

BIBLE STUDY: THE BOOK OF RUTH

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THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING THE BIBLE

The word of God has several dimensions or levels of meaning. We must not only read the bible but we should learn to study it. If we are faithful to study the bible and remember to turn to the bible when adverse situations face us; to find out from the bible what we ought to do and we follow it, we would not make the mistakes that we make in our Christian walk. Things that become big problems would not be problems at all. Many of our experiences, have been designed by God to come our way, for are good. The intention of God is to turn all things for good to them that love him; but many times we do not follow things from the insight (point of view) of the bible, consequently problems arise. It is God's will that we all return to the study of His word. May God help us to get into the habit of studying the bible daily. Let us trust God to help us.

IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES TO APPLY IN BIBLE STUDY

We must learn to take the words and thoughts we find in scripture seriously. Many times we read the bible just as we would a story book. We do not sit down with pen and paper to study. We do not approach our bible study time with the mind to jot down that which the lord will say to us during our study. We do not really get into the reality of what the word says. We should look at the word of God in such a way as to get its surface or natural meaning and then we get the meaning in the Spirit and finally we get the fullness of the word.

Reading the bible becomes bible study when we begin to think beyond that which we read on the surface (surface meaning). When we begin to think, what does this word/ passage mean? How does it apply to me? Is God trying to call my attention to something in my life? As you continue to ask and turn around the thought in your mind (meditate) you get understanding and revelation. Some times you get inspiration. This is when you begin to benefit something greater from your reading. Otherwise we would just read the story of what happened and that's were it ends and what we read does not really affect or change us because we are no longer living physically in bible times. The word of God may be in danger of being just another story for us. It ought not to be so.

Ac 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

2Ti 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth

Ps 1:2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

The study of God's Word, for the purpose of discovering God's will, is the secret discipline which has formed the greatest characters. --J.W. Alexander

BIBLE STUDY ON THE BOOK OF RUTH CHAPTER ONE

V 1: *Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.*

STUDY POINTS TO NOTE :

- I am sure many of us have read this book of Ruth but it is possible that as you read it again, it comes to you with a fresh breath.
- You may not have taken note of the fact of how it began until now, as you read, you realise that a time setting is given to when these events occurred. The events in this book happen in the time when the people were ruled by judges (ref: *Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled v1*).
- The time of the Judges was a time in Israel when there were no kings. The lord was the king, the ruler of His people. Through His prophets He told them what to do, He guided their every step and they obeyed Him. A time came when people began to live in their own ways, they walked in unrighteousness, turned away from God and would not listen to or ask His will. So God watched them go their own way,
- So how does it concern us and what does it mean to us; that at the time of the Judges, there was farming in the land?

Implications :

The same thing that happened to the children of Israel at this time is what happens to us also ,when we do not read the bible. If we are people that study the bible. we would acknowledge that God is our king and we will want to hear from Him. When something confronts us and we do not turn to God to say how should I do it? Automatically we will do it the way we learnt to do it from those around us or from what we have learnt in school, we will do it the way the world does it and that will not be the way of God. This was the case at the time of the judges. God stood aside and the Israelites tried to do things their own way, *In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.(Jg 21:25)*. They often got into trouble because they walked in sin and people in the lands around them would rise and over power them and would then oppress them and then they would cry out to God, until he would bring up a Judge (ruler) among the people. This happened many times

There was a famine in the land (v 1) : When you hear of famine what it means physically is that there is no food (garri ,rice etc). It is difficult to feed. The people and their children must have been crying out for food. What does it mean to us, now, when we read “that as at that time of the judges there was famine in the land”? It may mean that during the time of the judges ,there was a lack of food and with us now ,though there is no lack of physical food which gives nourishment ,there is a lack of spiritual food (the pure word of God) that nourishes our life in Christ. It applies to us now , in the sense that there is scarcity of the word of God. The scarcity of the word of God results in the lack of life of Christ in the church.

Another thought is ,when there is famine, food is not being produced ; either men were not working to produce the food or farmers were not doing their work or the land was not yielding .It could also mean that God had allowed something to happen to the land, because under natural circumstances , when we plant the land yields fruit. God could allow a situation were the land refuses to yield fruit.

At this point we may want to explore this thought. From what we know from scripture why would God allow a situation where the land does not yield its increase? We know the natural reason could be drought but what we need to explore is, why would God allow drought to come upon the land? There could be various reasons :

- a) **blood shed:** When there is blood shed in the land it defiles the land and automatically attracts the curse of drought , generally speaking , when there is sin or disobedience to God then God will allow farming to come upon the land.
- b) A spiritual atmosphere in which spirits can thrive and stifle the word of God can create famine just as there are weather conditions that would favour the multiplication of some pests , or just as rain can make for the spread of locust that can eat up the plants and cause farming even if the soil is okay.

So if we say there is a lack of food in our land then by implication there is a lack of the word of God in our land. For the people of God this means we are not working in obedience to the word of God, it means there is sin in our lives .That is a serious matter. Praise God that even in the natural when there is no food; we know that we can do something about it. When we realise there is sin in our lives, we can do some thing to correct it in God's sight. This thought will further lead us to ask, what can we do about the sin we find in our lives? *(When this happens we can ask God for forgiveness and then repent. Note that asking for forgiveness is different from repentance. One can ask for forgiveness but not repent. What does it mean to repent? Repentance is making up ones mind to make a change, and begin to obey God)*

V 1 *And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.*

STUDY POINTS TO NOTE :

- The point being made here is that in this time of famine a certain man of Bethlehem Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab. He and his wife and his two sons.
- Bethlehem means house of bread, it means praise. Going by the meaning of the name, the situation here ought to be one in which there is plenty of bread, there should be much to eat, and again there should be joy, praise, rejoicing in the midst but instead there was famine ,right in the house of bread . When there is famine in the house of bread it means that the name *Bethlehemjudah* becomes like a joke or caricature. When it is the house of bread and there is no bread in it , it is a sad situation indeed. This man therefore decided to leave the house of bread and went to sojourn in the country of Moab.
- **Moab :** This word is made of two words **mo - ab**. **Ab** as in Abah (father), **Mo** means from . So Moab means taken from father referring to the ugly experience of Lot with his daughters and the child which was born as a result of their incest. (How blatant Lot's daughter was in her sin to have had the boldness to call her child such a name)

Implication :

Now we need to learn something from the action of this man, concerning our place or walk with God What should our reaction be when we look into our souls and see that the bread is not there, should we react by running over to Moab or ought we to turn to God?

V 2 *And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.*

STUDY POINTS TO NOTE :

- The name of the man was Elimeleck, **El** means God, **Melech** means king. Elimeleck means God is king or God's king and the name of this wife was Naomi that means is pleasant.
- They had names that acknowledged that the Lord was king and pleasant . It is surprising therefore that when he were faced with the difficulty of famine in Bethlehem Judah , he did not turn to his God. He did not take the stand and posture to declare in the situation he found himself that Jehovah is king.

Implication

There is a lesson to learn here, because it happens to us often, when we are faced with situations of stress, we fret and panic and we are not able to take our stand and declare that Jehovah is king. Rather than do that Elimelech, went with his wife to Moab (a land associated with incest)

What are your own reactions when things are not going right? Are you one of those that will complain and mumber instead of praying and fasting and seeking God's direction by studying the bible? Note that when Elimelech left, he took Naomi (Naomi means pleasant) with him. This implies that he took along with him that which was pleasant in the house in Judah and took it to Moab (a land accursed by God). When there is no bread in the house and you get up and say let me go and look for bread outside of God , you bring more reproach to the house by taking away the pleasant things God has worked out in your life (Naomi) to go and serve Satan. Remember the prodigal son who took of his father's substance and went and wasted it in a far country.

He had two sons, one was Malon (sickly) and the other was Julion (pining, wasting away). In this study we will not concern our selves with why he give those names to his sons, the important thing to examine is the type of sons he produced. We should look at our lives and pray that our lives will not produce that which is sickly and wasteful in God's sight.

TO BE CONTINUED.....