

BIBLE STUDY: THE BOOK OF RUTH CHAPTER ONE CONTD.

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We continue with our study of the book of Ruth. This book teaches us not to be a people who do things their own way but to learn to ask God and whatsoever He says *"that we do"*. It also emphasizes the consequences of Anarchy and Rebellion

STUDY POINT TO NOTE:

In the last study we mentioned that the events in the book of Ruth happened in the time of the Judges. The time of the Judges was a time when people walked in rebellion and anarchy because *'in those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes'* (*Judges 21:25*) If we bring this thought into Ruth chapter 1 v 1 which reads. *' 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 Bethlehem Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons'*. We can paraphrase the above verse in the following words: 'In the days of anarchy and rebellion, in the time when people did not honor God, and so walked according to their own minds there was famine in the land. So having that in mind we can again summarize Ruth 1 v 1 to mean THERE WAS NO KING AT THE TIME SO MEN DID WHAT EVER THEY LIKED, UNDER SUCH AN ATMOSPHERE WHERE MEN WERE WORKING DISORDERLY AND NOT HONOURING GOD FAMINE CAME UPON THE LAND BECAUSE OF THE ANARCHY AND REBELLION.

Implications for us in the present :

We have to examine our own hearts and ensure that this is not the case with us. Are we by any chance saying by our actions or deeds *"there is no king in this house and every one can do what is right in his own eyes"*? God testified against the children of Israel in their time. How? You may ask. There was a man in their midst whose name was Elimelech which means God (*Jehovah*) is king. Likewise we cannot say that there is no ruler over the house of God. There is a witness in our hearts which tells us there is a ruler over the house and the ruler is God himself.

God is asking us to walk in his fear; God is telling us that we cannot just do that which is pleasant in our own eyes, we must do that which pleases him.

STUDY POINT TO NOTE:

We examine the word 'Bethlehem' in v1, the word means 'house of bread', and Judah means praise. Put together you have Bethlehem Judah a very good prophetic name. In such a house of bread, in such a land of praise there should not have been any famine but in spite of the good name because there was rebellion there were attendant consequences. Whenever the proper atmosphere is created for rebellion, then the consequences of rebellion would always follow. **If we sow rebellion in the land what would always grow out from that place would be the consequences or rewards of rebellion, the good name of the place notwithstanding.**

Implications for us in the present :

Your good name is of no consequence if there is rebellion. The good name of a fellowship does not matter if the group is walking in rebellion. If we do not honor God our good name does not matter. **In other words, God is telling us not to allow ourselves to be deceived like was the case with the church in Laodicea.** *Rev 3:17 'Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked... We must make a habit of examining ourselves whether we be in the faith. Another illustration of this thought we find in Ec 10:1 Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor. An apothecary is the person who prepares perfumes, creams and sweet smelling ointments. If such a man has been known for producing substances with very pleasant aromas, and he allows a dead fly to fall into that which he is preparing, it would produce, not beautiful perfume but an offensive smell. That is how it is, with a man who has reputation for wisdom and honor but gets careless and does something foolish. He would be seen as a foolish man even though all these years he has been known to be very wise. The same goes for a people who have been known for righteousness and for following after the will of God, if they then turn to lawlessness. If a people are known for no compromises in their walk with the Lord, if they turn around and begin to walk carelessly and no longer honor the Lord and fear him, it takes only a little time and their reputation would be swept away. This is the thought that is expressed in Eze 18:24 But when the upright man, turning away from his righteousness, does evil, like all the disgusting things which the evil man does, will he have life? Not one of his upright acts will be kept in memory: in the wrong which he has done and in his sin death will overtake him. (Bible in Basic English). **God is saying that He is not reckoning with man's past reputation but He is looking at where we are in this hour. God expects us to be in right standing with him at all times.***

CONSEQUENCES OF WALKING IN ANARCHY AND REBELLION

- **Famine in the land:** famine means scarcity. It could be physical or spiritual scarcity (famine or dryness in the soul). In other words famine is a closure of communication with God, the joy of salvation is lost. It becomes difficult to reach God in prayer when there is famine.
- **A departure from the Lord:** Elimelech went to sojourn in the land of Moab. *Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled that there was famine in the land and a certain man of Bethlehem Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.* We see that when there is rebellion, there would be a departure from the Lord. Bethlehem Judah should be a place that one would want to be, but the man departed from that place. When men stop seeking God, they walk in their own ways, they stop seeking God's counsel, so it is in a situation when there is rebellion. As people walk in disorder they just discover that they have worked far away from the Lord. So a man who is known for keeping close to the Lord would

discover he has turned away from the Lord. We must beware of rebellion; else we would find ourselves having turned away from the Lord.

- **The government of God is withdrawn.** The implication of Elimelech departure is that God's rule was withdrawn from him, which means the ruler ship of God over a people can be withdrawn. God can withdraw his fellowship with a people. In other words it is a thing that can happen that God can turn away from a people. Many ministries and many people of God who began so well and who had the glory upon their ministries, we find it is no longer the same today with them. We should be very careful lest it should become with us as it did become with these people. Some walk on thinking that the glory of God is still with them. The scripture in Ezekiel, describes a situation where the glory departed .The glory of the Lord lifted from the cherubim and it went to the threshold and remained there for a time, it then lifted from the threshold and went to the wilderness. Note the progression of the glory lifting. **I think that this is a strong warning that is coming to us as a people. *Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you (James 4:8)*, it means that the converse can also be the case.** If we suffer with him we would reign with Him, if we deny Him we also would deny us. **Elimelech is symbolic of a people that had Jehovah as their king. If they fail to recognize the kingship of Jehovah, Jehovah can turn away.**
- **That which is pleasant might depart from the midst:** Let us look at the next person that is involved in this scenario. Naomi which means '*pleasantness*' also left Judah. In other words, one of the consequences of disorder is that the sweetness of fellowship can depart, the oil can dry up, and when the people gather together it will be just human effort that keeps it going. The pleasure of fellowship comes by that which the Lord gives, not by what a man, or men can do. We cannot walk it out by human effort. God, by deep calling unto deep, can work out the atmosphere for the anointing.
- **They produce that which is sickly and weak:** The next thing we notice is the names of the sons Mahlon (*sick or sickly*) and Chilion (*pinning, or pinning away, failing, wasting away, consumptions, destruction*). As they walked in disorder what came out of Elimelech and his wife was that which was sickly, wasteful, and weak. 1st Corinthians 11 v 30 "*for this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep*" A people who walks in disorder will find out that there is a lot of sleeping, weakness, and physical or spiritual sickness and even spiritual death, in their midst. The people will lack discernment. Such a state is caused by a people not knowing the seriousness of where they are or not realizing the quality, the value and the reality of what they are dealing with, and so they go their own way. When men do not discern, they are spiritually blind and what they produce is sicknesses, weakness, wasting away, destruction. That is what comes out of a people that walk in rebellion. Let us be encouraged to watch our feet that we go not in this way.
- **Abomination sets in:** *v 2 and they came into the country of Moab...* Moab is synonymous with abomination. Moab was a descendant of Lot. God brought Lot out of the land of Sodom and Gomorrah and told him to go into the mountain but he chose to stay in the plain area and while he was there , the devil entered into his two daughters and they got their dad drunk and laid with him and produced two children. One of them named her child Moab which means '*from father*' (she was blatant about her sin and was not ashamed to declare to everyone that she got this baby from her father). In other words she was brazen in her rebellion. That is what will become of us if we walk in rebellion. We will not abhor sin.
- **Complacency sets in:** *and they continued there....* They were not uncomfortable nor did they try to return. Their continuing there shows that a spirit of complacency had set in. In my heart I believe that God may have been telling them to come away but they still continued there. I say this because I know that if you tell someone you have "*continued in this thing,*" it

means that you must have told that person to stop that thing many times but he continued hence the term they continued there.

- **There is an open door for sin and sinning:** When you take one step in sin, it will lead to another and another. These people started out by just feeling that they should do something about the famine situation. They did the wrong thing and left Bethlehem Judah. That was how they started. One thing led to another and they landed in Moab. One wrong step, if not repented of will certainly lead to another.
- **Seared conscience:** *V 4 And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.* Taking wives of the women of Moab was an indication that they had gotten comfortable and settled with their sin. When you marry you produce that which makes you settle the more. Your roots grow deeper and deeper so it becomes difficult, if not impossible to escape; for marriage produces children which will make you settle further. By taking wives of those people they also ostracized themselves from the household of faith. We must be careful not to keep ourselves from the body of Christ. Marriage is a union and it was this union that took them away from God, to unite with the Demon god of the Moabites (*Chemosh*). Even in the physical, if you marry an American, the rights and the privileges of an American is given to you. The laws of naturalization permits that though a Nigerian you can claim American citizenship by marriage. The simple truth is that with marriage, the two become one. In other words marriage to the Moabites made them to become Moabites. They had by implication become one flesh. **By their action they had denied or renounced where they came from, they had rejected the congregation of the people of God.** This is a very serious matter? In other words you can become an unbeliever if you, as a child of God goes and marries an unbeliever. The scriptures that says, the believing partner becomes a covering, for the unbelieving partner, is only applicable to those people who were married before one of the partners became born again.
- **Tribulation sets in:** They dwelt there for 10 years. Ten symbolizes tribulation. It is symbolic of the fact that such a union will be froth with trials and affliction because God is not in it and also because the man has departed from God to sojourn in another nation. The scriptures are clear on this matter. *2Co 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God. 2 Cor 6:15.* The man who consciously takes the decision to go and marry an unbeliever automatically becomes an unbeliever. An unbeliever has the devil as his father. In fact I make bold to say that if you take such a step, you become the devil's son/daughter in law. God forbid that any one of us will make such a grave mistake as to join him/herself with one who is in the kingdom of darkness. If you marry an unbeliever you put yourself outside God's kingdom and you will have to work very hard to get back in.

THE ULTIMATE CONSEQUENCE OF REBELLION

The wages of sin is death, but the grace (*gift*) of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. The ultimate consequence of departure from God is death. *v 5 And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband. (Ruth 1 v 4,5)*

These people turned away and they died. Naomi lost her husband and her two sons. God helped Naomi and she arose and made up her mind to return, that was her saving grace. God opened a door of repentance for her and she took it. If she had continued there, she also would have died. I

I personally think that at the time of her husband's death, she ought to have returned but she didn't until her two sons died. Note that their wives lived. It points to the fact that the environment was an environment that was not strange to the wives, they were Moabites. They were already under the control of the devil so they were not under attack. The problem is not the people who are already in the world but the problem is you , who has left the covering of Jehovah God to expose yourself to the devil.

We must be careful not to be enticed away from our God with the promise of bread in a strange land. You must always consider what the end result of going after that bread will be. For example some people are running after the bread of prosperity. Prosperity is not the ultimate aim of salvation. Jesus died so your soul can be saved. We are admonished to follow after God and His righteousness so that all other things shall be added unto us. Follow Jesus and you cannot help but prosper. May God help us to be a people who will stay with Him and avoid looking out.

RETURNING TO GOD : THE WAY OUT

Repentance is the drastic decision that one has to take to be able to separate oneself from where one is coming from and to enter into a new phase of life. Repentance must indeed take place if we are to return. The condition for returning is REPENTANCE. We will have to make up our mind to say "I go this way no more, Lord. I am sorry, I turn back to you". Hallelujah.

There must be a very serious severing or separation that takes place. It can be likened to a man renouncing the former nation that he was a member of and now becoming the member of a new nation. God is gracious. **If any man is in sin, God is saying there is such a thing as repentance.** If you turn away from unrighteousness and begin to walk on the path of righteousness in Christ the devil cannot hold the past against you, in the same way if a man lives and abandons his righteousness and begins to walk in unrighteousness the fact that he hath walked in righteousness all these many years will not count.

IMPORTANT WORDS OF ADMONITION

Elimelech and his family ran out of the house of bread. In the true sense, in our walk with God , whatever happens in your Bethlehem Judah experience (*i.e. when there is lack in the midst of plenty*) you must praise God brethren and not run away from the house of bread. When we are not able to praise God, we become discontent and what comes out of our heart is grumbling, bitterness etc.

This brings us to the matter of the kind of bread we seek. God is also telling us that we should be careful. Yes, there was bread in Moab but what kind of bread did it turn out to be? Bread of mourning, bread of affliction. In Judges 17 v 7 we read the account of a young Levite who left Bethlehem Judah to sojourn where he could find a place. His experience was even more disastrous than Elimelech's. The man departed from where he was and he became a priest over a demon god. He became a hired priest for a man! What a shame. Another example is Esau, who for a bowl of pottage sold his birth right. He sort to get it back but was unable.

As we talk about going in the wrong direction and persisting in it, I remember a certain young lady who had some disagreement with the brethren in fellowship and decided to keep away from church. In spite of all persuasion; she persisted in holding on to her offence and was never able to return to fellowship. This is something that can easily happen to any of us , as we talk about continuing in a wrong step, let us beware for we may have good reasons for our offence. We may insist on continuing in our offence and before you know it you may be out of fellowship. **An antidote to this is the need to recognize which church family God has called you in to and to steadfastly remain in it.** Rebellion is like a little seed and it begins to grow and your thinking begins to change. That which is against the will of God becomes more and more acceptable. For example you start by admiring the way of life of the unbelievers, instead of them being abhorrence to you.

Elimelech and his children were comfortable living in Moab (*a land where men were so steeped in idolatry that it was a little thing for them to sacrifice their children to Moloch*) Little wonder then that the children married unbelievers and continued there ten years. What a disgrace. Imagine the thought of being the devil's in law. That is prodigal indeed.

SUMMARY

- The experience of Lot in Genesis is similar to that of Elimelech. Lot chose to go the way he did and he dwelt in the land that he felt was good for him, so also Elimelech. He departed and moved from Bethlehem and went to Moab. **We see that when one makes up his mind to go in a certain direction or take a decision that is contrary to God's, it is really the beginning of a walk in rebellion, and other things begin to follow and the sure product of our rebellion will be sin.** The result would be that which is not to the glory of God, because the root of our action is borne out of the rebellion of insisting to go one's own way.
- **We cannot overemphasize on the fact that as Christians we must ensure our hearts are not secretly enticed to the ways of unbelievers, especially as it regards marriage. We must continuously assess ourselves and weigh those things we tend to have an inclination for and confirm if they are in conformity with Christian values, and if they are not, we go to God in fasting and prayer. I am sure that no true believer will purposely plan to marry an unbeliever. These temptations do not start in a day. The thought slips into your heart gradually hence the admonition to watch (*watch yourself and your actions*), to pray and to remain steadfastly in the way of fellowship.** Remember Solomon who the scriptures testify of loving God but sadly his heart was not wholly given to God. In his later days his love for strange flesh "caught up with him. We must take the admonition to *Keep our heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life (Pr 4:23)* seriously indeed.

In the matter of marriage it is necessary we make an important distinction here. When we say marriage to an unbeliever is wrong. We mean a stark unbeliever, that is one who has not known anything about Jesus. We are not referring to those Christians who do not believe exactly what we believe. An unbeliever is one who does not know Christ. The man who does not believe what you believe is not an unbeliever. It's just that your vision differs from his. Marrying one who has a different vision from yours has its own challenges (*which can be sorted out*), it certainly is not the same as marrying an unbeliever.