

Bible Study Lesson Summary, July 19, 2020

Today's lesson includes Days 124-130 on your reading guide.

THE BOOK OF RUTH

I love this story. The book of Judges was a macro look at the God working with the People of God and can seem very impersonal, people getting killed like God doesn't care about individuals. This is a micro look at a few individuals and are examples of how God works with each person through His law and the community, and later the church He builds. It shows that when good people live out the law, good things happen. So it seems a little idealistic, but to most people the idea of heaven is idealistic. This is a great balance after reading the last half of the Book of Judges.

Ruth 1: Elimelech and his wife, Naomi, leave Bethlehem and go to live in Moabite territory. Their sons marry Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. These women are those pagan wives that God warns the Israelites about, so it is a real test of how God thinks. Elimelech and his sons die leaving three women without legal standing in this land. It is dangerous for them, especially for Naomi, who is the Israelite in a foreign country. She heads back to Bethlehem. Orpah decides to stay with her people. Ruth risks everything to go with what is left of her new family, Naomi. Vs. 11, "Have I other sons in my womb who may become your husbands?" This and the other lines around it help us understand that they must be desperate to be connected with any man so they can have the protection of the law.

Ruth 2: Living in poverty, Ruth and Naomi must become a part of the Middle East welfare system. Landowners are to leave small amount of their crops in the field for the poor to come and harvest. This gives the poor the dignity of work and allows them to have a little to eat. Ruth does this in Naomi's relative's fields. Her relative Boaz sees Ruth doing this. Naomi, who is too old to harvest, and is impressed, for Ruth could have stayed in Moab and lived with her father and brothers and be protected. Vs. 22 gives a sense of the danger involved in this situation and how Naomi tries to keep it at a minimum, "'You would do well, my dear,' Naomi rejoined, 'to go out with his servants; for in someone else's field you might be insulted.'" Insulted means raped or abused. Remember, the law does not protect her for she has no right since she is not connected to a man.

Ruth 3: Vs. 9, "He asked, 'Who are you?' And she replied, 'I am your servant Ruth. Spread the corner of your cloak over me, for you are my next of kin.'" She is related to Boaz through marriage. Because of the way the Promised Land is divided out between the tribes of Israel, they are encouraged to marry their own relatives. They did not have the regulations we have about marrying close cousins or siblings. For the sake of keeping the land in the family they must try to marry someone close and bring up offspring to work the land when the elders can't. That was they version of Social Security or retirement plan.

Ruth 4: Because of her compassion and faithfulness to God's people God blesses Ruth. Vs. 21, "Salmon was the father of Boaz, Boaz was the father of Obed, Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse became the father of David." So Ruth could have been the great grandmother of King David. This was copied right into the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 1. Family stories like this help to build character, by helping new generations know that they can aspire to greatness by depending on God.

THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

The time of the Judges is over and the people want a king. It seems that God has been hesitant to supply one for He wants to be the king. First He worked on making them a family (Adam & Eve), then a tribe (Abraham), then a nation (Moses & Joshua leading to the Holy Land). But it was always the idea that He was to be the head of the family, but now it has grown and He has to show them how to be a kingdom on earth so they will eventually understand the Kingdom of Heaven.

1Sm. 1: Think of Hannah as the people of Israel. Peninnah would be the Gentile nations. Hannah was childless but was a favorite of her husband. The Israelites were blessed but they didn't have what they needed for salvation for the future, a leader for this nation, hopefully a priest, prophet and king, or a savior. The gentiles seemed to be in better shape. In answer to prayer, salvation comes but must be offered back to God. So Chapter 1 is a summary of the plan of salvation for the chosen people. By the way weaning for them was after the age of three.

1Sm. 2: The prayer of Hannah to thank God is very much like the Magnificat. Just a side note, (vs. 8) "For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he has set the world upon them." This fits the image of creation that is pictured in the Genesis in some of your bibles. The sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, are the images of the chief priests that Jesus would have to contend with. Vs. 27-36 is a prophecy on the end of the priesthood based on the family tree of Levi, but God will choose one priest who is faithful (vs. 35). That is a prophecy of Jesus and the end of Jewish priests. Have you noticed that there are no more Jewish priests, only Rabbis? That is because they no longer have a temple in which priests would offer sacrifices.

1Sm. 3: Samuel is the Christ figure. Vs. 19, "Samuel grew up, and the Lord was with him, not permitting any word of his to be without effect." God uses Samuel as a prophet to reinforce that the priesthood of the Levites is coming to an end. That priesthood is represented by two sons of Eli, Hophne and Phinehas.

1Sm. 4: This defeat of the Israelites is a foreshadowing of the people of Israel in Jesus' time trying to say that they could be saved just because they were Sons of Abraham. They did not follow God faithfully, but wanted to have the fruit of the covenant. The Ark couldn't save them for it contained the Word of God, the Ten Commandments, which they ignored. At the news of this Eli, 98 years old, and the last of the judges, died.

1Sm. 5: The Ark, the Word of God, is not powerless and causes horror to those who do not understand it, in this case it was hemorrhoids. The notes say this might actually have been the bubonic plague. Other bibles say tumors. Dying of hemorrhoids sounds more like God's sense of humor to me.

1Sm. 6: Vs. 6, "Why should you become stubborn, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh were stubborn." The Philistines had heard about Israel's dealing with Egypt and are trying to figure out how to deal with the Ark. They don't want the laws within it but they are challenged by its presence. When Jesus comes, the Gentiles will have the same challenge. Can they give up their ways to follow Christ? In vs. 19 it says, seventy descendants of Jeconiah did not join in the celebration and died. This foreshadows many who do not join in on the Lord's Day celebration of Jesus's death and resurrection.

1Sm. 7: Samuel helps the people of Israel to turn back to the Lord. Vs. 3, "Samuel said to them: "If you wish with your whole heart to return to the Lord, put away your foreign gods and your Ashtaroth, devote yourselves to the Lord, and worship him alone. Then he will deliver you from the power of the Philistines." They did turn to God and the Philistines were conquered.

1Sm. 8: The Ark of the Covenant with the Commandments is not good enough for the Israelites so now they want a king. God was not pleased. Vs. 7, "Grant the people's every request. It is not you they reject, they are rejecting me as their king." It would be like us saying we want a holy president and that will make us look like a holy nation, and we don't have to take responsibility for our being bad.

1Sm. 9: Saul is handsome and tall and is the one chosen to be king, even if he can't find his asses. Once again, we realize that God has a sense of humor.

1Sm. 10: Saul is anointed with oil. Oil or chrism is the sign of a permanent job because it soaks in and stains. Note also in vs. 3, that bread and wine are a part of the sign of God's help. Vs. 12 shows Saul to be a prophet also, so he becomes the Christ figure. Vs. 27, "But certain worthless men said, "How can this fellow save us?" They despised him and brought him no present." There are always some non-believers.

1Sm. 11: Vs. 9, "...while the sun is hot, they will be rescued." Would you believe about 3:00pm? Saul wins his first big battle. Vs. 13, "But Saul broke in to say, "No man is to be put to death this day, for today the Lord has saved Israel." This is again a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ giving us another chance after He shows His power.

1Sm. 12: Saul is not to be seen as the savior. Only Jesus could be that. At this point the people are choosing Saul in addition to God. But the fear is that they will let their faith in their king replace their faith in God. Samuel quotes the people in vs. 12, "'Not so, but a king must rule us,' even though the Lord your God is your King." In vs. 14 Samuel says: "If both you and the king who rules you follow the Lord your God—well and good." With Jesus God finds a way around this paradox by having Jesus be God, King and a representative for us.

1Sm. 13: In vs. 8 you see that Samuel was late for his priestly duties. Don't you hate when that happens? So Saul also tries to be a priest; something that he is not anointed to do and gets into trouble. Vs. 9, "He (Saul) then said, "Bring me the holocaust and peace offerings," and he offered up the holocaust." Only Jesus is anointed priest, prophet and king. Saul is only king and barely a prophet, but certainly not a priest. Vs. 14, Saul's kingdom will not endure "...because you broke the Lord's command."

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Psalm 119: 97-176: The faithfulness of Jesus as He speaks to the Father in this psalm is just beautiful. He sees such goodness in following the way of the Father and such abhorrence to anything else.

Vs. 105 is another verse that helps to understand this psalm is, "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path." I think that is already a song.

Vs. 121 is important as He gets closer to the end of His prayer in the Garden: "I have fulfilled your just edict; do not abandon me to my oppressors."

Psalm 120: The first two parts of this psalm sounds like a summary of Jesus' prayer in the last psalm. Vs. 5 is different; "Alas, I was an alien in Meshech, I lived near the tents of Kedar!" These are areas where Abraham traveled, so Jesus is identifying himself with Father Abraham and his ancestors; even though He is speaking as an individual. This is like His words to Saul; "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me."

Psalm 121: "My help comes from the Lord..." This psalm is very similar to the theme of psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd."

THE GOSPEL OF ST. MARK

Mk. 3: The last line of chapter 2 was; "That is why the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath." That is not an empty phrase. You have to know that Ezekiel speaks of the Son of Man reigning in glory with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But this 3rdchapter starts to show Jesus is not kidding when He speaks of Himself as Son of Man. It is also another reason that I don't always trust every New American Bible footnote even though I love the translation. Their comment on Mk. 2:28 is that this reference of Son of Man is for Christian readers. The title of 'Son of Man' would mean nothing to Christian readers. Any reference we know of the Sabbath we are

figuring out from these Scriptures or may know from our Jewish neighbors. So I think the editors of the NAB missed the point of this clarifying something for the Jewish listeners also. So vs 1-7 and His curing the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath does not shock us, but sure shocked the Jews.

From vs. 7-12 Jesus is doing miracles but vs. 11 says the unclean spirits would call Him, “Son of God.” This would again have made the Pharisees very nervous for they wouldn’t know if the demons were telling the truth. You do remember that they lie, but we would understand that they don’t lie to Jesus. With all the work ahead, he pick his apostles in vs. 13-19. He is now facing opposition in vs. 20-22. His relatives think “He is out of his mind.” The scribes said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul.” This is the people’s reaction to the notion of Him being Son of Man and/or Son of God. Either would be a flag of heresy or insanity if it is not true. Was it Chesterton that said it comes down to whether Jesus is a mad-man, a liar, or the Son of God? Vs. 23-30 are Jesus’ response. He explains the silliness of Satan being against Satan. This would allay the insanity accusation. Vs. 29 ups the stakes on the truth of Him being the Son of God/Man. “But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an everlasting sin.” I’m guessing that He is setting up the fact that His spirit is the Holy Spirit and not an unclean spirit. The problem is that this leaves the reason that blaspheming the Holy Spirit as unforgivable, up for grabs.

Now the more immediate family shows up in vs. 31. Jesus uses their presence to build a new family based on belief in Him.

Mk. 4: All but the last part of this chapter are parables that fit the concept in vs. 11, “The mystery of the kingdom of God...” The sower tells us that it grows with our bearing fruit but not all will do this. Some will be lost. The parable of the mustard seed is also about the growth of the kingdom.

Vs. 35-41 wakes the apostles up to the reality that He really may be the Son of God. Vs. 41 lets us know that they still are not ready to believe; “Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?” The immensity of all this is not easy for them to grasp.

Mk. 5: The story of the Gerasene Demoniac is interesting. Jesus drives out a legion of demons. This doesn’t just tell us how many but that they have a pecking order. St. Thomas Aquinas outlines this. Since they fell from the different choirs of angels, so they have different levels of power like those choirs. Satan was the highest and they don’t want to make their general angry. When the exorcism is done the man wants to follow Jesus but that is not his vocation. Not everyone is called to that priestly ministry. So family men are important also.

We have a sandwiching story here. Jairus’ daughter is the bread at the beginning and the end. The meat would be the woman hemorrhaging. That woman represents all of Israel who have had no relief before Jesus. The actual relief is in the bread or the raising of the girl from the dead. You would think it would be the other way around but the real healing is not about being brought back into this world.

Mk. 6: Jesus has been down river near the Jordan and then in Capernaum. Now he goes back to Nazareth. He was not able to do many miracles there, not because He didn’t have the power but because they weren’t doing their part by believing in Him. After this Jesus sent out the twelve and they can do what He had done. This is another piece of bread for a sandwich lesson. The

meat is the beheading of the Baptist. It is a reminder of the obstacles that the apostles will face. But they seem to return oblivious of the danger.

Starting with vs. 34 we have the first multiplication mentioned by Mark. After that Jesus walks on water and we hear in vs. 52 that they didn't understand. "They had not understood the incident of the loaves. On the contrary, their hearts were hardened." Is that another way of saying dumb as a rock? But Jesus does more miracles at Gennesaret to end the chapter.