

Sunday – March 26, 2017

Preparation

Have you considered lately exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ redeemed you from? Where were you when He saved you? What were the circumstances that led you to Christ? We begin this week in the Book of Ruth, an incredible picture of Christ and the church. In reading through this Book we'll see the picture of our Lord and Saviour in the life of Boaz, Ruth's kinsman redeemer. As we find, at the end of Ruth, Boaz was the only one with the ability to redeem Ruth and all the "baggage" that came with her (Ruth 4:4-6). The words recorded from Boaz in regards to Ruth are quite remarkable. In Ruth 4:10 the Bible tells us, "Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife". Our Bible is so amazing! Praise the Lord that He, being the only One with the ability, saved and redeemed "in that, while we were yet sinners" (Romans 5:8). By redeeming us, our Saviour purchased, "by his own blood", everything that went with us: past, present, and future. He purchased us to one day make us His wife (Revelation 19:7). We can praise the Lord, along with Job, as He penned in Job 19:25, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:"

From Ruth we dive into the Book of 1 Samuel where God begins the process of "anointing" a king of the nation of Israel. In 1 Samuel 8:5 the Bible records, "And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." God granted Israel's request through the man Saul. We begin the account of his life through our reading this week. The old saying "Be careful what you wish for" is proven quite true in the "anointing" of Saul, as he turns out to be more (or less) than Israel "bargained for".

As we spend time each day in the word, let's all be cognizant of what God has preserved for us, and furthermore, what He wants to teach us. This week will prove to be a time of reflection and rejoicing of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done in each of our lives. Let's all commit to the Book and make time each day to read, study, and meditate on the words preserved for "our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

TODAY'S READING: RUTH 1-4

OVERVIEW: Elimelech and Naomi and their two sons sojourn into Moab during a time of famine; Elimelech's death; the marriage of Naomi's two sons to Orpah and Ruth; the death of Naomi's sons; Naomi's decision to return to Bethlehem and Ruth's decision to go with her; Ruth goes to glean in the field of Boaz in Bethlehem; Boaz's kindness to Ruth; Naomi informs Ruth that Boaz can fulfill the role of kinsman-redeemer; Ruth approaches Boaz at the threshingfloor; Boaz fulfills the role of Ruth's kinsman-redeemer, taking her to wife; Ruth gives birth to Obed, King David's grandfather.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The Book of Ruth is the record of one of the greatest love stories of all time. Ruth's story is a familiar one. She was born into this world a Moabite. The Moabites were a race of people cursed by God due to sin (Deut. 23:3).

During a time of famine (1:1), one day someone shared with Ruth the fact that the Lord had visited His people in Bethlehem, giving them bread (1:6). Upon hearing that good news, she left her father and mother and the gods of her homeland, and went to partake of the Lord's provision of bread in Bethlehem (1:15-18).

When she arrived in Bethlehem, she just "happened" (2:3) to go to work, gleaning in the harvest field of the only man on earth who would carry out for her the Old Testament provision of the kinsman redeemer (Lev. 25:23-28). His name was Boaz, a mighty man of wealth, a Jew, from the city of Bethlehem (2:1-2). Boaz took one look at her, fell head-over-heels in love with her (2:5), and takes her out of his harvest field to be his bride (4:9-10). "And," as the old saying goes, *"they lived happily ever after."*

Like Ruth, we too, were born into a race of people that had been cursed by God due to sin (Rom. 5:12; 6:23a). We call it the "human" race.

But, one day, someone shared with us the fact that God had visited this planet, being born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:4, 7), as the Bread of Life (John 6:35), and could feed the famine sin had left in our soul. Upon hearing that "good news" (gospel – I Cor. 15:1-4), we left our father and mother (Matt. 10:37), and the "gods" we once served in our homeland (I Thess. 1:9), and became a partaker of

God's provision on our behalf.

We have now been left to work, gleaning in the harvest field (Matt. 13:38) of our Jewish Kinsman Redeemer, the mighty man of wealth (the "God-man") from the city of Bethlehem, until He calls us out of His harvest field (I Thess. 4:16) to make us His bride (Rev. 19:7; 21:9), and so shall we ever be with the Lord (I Thess. 4:17), living happily ever after (Rev. 21:4).

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Through BOAZ, the mighty and wealthy Jewish kinsman-redeemer from the city of Bethlehem who took a Gentile bride out of his harvest field – Ruth 2-4 (Isa. 9:6; Heb. 4:15; Luke 2:4-7; Rev. 19:7; Matt. 13:38).

Tuesday – March 28, 2017

TODAY'S READING: I SAMUEL 1-4

OVERVIEW:

God gives Samuel to Hannah; Hannah gives Samuel to God; Samuel gives himself to God; God gives Samuel to Israel; Eli misappropriates the tabernacle by permitting his sons to disobey; Eli misses God's message; Eli misuses the Ark of the Covenant; Samuel lives; Eli dies.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The Book of I Samuel begins at a time when *"the word of the Lord was precious"* (3:1). It was precious for the same reason platinum is such a "precious" commodity today: because it is incredibly rare! God's people were in the place He wanted them, (the Promised Land), but they hadn't actually "possessed their possession" the way God had intended. God had repeatedly warned them in Deuteronomy 8 and 9 of the danger of forgetting Him after He had brought them into the land. The warning had gone totally unheeded, however, resulting in two extremely unfortunate realities in I Samuel: 1) God's people were not bringing Him the honor, respect, fear, and glory He deserved and/or demanded; 2) God's people were not experiencing the "abundant life" He had designed for them to enjoy in the "land that flowed with milk and honey." Once again, Israel is a picture of believers who are "in Christ," but live lives beneath what God intended life in Christ to be.

Enter Samuel, the miracle child given to a mom who surrendered him to God before he was even born. He was to be the first of the prophets, the last of the judges, and the man that would usher in Israel's earthly kings. He was born into a time when God's perfect will was largely ignored. He would faithfully serve God and His people, and yet ultimately be rejected by the people. Though Israel rejected Samuel, God was clear that it was actually Him that they were rejecting (8:7). Because of their rejection of God's leadership, they sought out kings to lead them as had the other nations of the world. The kings are all ultra-imperfect pictures of Christ, whose kingdom would nonetheless be ushered in at God's perfect time.

The Book of I Samuel is fast paced and layered with historical and spiritual significance. One of the most intriguing lessons repeated throughout the Book of I Samuel is the way that God always provides a "new perfect will" for His people, even as they mess up the "perfect will" He had them working within the day

before. In Chapter 1, it is out of a sticky marital situation that Samuel is born to Hannah. Hannah is one of Elkanah's two wives who prayed that God would give her some relief from her "adversary" (the other wife with whom she could not get along). Elkanah loved Hannah, but his acceptance of what was culturally acceptable (bigamy), while not in God's perfect will, was the backdrop for God's "new perfect will" – Samuel. (Random note – Over 30% of live births in the U.S. are now outside of marriage altogether, which is obviously not in God's perfect will, and yet God has a "new perfect will" for each of these souls.)

In Chapter 2, when Hannah presents back to God His present to her, she is handing Samuel over to a priest who has long departed from God's perfect will. He is a carnal, obese (I Sam. 4:18) old man who has allowed his own sons (who are the sons of Belial!) to run the tabernacle. And, run it they did. Right into the ground! Out of this, God's "new perfect will" emerges. And even with the loss of the Ark of the Covenant in Chapter 4 in a battle improperly fought by Israel, the "new perfect will" of God will emerge. Lamentations 3:22 & 23 says, *"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."* Hallelujah for God's unending mercies and unfailing compassions for Israel, and US!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

We see Christ in all that Samuel was meant to be – judge, priest, and prophet. John 5:30; Hebrews 7:26 and Acts 7:37.

Wednesday – March 29, 2017

TODAY'S READING: I SAMUEL 5-10 (don't worry, it's only 126 verses!)

OVERVIEW:

God wreaks havoc on His enemies through the Ark of the Covenant; Samuel leads Israel in reformation and worship; Israel demands an earthly king and Saul is chosen by God.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The glory has departed Israel (end of Chapter 4). Ichabod has been born at the death of his father, uncle, grandfather and mother. In one fell swoop, Samuel is ushered in as judge, priest and ruler. While God is establishing His man, He is wreaking havoc in the lives of His enemies. They have taken the Ark in battle, and have found that nothing is more uncomfortable than the presence of God in the house of the devil (II Cor. 6:14).

Samuel calls God's people back to Him and as they respond to His Word, they are restored, and once again, are protected by God in a miraculous manner (II Chron. 7:14). In the end, however, the sins of Samuel's spiritual father, Eli, are visited upon Samuel and his sons sin in a manner similar to Eli's sons (Deut. 5:9), and given this excuse the children of Israel reject their God and choose to ask for an earthly king (Phil. 3:19).

Ignoring all the warnings of how oppressive their choice of having an earthly king rather than God as king would be, the children of Israel are given Saul. Once again, even though Israel has chosen God's second best plan, God makes provision to give them a king who could choose to lead them to Him.

To the echoes of "God save the king" (I Sam.10:24), Saul begins his reign.

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

We see Christ in all that Samuel was meant to be – judge, priest, and prophet. John 5:30; Hebrews 7:26 and Acts 7:37.

Thursday – March 30, 2017

TODAY'S READING: I SAMUEL 11-14

OVERVIEW:

The rise of King Saul as he obeys God; the fall of King Saul as he relies upon his own reasoning; Jonathan, Saul's son, acts in great courage.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

With all the disobedience and rejection God has tolerated throughout Israel's history, Saul's reign is delivered with this promise and warning, *"Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king."* I Sam. 12:24, 25.

Fourteen verses later Samuel is announcing privately to Saul what will still take years for God to deliver, *"thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart."* Watching Saul try to hang on to his power and position from this point on, instead of seeking God and desiring to keep a pure heart, is like watching so many followers of Christ who structure their existence upon maintaining a good front, and getting from God what they want from Him, rather than hearing and heeding and knowing the God who in turn promotes and protects. (I Sam. 7:9; Jeremiah 22:29; Joshua 23:11; James 4:10)

In the New Testament, Paul, (who's original name was Saul), makes only one mention of his name's sake saying, *"And when He had removed him."* How ironic that the first king of Israel is only known for having to be removed, so that God could fulfill His plan. God will always seek a man after His own heart. (I Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22)

Jonathan, King Saul's son, seems to have the heart of a lion (I Sam. 14:6), but his life is caught up in the web of his father's sin. Although he remains pure, the tangle of Saul ends his life too. There is no private sin or private life. What we do affects those around us, and most often and most severely, those we love (Numbers 32:22-24).

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

We see Christ in all that Samuel was meant to be – judge, priest, and prophet. John 5:30; Hebrews 7:26 and Acts 7:37.

Friday – March 31, 2017

TODAY'S READING: I SAMUEL 15-17

OVERVIEW:

Saul's disobedience costs him the kingdom; God chooses David to be king; David kills Goliath.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

These three chapters are some of the most dramatic happenings in all of scripture. Here God rejects a king, appoints another one to replace him out of obscurity, and instantaneously promotes the new king- elect in the eyes of the entire nation of Israel.

Each of these stories has been preached on numerous times because of the very clear messages that God is sending in each of them. In Chapter 15, God gives King Saul a very clear command to totally annihilate the enemy, and by all outside appearances it looks as if Saul is going to obey God. He gathers the troops, confidently prepares them and courageously leads them to battle, but out of victory, Saul snatches ultimate defeat. After the hard part is done and the battle is won and while Saul is in total control, he "reinterprets" God's command in order to do something that better suits his taste. He keeps some of the spoils of battle, and with his own desires fulfilled, he leaves forever behind the hand of God upon his life.

Ringling in his ears are Samuel's words, *"to obey is better than sacrifice,"* while we go on to read what Saul did not understand at the time. *"Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death."* How ironic. (Note that Romans 12 makes obedience and sacrifice one when we are "beseeched" to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service.)

And the irony only intensifies by the last verse of I Samuel 16 when the only cure for King Saul's oppression from the evil spirit was the beautiful harp playing of David – the young man, who unbeknownst to Saul, was God's choice for king.

As the emphasis in the scripture forever shifts from Saul to David, it is thrilling to note what is at the heart of this shift – the heart. While Saul was a choice that was easy on the eye, David was a man after God's own heart. (16:7 – But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him (Saul): for the LORD seeth not as man

seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.) I Sam. 13:14 is where Saul is disqualified over the heart issue, and I Sam. 12: 24 has God urging Saul to keep his heart right. Obviously, God is serious about the state of our inner being, since “heart” is in the scriptures 765 times, and it seldom refers to the physical blood pumping muscle!

With the whole heart issue in mind, we launch into the story of “David and Goliath”, which should be renamed, “David and His Motivations.” While this history is often recounted emphasizing the fact that David desired to defend the name of God against the big, bad, evil Goliath who defied the God of Israel, his motivations seem quite different when we examine the emphasis the scripture puts on David’s discussions around the campfire prior to taking on the giant. Three times David is told what will be done for the man who defeats Goliath (twice David asks). (I Sam. 17:25-30) And to make the point even stronger, David’s eldest brother accuses him of having a bad heart attitude right in the middle of these discussions about the booty for killing the giant. It is clear that God is strongly endorsing the fact that rewards often naturally accompany doing right by God and we do not need to shy away from them or apologize for being motivated by them as long as we are not perverted by them from doing God’s will.

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Through DAVID’S NAME, which means “BELOVED” – I Sam. 16:13 (Matt. 3:17;17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35)

Saturday – April 1, 2017

Reflection

Coming off of the heels of the fact that, “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25), this week’s assigned reading was jam packed with some incredible application, lessons, and typology. We began in the Book of Ruth learning of the picture painted of Christ and the church. Perhaps Ruth’s response to being face to face with Boaz, her redeemer, served as a reminder to all of us as to what our response to God should be on a daily basis. Ruth, without doubt, lived a life of true devotion and commitment to her redeemer here on this earth, how much more should we as “sons of God” (John 1:12) that have been redeemed by the blood of Christ offer lives of “living sacrifices” (Romans 12:1).

As we began our journey through the Book of 1 Samuel, we learned of Samuel’s commitment to the LORD. The Bible records in 1 Samuel 3:19, “And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.” A constant theme throughout the word of God is the emphasis that God places on a relationship with His word. The Bible tells us both in Matthew 4:4 and Luke 4:4 that, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Job writes in Job 23:12, “Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.” In order for any of us to grow as believers, or furthermore throughout life in general, it is essential that we develop and maintain a healthy relationship with the Bible, God’s preserved word.

In contemplating the “success” of men such as Samuel, or Boaz, or even David, a verse we covered in the Book of Joshua comes to mind: Joshua 1:8, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” This compares so well to Proverbs 3:5-8, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.” In considering the world’s definition of success versus the Bible’s definition, we find that they differ in every form of the word. As we continue our journey through 1 and 2 Samuel and learn of David, Solomon, and

so many more “successful” men, may we all consider the source of their “success” and commit our lives to the One “Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father” (Galatians 1:4).

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION:

Ruth 2:10 “Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?”

1 Samuel 3:19 “And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.”

1 Samuel 10:6 “And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.”

1 Samuel 13:14 “But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.”

1 Samuel 17:45 “Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.”