

## PREACHING THROUGH JUDGES AND RUTH

Judges and Ruth deal with the same period in the history of Israel—approximately 1400 to 1100 B.C. Judges tells of public events at various times; Ruth tells of the doings of one family at Bethlehem at a time about midway of this period.

After Joshua died the nation had no strong government, but formed a loose confederacy. They were surrounded by enemies. Among themselves they were united and protected principally by their faith in God. Many times they slipped into indifference and idolatry, and then God allowed their enemies to afflict them, sometimes in one part of Palestine, sometimes in another. When Israel repented, God raised up leaders, called “judges,” to overthrow the oppressors and to lead in paths of peace. The Book of Judges records seven periods of oppression under seven nations, and it tells of fourteen judges.

Archaeologists have found evidence of many places and events recorded in Judges, thus again establishing the truth of the Bible record.

### OUTLINE OF JUDGES

- Chapters 1,2 Final conquests, Israel's forgetfulness and punishment.
- Chapters 3-16 Stories of the Judges
  - 3 Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar
  - 4,5 Deborah and Barak
  - 6-8 Gideon
  - 9 Abimelech
  - 10-12 Tola, Jair, and Jephthah
  - 13-16 Samson
- Chapters 17-21 Stories of the tribes.
  - 17,18 Migration of the Danites.
  - 19-21 Feud between Benjamin and the other tribes.

### IMPORTANCE OF THE BOOKS

The hand of God is clearly seen in the history of the people. God's Word does not whitewash the sins of His people; it tells the truth. The ugly doings of the days when “every man did that

## PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE

which was right in his own eyes" (17:6) prove that "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12).

The book of Ruth shows that God did not scorn the righteous foreigner in building the nation through which to send His Son. Ruth was an ancestress of Jesus. The fields where she gleaned at Bethlehem heard angel voices twelve centuries later.

### Sermon Outlines Provided:

- "The Hand of a Woman" (Judges 4:1-10)
- "The Men Who Kept On" (Judges 8:1-12)
- "Orpah, Who Almost—" (Ruth 1:6-18)
- "Ruth, the Friend" (Ruth 1:5-18; 2:1-13)
- "Naomi, the Faithful" (Ruth 1:19-22; 4:13-17)

### Other Suggested Sermon Topics:

- "The Man Who Faced Judgment" (Judges 1:7)
- "The Politician's Parable" (Judges 8:7-21)

## QUESTIONS OVER JUDGES AND RUTH

1. Caleb gave his daughter for a wife to what man for capturing a certain city? (Judges 1:12,13)
2. Who was the second judge, who killed the King of Moab? (3:14-22)
3. Who put out a fleece to test the Lord? (6:36,37)
4. After the death of Gideon the Israelites worshiped what gods? (8:33)
5. Who vowed that if victorious in battle he would sacrifice whatever first came from his house to meet him? (11:30,31)
6. What was unusual about the 700 men accurate with slings? (20:16)
7. Name the wives of Naomi's sons. (Ruth 1:4)
8. Which daughter-in-law left Moab and returned to Israel with Naomi? (1:16-19)
9. In whose field did Ruth glean? (2:1)
10. Who was the great-grandson of Ruth and Boaz who became king of Israel? (4:22)

PREACHING THROUGH JUDGES AND RUTH

THE HAND OF A WOMAN

(Judges 4:1-10; Cf. I Tim. 2:8-15)

INTRODUCTION —

(Thesis): There is such a thing as too close attention to one's own business.

I. ISRAEL NEEDS A LEADER.

- A. After Joshua, no central leader: "Each did that which was right in his own eyes."
  - Chief immediate need of the nation was for protection.
- B. Leaders of limited ability were found and used where they were.
  - 1. Othniel
  - 2. Ehud
  - 3. Shamgar
- C. Present affliction was at hands of Canaanite king Jabin, whose commander, Sisera, had 900 chariots at his disposal.
- D. Application: Not all whom Christ involved, came to serve under Him.
  - 1. "Whosoever will come after me . . ."
  - 2. The harvest is still plenteous, and the laborers still few.
    - a. There is need for preachers, teachers, youth leaders, etc.
    - b. Many still "prefer not to be in the prominent places."

II. A LEADER TAKES OVER, AND SUCCEEDS.

- A. Deborah, of Ephraim (some distance removed from the danger spot), prophetess, sees the need, and attempts to stir resistance.
- B. Calls Barak to gather the forces of Naphtali and Zebulon.
- C. He agrees, on condition that she will go with him; she succeeds, but says the glory for the victory will go to a woman.
- D. Israel camps at Tabor; Sisera comes; Israel attacks,

## PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE

withdraws, engulfs the Canaanites. (Josephus tells of rain and hail coming from behind the Israelites into the faces of the Canaanites.)

E. Sisera finally falls to the hand of another woman, Jael.

F. Application—One hears occasionally of a church held together and the doors kept open through difficult times by unlikely leadership, even that of a woman—and no credit to the men who made it so.

### III. GLORY IS GIVEN TO THE LEADER, AND CONDEMNATION TO THE ONES TOO BUSY WITH THEIR OWN AFFAIRS TO TAKE THE RISK OF HELPING GOD'S CAUSE.

A. Honor to Deborah.

B. Song of praise includes Jael (See Judges 5:24, for stronger statement honor than that given to Mary, the mother of Jesus!)

C. The people of Meroz are cursed because they remained conveniently neutral.

D. See the courageous commitment of Paul. "He that is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12:30).

### CONCLUSION —

Invitation to courageous commitment, which does not wait for someone else to shame one into doing his duty.

THE MEN WHO KEPT ON

(Judges 8:1-12)

INTRODUCTION —

The less well known sequel to the well known story of Gideon and the three hundred who routed the hordes of Midian. Here they were finishing what they started in the plain of Jezreel with their pitchers, torches, and trumpets.

- A. Preparation and onslaught had given them a sleepless night. Pursuit of the fleeing enemy had occupied the day, and some twenty miles to the Jordan.
  - B. Men from the tribe of Ephraim had cut off the main force of Midianites at the Jordan, but some 15,000 of the original 120,000 had gotten past.
  - C. Gideon's three hundred arrived at the Jordan, "faint, yet pursuing them" (v. 4).  
— The battle not over until victory is complete.
  - D. Gideon's company gained the victory against three evident obstacles.
- I. TEMPTATION TO ACCEPT A PARTIAL VICTORY.
- A. Marauders from far-off Midian had been plundering the Israelites in Gideon's homeland near the Sea of Galilee. Now only one-eighth of the Midianite army remained, running pell-mell for home with their kings, Zebah and Zalmunnah.
  - B. Surely no major threat remained; but God's plan required total destruction of the enemy.
  - C. So now a partial victory over Satan and sin is not sufficient: ". . . Till we all come in the unity of the faith . . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).
  - D. Partial cleansing from sin leaves the sinner still guilty, and a partial commitment to Christ leaves the rebel still rebellious.
- II. TEMPTATION OF WEARINESS AND HUNGER.
- A. The strenuous exertions of the night and the day, without time or opportunity for refreshment, left them understandably "faint."

## PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE

- B. The physical stamina and endurance of the three hundred must be noted.
- C. Compare with the distance runner, "when feet are lead, the body aches, the stomach burns, the breath comes in gasps, and you have to comfort yourself with knowing that the man ahead and the one behind feel the same way."
- D. "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9).
- E. Paul's example fits his advice: Even after he had written, "I have finished my course," he added, "When thou comest, bring . . . the books" (II Tim. 4:7, 13). There was still learning and work to be done!

### III. TEMPTATION TO DISCOURAGEMENT FROM "FRIENDS."

- A. Ephraimites pouted because they were not in on the beginning of victory (vv. 1-3).
  - 1. They had to be mollified with extravagant praise for what they did.
  - 2. Selfishness and childishness among the saints can be discouraging.
- B. Men of Succoth and Penuel (another ten miles beyond Jordan) refused to help because they weren't sure Gideon was going to succeed.
  - 1. These were in the tribe of Gad, whose ties with other tribes were questioned.
  - 2. In the church, some are reluctant to become involved unless immediate rewards are assured.
- C. Gideon finished the job at hand before "taking care" of these discouragers!
- D. Compare Paul's loneliness; "Demas hath forsaken me . . ." (II Tim. 4:10).

### CONCLUSION —

God's men press on to victory, confident in the assurance written in Isaiah 40:29-31. "He giveth power to the faint . . ."

PREACHING THROUGH JUDGES AND RUTH

ORPAH, WHO ALMOST —

(Ruth 1:6-18)

INTRODUCTION —

The story of Christ's coming reaches in every direction. Ruth is a part of it. But consider Chilion's wife, who also seems to have been faithful, dealt kindly with Naomi, and started to leave her homeland with her. The story is about Ruth. The blessing is hers, not Orpah's. Why?

I. ORPAH HAD GOOD INTENTIONS AND MADE A GOOD START.

A. In Moab:

1. Faithful wife, grieving with others at loss of husband.
2. Affectionate to Naomi, dealing kindly with her.
3. Hearing of Jehovah, and blessed by Naomi in His name.

B. On the journey.

1. At least followed the custom of seeing a traveler to the border.
2. Seems to have intended to go to Bethlehem with Naomi.
3. Affectionate and reluctant in parting.

C. She did all that was reasonable and natural—perhaps more.

D. In this she is the picture of most people associated with churches.

1. They are attracted to the good and righteous.
2. They follow it a certain way, perhaps all that is reasonable.
3. These are the two soils, shallow with rock, and choked with thistles.
4. These are the multitudes who followed Jesus.
5. These are the Christians who are enthusiastic about one phase: Mother's Bible; baptism; blood atonement; creeds; fellowship; social reform; peace of mind.

## PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE

6. These are they who attend church when it is convenient; read the Bible occasionally; pray when in need; and give what is reasonable.

### II. ORPAH WAS TESTED.

- A. Naomi's suggestion that she return.
  1. Was it a deliberate test, as Jesus' challenge to the Syrophenician woman?
  2. The suggestion reminded of home, family, friends in Moab, and the lonely life of a stranger in Bethlehem, without normal rewards.
- B. There come testing times.
  1. The multitudes following Jesus were offended at His "hard sayings."
  2. The apostles were offended at the sight of the cross.
  3. The rich young ruler couldn't take the challenge.
  4. Presently—
    - a. There is difficulty, or ingratitude, in the church.
    - b. There are financial reverses at home.
    - c. "It isn't easy"—
      - To forsake the religion of one's family.
      - To go to church when no one else your age goes.
      - To go to the small church in the community.

### III. THERE WAS A LIMIT TO ORPAH'S LOVE, AND SHE RETURNED (It was reasonable).

- A. She to her family, her nation, her god Chemosh, and oblivion.
- B. Jesus said to the apostles—"Wilt thou also go away?" (John 6:67).
- C. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (II Tim. 4:10).
- D. How often do you hear, "There's a limit . . . ."?

### CONCLUSION—

Christ comes to earth and we get acquainted (not by famine in heaven). He returns, and we say, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Will we, to His home with the Father?



PREACHING THROUGH JUDGES AND RUTH

RUTH, THE FRIEND

(Ruth 1:5-18; 2:1-13)

INTRODUCTION — The name Ruth means “friend.”

- A. A quick glance at the story tells why:  
Got along well with her mother-in-law, before and after death of husband.  
Gained smiles and favor in the fields where she gleaned.  
Gained a good name in the village of Bethlehem, though she was a stranger.  
Gained the favor, later to become wife, of the wealthy hero of the story.
- B. Surely she knew how to “Win Friends and Influence People.” To have friends one must show himself friendly (Prov. 18:24). A closer study reveals the *deeper meaning*.

I. FRIENDSHIP IS MORE THAN FRIENDLINESS.

- A. There is a surface friendliness, often mistaken for friendship. — “Never sees a stranger” (Does he make friends, or acquaintances?) (Illus. “I buy all my Christmas presents in October.” “But how do you know in October who your friends are going to be in December?”)
- B. That is not the stuff of Scripture and poetry:  
“There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”  
“A friend is like ivy; the greater the ruin, the closer he clings.”  
“A friend is one who comes in when all the world has gone out.”
- C. True friendship is of heroic, lasting stuff:  
“Because of your firm faith, I kept the track  
Whose sharp set stones my strength had almost spent—  
I could not meet your eyes if I turned back,  
So on I went.”

## PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE

### II. OBSERVE THE BLESSINGS OF FRIENDSHIP.

- A. It made home with Naomi a pleasant place in spite of Naomi's dreary pessimism. —Homes need more than love and duty; they need the brightness of congeniality.
- B. It gained an entree among strangers, in Bethlehem.
- C. It made work with others a pleasure, and avoided jealousies.
- D. It avoided any employer-employee troubles . . . So every relationship is blessed by it.

### III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FRIENDSHIP.

- A. A solid basis in mutual self-giving: Two principles of the friendly approach:
  - 1. Every one I meet has something I need.
  - 2. I have no right to claim that something without first offering something better in exchange.Ruth needed the deep faith that was Naomi's; she offered love and helpfulness.
- B. Spirit of courage and good cheer; not critical or fault-finding. "It is one of the charitable provisions of Providence that perfection is not essential to friendship." —Alexander Smith.
- C. Unselfishness, not quick to take offense or feel slighted.
- D. Patience and persistence in the expressions of good will.
- E. Modesty—neither boasting nor demanding—and gratitude.
- F. Industriousness—the lazy friend is a wear on the patience of others.
- G. No gossip, betraying confidences and embarrassing friends.

### CONCLUSION — The eternal friendship.

- A. The qualities of true friendship make it better with age, best in eternity.
- B. Jesus Christ, center of friendship. "What a Friend we Have in Jesus."—Millions are friends of each other because they are friends of Him.

PREACHING THROUGH JUDGES AND RUTH

NAOMI, THE FAITHFUL

(Ruth 1:1-7, 19-22; 4:13-17)

INTRODUCTION —

Naomi had been away from home for ten years, and on coming back she found everything changed. (The story from the first verses of the Book.)

I. THE SURROUNDINGS HAD CHANGED.

- A. Not so great changes as ten years make now, but observe children grown up; old friends dead; new houses built, etc.
- B. See the rapidity of change with us. Found church directory 20 years old:
  - 1. One fourth of former members are still active.
  - 2. One person in seven still lives in the same place.
  - 3. One third of the businesses which advertised in it are still going.
- C. Through it all Naomi remained faithful.
  - 1. God was real to her, even when it seemed that His hand was heavy.
  - 2. She was quick to bless Him for the good that came to her.
  - 3. "Love is not love that alters when it alteration finds."  
(Transition—Part of the seeming change in things may be change in ourselves.)

II. NAOMI HERSELF HAD CHANGED IN TEN YEARS

—“Is this Naomi?”

- A. “Call me not Naomi (pleasant) call me Mara (bitter).”
  - 1. “The hand of Jehovah has been bitter against me.”
  - 2. Widowhood, childlessness, poverty—what other affliction is there?
- B. We go back to the Old Place. Things are not as we remember them; *we* have changed.
  - 1. The changes we see in places and people are often the reflections of the changes that have occurred in ourselves.

## PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE

2. Thus the worship in church is either richer or less helpful; reflecting self.

C. Through the changes in herself, Naomi remained faithful. — Her prayers might now be offered through tears, but they were offered (See 1:20, 21).

III. NAOMI'S FAITH HAD CHANGED—(If it had not she probably would not have kept it.)

A. There was not any change in the revealed truth on which her faith was based. Her God was still the one who gave the Law at Sinai. The change was in her understanding of Him.

B. She had thought of Him as the defender of Israel and the giver of good.

— Now she sees His hand also chastening those whom He loves.

C. Her people thought of Him as the God of Israel only.

1. Hear Boaz, "Jehovah, under whose wing you have come . . ."

2. But Naomi said in a strange land, "May Jehovah deal kindly with you . . ."

3. Thus her faith could survive ten years in a strange land, mid strange worship.

D. It was a triumphant and attractive faith in the midst of difficulty—"Thy God shall be my God," said Ruth.

E. Observe among us the loss of many whose faith never grows, and is shed like an outgrown garment. A man-sized faith needed for the life of a man.

F. The Gospel can not and must not be changed, but our understanding must grow.

— "Now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things" (I Cor. 13:11).

## CONCLUSION —

The Apostle who said, "My little children, . . . love one another" was a changed man in changed circumstances and bigger faith than he who said, "Shall we call down fire from heaven?" to burn the unfriendly village.