

The Bible 20/20: "In Those Days" (3-22-20)

Introduction: Judges & Ruth

1) Judges - We need a Deliverer

This book is both a History and a Warning:

- God's People didn't follow the Torah (Law/Instruction)
- God's People didn't drive out the inhabitants as instructed

Judges shows us the results of this failure & they are ugly . . .

Judges 2:11-12 & 14 (ESV)

(11) And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. (12) And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger . . . (14) and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies.

But God - He would see their failure and the ensuing trouble and show mercy by raising up a Deliverer

- **Deliverer** - One who sets free, rescues, or saves

Judges 2:16, 18-19 (ESV)

(16) Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. . . (18) Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. (19) But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.

Notes: May we be different than so many before us who fail to learn from History!

These were Imperfect People, with Imperfect Deliverers who continued in this cycle . . .

- **Gideon** - cowardly - courageous faith - victorious, then - vengeful & idol worship
- **Jephthah** - child sacrifice as he "bargains" with God (a requirement God never gives)
- **Samson** - strength from God, but He continually compromises & plays with sin to devastating results
- **Gibeah** - the sin of Sodom & Gomorrah repeated (now amongst God's people) and civil war follows

This all leads to the closing of Judges which defines the core issue . . .

Judges 21:25 (ESV)

In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

2) Ruth - We need a Redeemer

Ruth 1:1 (ESV)

In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land . . .

The Story: Opens with 3 women in tragedy Naomi and her daughters-in-law Ruth & Orpah

- **Naomi** - bitter, has a works based (or bargaining with God) mentality . . .

Ruth 1:20-21 (ESV)

(20) She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. (21) I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?"

- **Orpah** - returns to her people and their gods . . .

Ruth 1:14-15 (ESV)

(14) . . . And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law (goodbye) . . . (15) And she (Naomi) said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods."

- **Ruth** - faithful to God and His people . . .

Ruth 1:14 & 16-17 (ESV)

(14) . . . but Ruth clung to her (Naomi) . . . (16) But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. (17) Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you."

Ruth's Story:

- (Chapter 1) Ruth - Chooses to follow God & be Loyal to Naomi. They return to Bethlehem
- (Chapter 2) Ruth - Serves Naomi faithfully, & works in the field as a day laborer, living on the scraps
- (Chapter 3) Ruth - Trusts & Obeys - both Naomi (god's people) & Boaz (the redeemer)
- (Chapter 4) The Redeemer fulfills his duty - Joy & Blessing (even in the **midst** of famine & tragedy)

Boaz is the picture of a Redeemer . . .

- **Redeemer** - One who restores your rights, and avenges the wrongs

This book shows us 2 key things:

- Following the Law does not exempt us from trouble
- There is hope when we cling to the Lord and trust our Redeemer!

3) Jesus - The Deliverer & Redeemer

- **Jesus is our (Perfect) Deliverer**

Galatians 1:3-5 (ESV)

(3) **Grace** to you and **peace** from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, (4) who gave himself for our sins to **deliver us from the present evil age**, according to the will of our God and Father, (5) to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4, 10 (ESV)

(3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, (4) **who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction**, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God . . . (10) **He delivered us** from such a deadly peril, and **he will deliver us**. On him we have set our hope that **he will deliver us again**.

- The Grace & Peace of Jesus - delivers us from the present evil age!
- Our Deliverer comforts us in our affliction
- In contrast to the Judges (and our present evil age) that spirals in an every descending cycle . . . God's cycle of faithfulness it past, present, and future deliverance!

- **Jesus is our (Gracious) Redeemer**

Galatians 3:10-14 (ESV)

(10) For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." (11) Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." (12) But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them." (13) Christ **redeemed** us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"— (14) so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might **receive the promised Spirit** through faith.

- If we are relying on our own good works to save us from trouble, that way is cursed! (see Naomi)
- But, Christ redeems us from the curse of the law - so we can receive His Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-23)

Galatians 4:3-5 (ESV)

(3) In the same way we also, when we were children, were **enslaved to the elementary principles of the world**. (4) But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, (5) to **redeem** those who were under the law, so that **we might receive adoption as sons**.

- Whether we are living by the elementary principals of the world (see: Orpah)
- Or enslaved to a works based life - bargaining with God for good things

By the Grace of God - we can be redeemed and enjoy living in the Family of God!

Listen: We cannot manufacture the things we need right now on our own, they are a byproduct of the abiding presence of God . . .

Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)

(22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Application: In these Days . . . Let's learn the lesson of Ruth that in the midst of Tragedy our Redeemer Lives!

Closing Prayer: I want to close in prayer with something Paul wrote to the church in his letter to the Colossians. This passage concludes with a reminder that Jesus is both Deliverer & Redeemer . . .

Colossians 1:9-14 (ESV)

(9) And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, (10) so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; (11) being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; (12) giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. (13) He has **delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,** (14) in whom we have **redemption**, the forgiveness of sins.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) The book of Judges closes with "In those days . . . everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Do you see this mentality in our culture today? What are some examples? What are the 2 warnings in Judges that would help us avoid this mentality? (follow God's instruction, don't mingle with the culture)
- 2) How can you follow these 2 warnings in your daily life? What is a practical step you can take to better follow God? Is there a particular area that you've allowed culture to mix into your life - what is God asking you to do in order to change this?
- 3) Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth are living in the midst of this same time period, and are experiencing personal tragedy themselves. What are the different ways they handle their difficulty? Who do you relate to most right now? How could you to these times like Ruth respond in her day?
- 4) As Ruth chooses to cling to God and His people, we see His blessing on her life even in the midst of her own tragedy and the difficult circumstances in the world around her. Can you think of some examples in your life of surprising or unexpected blessings in the midst of difficulty?

We see from these stories the need for a Deliverer (one who rescues and saves), and a Redeemer (one who restores, and rights the wrongs).

- 5) How is Jesus the ultimate Deliverer (see: Galatians 1:3-5 & 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, 10)? Is there a specific aspect of His deliverance you need in your life right now?
- 6) How is Jesus the perfect Redeemer? (see: Galatians 3:10-14 & Galatians 4:3-5) Is there a specific way you need his redemption right now? How can you experience the wonderful fruit his presence provides? (Galatians 5:22-23)

Finish your time by praying through and reflecting on Colossians 1:9-14.