses changed it to Jehoshua (or Joshua), which means "Jehovah is salvation" (Num 13:16). He was a slave in Egypt and served as Moses' minister during the journeys of the nation (Ex 24:13). He also led the army in the battle against Amalek (Ex 17), and was one of the two spies who had the faith to enter Canaan when the nation rebelled in unbelief (Num 14:6 ff). As a result of his faith, he (with Caleb) was permitted to enter the Promised Land. Jewish tradition says that Joshua was eighty-five years old when he took Moses' place at the head of the nation. Josh 1-12 (the conquest of the land) covers roughly the next seven years; he spent the remainder of his life dividing up the inheritance and ruling the nation. He died at 110 (Josh 24:29). The NT makes it clear that Joshua is a type of Christ (Heb 4:8, where "Jesus" (KJV) should be translated "Joshua"). The name "Jesus" in Greek is equivalent to "Joshua"; both mean "God's salvation" or "Jehovah is the Savior." Just as Joshua conquered earthly foes, so Christ has defeated every enemy through His death and resurrection. It was Joshua, not Moses (representing Law), who brought Israel into Canaan, and it is Jesus who leads us into spiritual rest and victory. As Joshua assigned the tribes their inheritance so Christ has given us our inheritance (Eph 1:3 ff).

III. The Defeated Nations

Those who oppose the inspiration of the Bible enjoy attacking the passages in Joshua that tell about war and slaughter (6:21, for example). "How can a God of love command such bloodshed?" they ask. Keep in mind that God had given these nations hundreds of years to repent (Gen 15:16-21), yet they refused to turn from their filthy ways. If you wish to know what "the doings of Canaan" were, read Lev 18, and keep in mind that these immoral practices were a part of heathen religious worship! Any sinner in the nation (such as Rahab, Josh 2 and 6:22-27) could be saved by faith; and there was adequate warning sent ahead (read Josh 2:8-13). God sometimes uses war to chasten and even to destroy nations that forget Him. God had these wicked nations destroyed to punish them for their sins and, something like a doctor who disinfects his instruments to kill the germs, to protect His people from their evil ways.

JUDGES

A Suggested Outline of Judges

- I. Apathy (1-2)
 - A. Early victories (1:1-26)
 - B. Repeated defeats (1:27-36)
 - C. Divine rebuke (2:1-5)
 - D. Serving other gods (2:6-23) (summary of the entire book)

- II. Apostasy (3-16)
 - A. Othniel (3:1-11) (Mesopotamia)
 - B. Ehud and Shamgar (3:12-31) (Moab)
 - C. Deborah and Barak (4-5) (The Canaanites)
 - D. Gideon (6-8) (Midian)
 - E. Abimelech, Tola, and Jair (9:1-10:5) (Men of Shechem)
 - F. Jephthah (10:6-12:15) (Ammon)
 - G. Samson (13-16) (The Philistines)

- III. Anarchy (17-21)
 - A. Idolatry (17-18)
 - B. Immorality (19)
 - C. Civil war (20-21)

Introductory Notes to Judges

I. Theme

Just as Joshua continues the history of Israel after the death of Moses (Josh 1:1), the Book of Judges picks up the story of Israel after the death of Joshua (Judg 1:1). This is a book of defeat and disgrace, as we see in the key verse (17:6): "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes." The Lord was no longer "King in Israel" — the tribes were divided; the people were mixing with the heathen nations; and it was necessary for God to chasten His people. We have a summary of the entire book in 2:10-19 — blessing, disobedience, chastening, repentance, deliverance. Judges is the book of incomplete victory; it is a book of failure on the part of God's people to trust His Word and claim His power.

II. Spiritual Lesson

You will recall the three divisions of Joshua: crossing the river, conquering the enemy, and claiming the inheritance. Joshua records how Israel crossed the river and began to conquer the enemy, but the book ends with "much land yet to be possessed" (Josh 13:1 and 23:1-11). "Crossing the river" signifies death to self and separation from sin; it means entering into our spiritual inheritance by faith (Eph 1:3). But after we have taken this step

of faith, it is easy to faint, or to compromise with the enemy. Israel entered into her land, but she failed to possess the total inheritance. She first tolerated the enemy, then took tribute (taxes) from the enemy, then mixed with the enemy, and finally surrendered to the enemy. It was only through God's deliverers (the judges) that the Israelites found victory. How easy it is for Christians to "settle down with sin" and miss the blessings of complete dedication and complete victory.

III. The Land

The Promised Land was filled with many nations and many "petty kings" who ruled over smaller territories. Joshua had led the nation collectively in great victories over the major enemies; the way had now been paved for each tribe to go in by faith and claim the allotted inheritance. Whereas the Book of Joshua is a record of united efforts, Judges records a divided nation no longer devoted to the Lord, forgetful of the covenant that they made at Sinai.

IV. The Judges

Named in this book are twelve different judges raised up by God to defeat a particular enemy in a particular territory and give the people rest. These judges were not national leaders; rather, they were local leaders who delivered the people from various oppressors. It is possible that some of the periods of oppression and rest overlap. Not all of the tribes participated in each battle, and often there was tribal rivalry. That God could call these "ordinary people" as judges and use them so mightily is another evidence of His grace and power (1 Cor 1:26-31). The Spirit of God came upon these leaders for a particular work (6:34; 11:29; 13:25), though often their personal lives were not exemplary in every detail. The several hundred years of rule under the judges prepared Israel for their request for a king (1 Sam 8).

V. The Nations That Remained

God permitted the heathen nations to be left in the land for several reasons: (1) to punish Israel, 2:3,20-21; (2) to prove Israel, 2:22 and 3:4; (3) to provide Israel with experience in warfare, 3:2; and (4) to prevent the land from becoming a wilderness, Deut 7:20-24.

If Israel wanted to live with this "second-class" situation, God would give them their desire. He then used these nations for His own purposes. The Jews could have enjoyed total victory; instead, they settled for a compromise. Chapters 3-16 picture the "up-and-down" experiences of some of God's people. Alas, the nation did not yield to God and obey Him; they looked instead to the human helpers He sent them. Too many Christians have their "ups and downs" and run to the pastor or another friend for help instead of first

getting alone with God to permit Him to examine their hearts and give them the help they need.

RUTH

A Suggested Outline of Ruth

- I. Ruth's Sorrow (1)
 - A. Naomi's wrong decision (1:1-5)
 - B. Naomi's wrong counsel (1:6-18)
 - C. Naomi's wrong attitude (1:19-22)

- II. Ruth's Service (2)
 - A. God guides Ruth (2:1-3)
 - B. Boaz shows kindness to Ruth (2:4-16)
 - C. Naomi encourages Ruth (2:17-23)

- III. Ruth's Surrender (3)
 - A. She obeys Naomi's counsel (3:1-5)
 - B. She submits to Boaz (3:6-13)
 - C. She waits for Boaz to work (3:14-18)

- IV. Ruth's Satisfaction (4)
 - A. Boaz redeems Ruth (4:1-12)
 - B. Boaz marries Ruth (4:13)
 - C. Boaz and Ruth have a son (4:14-21)

Introductory Notes to Ruth

I. Background

It is difficult to believe that the events in this book took place during the time of the Judges, a time when Israel was a divided and defeated nation. But during the worst of times, God reveals His love and still works on behalf of those who fear and trust Him. We live today at a time when there is "no king in Israel" (Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25), for the Jews rejected their King; but during this time, a beautiful love story is taking place in this world: God is getting a Bride for His Son. The Book of Ruth is a harvest story, as the "Lord of the harvest" gathers His sheaves (John 4:31-38).

We aren't certain just where the story of Ruth fits into the history recorded in the Book of Judges. It's possible that the famine was caused by the ravages of one of the invading armies that God used to discipline His people. There must have been peace between Judah and Moab or Elimelech and his family would not have been able to move there. During the period of the Judges, peace was possible in one part of the land while there was trouble in another part.

II. Theology

While the immediate purpose of this little book is to trace the ancestry of David the King, there is much spiritual truth found in this story. Ruth was from Moab, and the Moabites were excluded from the nation of Israel (Deut 23:3). But because she put faith in the God of Israel, she was accepted, an illustration of God's grace to the Gentiles (Eph 2:11-22). Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer, is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ who paid the price to redeem us and make us His bride. The unknown kinsman was unwilling to jeopardize his inheritance for the sake of Ruth, but Boaz so loved Ruth that he made her a part of his inheritance! The grace of God and the providential leading of God are major themes of this story.

Ruth became an ancestress of the Messiah (Matt 1:5) and of David, through whose line the Messiah was promised (2 Sam 7). Like Rahab (Josh 2; Heb 11:31), Ruth was a Gentile who married a Jew and became a part of "salvation history" (Matt 1:5). This book may be a small one, but the story it tells is a part of the greatest story ever told.

III. Practical Lessons

There are many lessons we can learn from this wonderful book:

- (1) No matter how difficult the situation may be, if we surrender to the Lord and obey Him, He will see us through.
- (2) No person is so far outside the reach of God's grace that he or she cannot be saved. Ruth had everything against her, but the Lord saved her!
- (3) God providentially guides those who want to obey Him and serve others. Because Ruth was concerned for Naomi, God led her and brought her into a life of happiness.
- (4) It does no good to get angry at God and blame Him for our mistakes. God used Ruth to lead Naomi out of despair and into His blessing.
- (5) There are no "small decisions" with God. Ruth's decision to glean in the fields led to her becoming an ancestress of King David and of the Messiah. Read Ps 37:3-7 and see how it is fulfilled in Ruth's experience.
- (6) It is wise to wait on the Lord and let Him work out His loving purposes. "The one who trusts will never be dismayed" (Isa 28:16, NIV). After we have done all that we can do, we must trust the Lord to do the rest; and He will never fail us.

INTRODUCTORY NOTES TO THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

I. Theme

Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are books of history that record the establishment of the kingdom, its years of victory and defeat, and the end of a divided kingdom. One lesson is obvious as you read these books: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov 14:34). Whenever the nation exalted God, God exalted the nation; but when the rulers, prophets, and people turned from the Law, God removed His blessing.

This truth is seen not only in the history of the nation collectively, but also in the lives of the leaders personally. Both David and Solomon disobeyed God and paid dearly in their own homes and personal lives.

II. The Prophets

In a period of spiritual decline, God sent His prophets to awaken the people. There are several "unnamed prophets" in these books, as well as famous servants of God such as Elijah and Elisha, Isaiah, Joel, Amos, Jonah, and Micah. Be sure to check your Bible dictionary or Bible handbook for the parallels between the lives of the prophets and the history of the nation.

III. The Books of Samuel

These books record the transition from the period of judges to the time when the kingdom was established. Samuel was the last of the judges and the first of the national prophets. It was he who anointed Saul the first king, and then David his successor. You may outline the books together as follows:

- A. Samuel (1 Sam. 1-7)
 - 1. Birth and childhood (1-3)
 - 2. Early ministry (4-7)
- B. Saul (1 Sam. 8-15)
 - 1. Made king (8-10)
 - 2. Early victories (11-12)
 - 3. Sins and rejection (13-15)
- C. David (1 Sam. 16-2 Sam. 24)
 - 1. The shepherd (1 Sam 16-17)
 - 2. The servant (1 Sam 18-19)
 - 3. The exile (1 Sam 20-31)
 - 4. The King (2 Sam. 1-24)
 - a. His triumphs (2 Sam 1-12)
 - b. His trials (2 Sam. 13-24)
 - i. Personal sin (11-12)
 - ii. Amnon's sin (13)
 - iii. Absalom's sin (14-18)
 - iv. National unrest (19-24)

IV. The Books of Kings

These books, as the title indicates, deal with the kings of the nation, beginning with the glorious reign of Solomon and ending with the tragic captivity of Judah by Babylon. We may outline the books as follows:

- A. The Kingdom United (1 Kings 1-11)
 - 1. Solomon's wealth and wisdom (1-4)
 - 2. Solomon's temple (5-9)
 - 3. Solomon's sins (10-11)
- B. The Kingdom Divided (1 Kings 12-22)
 - 1. Rehoboam and Jeroboam (12-14)
 - 2. A series of good and bad kings (15-16)
 - 3. Elijah and King Ahab (17-22)
- C. The Kingdom Taken Captive (2 Kings 1-25)
 - 1. Israel's captivity (1-17)
 - 2. Judah's captivity (18-25)