

Free - Take One



Shaqah

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

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Step Into the Springs!

For the sixteenth year, Living Springs Institute has published its daily planning calendar that gives you the Biblical calendar alongside the calendar most of us use every day. Since early 2018 the companion book, titled *Counting The Days*, has also been available. If you're a regular mail subscriber to this publication and have not already received a calendar, you should have received one with this issue of *Shaqah*. We'd also like to send calendars to all of our e-mail subscribers, but we don't necessarily have your current physical mailing address. Your 2024 calendar is waiting for you, so be sure to contact us and put in your order today!

As much as we have always felt the planning calendar is a great Biblical education product, even if you don't use the calendar, the calendar's companion book, *Counting The Days*, is still a book you're going to want to read. With a full example calendar in the back, this book is a great way to learn about the Biblical/Jewish calendar all by itself. *Counting The Days* is an overall teaching about the calendar and feasts God gave in the Law, but more specifically, it teaches the how and why God set up a calendar that contains distinct events, all of which prophesy about God's plan for our existence. It covers what each event prophesies about, why there is a Biblical and Jewish calendar, and much more! Of course, many of you have already received a copy of the book, but if you do not have one you will want to receive a copy when you order your 2024 calendar. If you already have a 2024 calendar, it should have come with a pink card inside that you can simply fill in with your name and address, and for only the price of a stamp you can order your copy of *Counting The Days*!

Again this year I say, by no means is Living Springs a ministry backed by a lot of money, so it is only by the continuing

grace of God we are able to not only offer the 2024 daily planning calendar, but it and a copy of *Counting The Days* are both FREE! To order your free copy(s) of the 2024 calendar and/or *Counting The Days*, you can simply write, e-mail, or visit us online. For online orders, just go to www.livingspringsinstitute.org, click on the "Resource Shop" button, order the 2024 calendar and/or *Counting The Days*, and type your mailing information into the lines provided on that form. To order more copies than the form allows, please use the comment box. If you are using e-mail, send your request to:

resources@shaqah.com. If you're using regular mail, write to us at: Living Springs Institute, P.O. Box 271, Loveland, CO 80539. Just tell us you would like the 2024 calendar and/or *Counting The Days*. Be sure to give us your physical mailing address, and your order will be on its way as soon as we can process it!



For those of you who may never have ordered anything from Living Springs, know that ordering will not put you on any mailing list! Living Springs is happy to send people only what they request. Thus, we want to remind everyone that we also offer other teaching products, and all for free! If you would like a free subscription to this publication (*Shaqah*), don't

forget to make that request when you write. We also produce a PDF version of the calendar, along with many other materials in PDF, which you can download from our website at anytime.

In closing, I just want to say thank you, and please remember to share Living Springs Institute with others so they too may learn and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ! We have struggled once again to get this calendar together and with getting it out to all of you. However, with God's help we will get the work done and may God bless each of you for your patience. As always, we pray you will be blessed by this issue of *Shaqah*!

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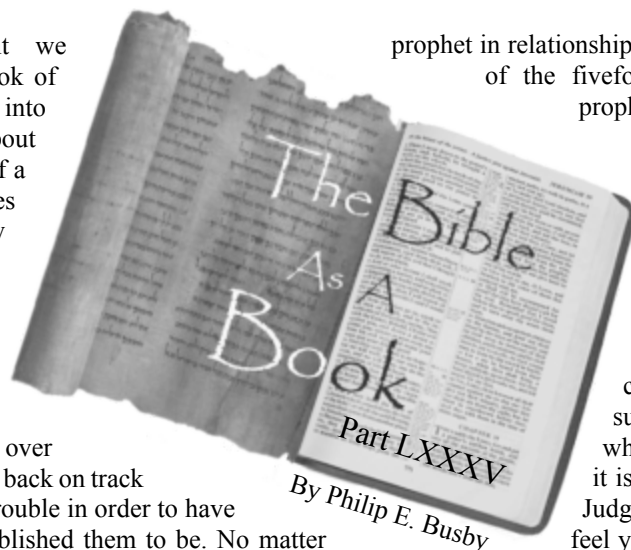
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In our last segment we finished our overview of the Book of Judges. As we left Joshua to go into the Book of Judges I talked about how we were moving into a bit of a new time period with both Moses and Joshua being gone. In that new period the nation was to truly live as God intended, using the Law as their guide, along with the priests, and recognizing God as their King. However, what the Book of Judges shows us is God sending judges to help Israel over and over again in an attempt to get back on track or at least pull them out of deep trouble in order to have a chance at being what God established them to be. No matter what judge we are talking about, these men and women were very different from having a king in that they were not total rulers of the nation as a king would have been. That said, some of them did exert king like powers at times or in certain ways. Thus, the major difference really is in the fact none of them were to be the beginning of a dynasty where a son of theirs would go on to be the ruler after them. As we discussed, each judge was who they were and directly called by God for the task He wanted them to perform. Even if their job turned out to be a lot like a king, each one being called directly by God meant God was choosing the earthly leaders of the nation without it happening by a set system of men. That makes a big difference in the way this was going to come out as each judge was called and did their job. We see this most prominently with the judges who did a very specific job and then went home. Such judges really showed they were not a king who expected to rule the nation as a whole and certainly not for their lifetime.

All that being true, as we moved forward through the Book of Judges we saw judges more and more acting like kings at times, wanting to be one, or the people of the nation wanting them to be a king in some form. In that we saw/see the progression or degrading of the nation during the time of the judges instead of what God was trying to get them to see through the judges. Keep in mind, the time period of the judges was not some time long into the nation's history thing. It was the first time period the nation had the opportunity to live fully as God intended them to on the promised land without an earthly king or even a national leader. If we think about what all this means, one can see how there could have been a real need for prophets to come at various points and help the nation find their way until how God wanted them to live was firmly entrenched in the minds and traditions of the nation. That's why in starting our look at the Book of Judges we talked about how the judges really were prophets. They are not often seen that way because they mostly took action and we think of prophets as those whose work is mostly in word. However, that viewpoint comes from the fact that later prophets had to deal with the truth the nation had a king. Kings often stood in the way of a prophet doing an actual work and even just the words most prophets brought led to them being killed or rejected by the king of the time, if not the nation as a whole.

Thus, the Book of Judges on many levels shows us a much better view of what a prophet can do, and as we think of a



prophet in relationship to the fact today prophets are still part of the fivefold ministry called by God, we see prophets are once again held back. Today prophets are held back in much the same way they were in and after the time of the kings. However, today it's not a king that's the problem. Today prophets have to deal with church "leaders" instead of being able to do their job among the body of Christ and the world at large. I could write pages and pages on that subject but I'll leave it to another time when God leads me to do so. At this point it is my hope that our look at the Book of Judges will not have been what makes you feel you know the book but only a start of a

new perspective on what the time period of the judges actually means to both our understanding of what God wanted then, as well as now. For those of us not part of the chosen nation, we do not have the responsibility to enact the Law but through it we find truths that can and should affect our lives. The Law and the chosen nation as a whole have been, are, and will be a living breathing example of not just what to do and how to do it when it comes to serving God but the example of the mistakes we make as well! This is one of the greatest reasons no antisemitism should exist within a group of true believers. It is the depth of what Jesus told us about judging others being the measure of judgment by which we will be judged. (Matt. 7:1-2) Recognizing mistakes the nation made is crucial to us recognizing the mistakes we've made and are making. Judging the nation as evil, rejected by God, or other such things due to the mistakes we see they made, is just condemning ourselves for we are all prone to make those same missteps. By not seeing what we should we also just keep walking forward in our own missteps believing what is, is what should be instead of recognizing what is, is just what God is willing through His great mercy to tolerate. The reason He tolerates what He does is for the sake of saving those who have the eyes to see and the ears to hear the real truth He is putting in front of us all!

Through the judges the chosen nation could have found their way back to the original intent of the Law. Instead, they chose to look at it as an ever increasing possibility they could have a king as other nations had/have kings. (I Sam. 8:19-22) This is why if we moved from the Book of Judges chronologically, we would go to the Book of I Samuel. That book shows us how the last judge was truly called of God, acted as a priest, and exerted much of the power a priest was to have among the nation in continually pointing the people to God. That man's name was Samuel and he would be the last judge of Israel, not because God wanted to give the nation a king but because God would finally allow the nation to have the earthly king He knew they'd one day demand. However, in the last judge we get to see one of the greatest examples of how God intended to work through the priests, specifically the High Priest, to guide the nation with God as their king. It was the example that shows us why God would one day send The Messiah to take that position and lead us into all truth. God did one day send The Messiah to take that role and lead the nation back to the truth during a time they almost couldn't have been further from it and still be anything God wanted them to be. They needed such a man to lead

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment we began by covering the way the Bible handles the wrap up of the life of Abraham, and more specifically Ishmael, as a way to keep our minds focused on the symbolism the main story is telling us while still giving us the details of how God blessed all the descendants of Abraham. We also saw the Bible's construction in the way the story turns back to do a quick refresh of facts we already know about Isaac and Rebekah before going on into their lives more directly. We talked about how this puts our eyes back on them so we can move on to see the formation of the chosen nation and the true fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation. From there, our last segment went into a study about how to pray in that we should not just ask and expect God to answer but we should take time to listen in order to get the answers we need, not just the ones we want, when we want them. We saw this is what Isaac did in seeking God for the fact he and Rebekah could not have a child. Because Isaac had learned from his father's mistakes Rebekah would conceive only when God was ready. From there we went on to talk about how Rebekah found she was having twins but the two children struggled in her womb from the very start. This concerned Rebekah as to how it could be God's will if this was the case. We see that she too asks God for understanding and takes the time to listen for God's response. All this brought us to Genesis chapter 25 verse 23 and we will continue with that verse this time.

As we covered last time, God told Rebekah she had two very different children in her womb. The wording used in the Kings James Version says she had two nations and manner of people. We talked last time about how this really is representative of the fact no matter where this world goes and no matter how much it changes through history there are only two groups of people that really matter. There are people who strive to serve God and there are people who do not. This is what we saw and have talked about so often in the history that existed between the fall of man into sin and the flood of Noah's day. Adam and Eve gave birth to Cain and Able; the story of which we are pretty familiar. Then they had Seth who went on to have a son named Enos. It is at that point we see the beginning of what physically would come to exist for a time and later be represented in the twins Rebekah would give birth to. It was with the birth of Enos we are told men then began to call upon the name of The Lord. (Gen. 4:26) This would start the separation between the two camps of people living in this world. There would be the sons of God and the sons of men. We know these camps were separated because we are told Cain specifically went out from the presence of The Lord to live his life, and we are given some of his genealogy before returning to the story of Adam and Eve having another son and who his son was. The second way we know this is, after being given more extensive genealogy of Seth through Enos, we go into the story of how the men from the camp of those who served God began to let attraction for the women in the camp that did not

serve God affect them! (Gen. 6:1-3)

It is at that point we see God determining man should not live the hundreds of years he was capable of even without the Tree of Life and so caps man's age at 120. Further we are told that the result of the two camps breaking down into one wash of humanity on the earth left a condition where those who still strove to seek God were considered giants among men. To say this in English is not to speak of stature but in the same way we talk about people who are really talented in a particular area of knowledge or physical ability. We often say they are, "a giant in their field." At that time there were people who served God and due to it stood out from among the rest of humanity because they understood things about life and living it which those who were not looking to God had no clue about. To see this clearly one must keep in mind this happened at a time the world's population was really gaining ground in numerical growth but it was a time long before the Tower of Babel had been conceived. This means men did not think in religious thought patterns because there was no religion(s) in the world, there was just life as many chose to live it day by day. That being true, the people of that day were not far enough removed from the Garden of Eden and the first two people created by God's own hands, to be devoid of the knowledge there was only One True God. They were not infected by the Asshur idea we talk about in this study from time to time, which was an idea there was/is a man who is less than God but so much greater than ordinary men they stand somewhere in between God and man. (Gen. 10:8-12)

That concept in and of itself affects our ability to think clearly when it comes to God and how to serve Him far more than we know! It's the reason why people seek religion in general and follow specific men as a way to know God or some form of a god. Some people even seek religion as a way to gain such a status for themselves. However, the people at the time of the giants had no such corruption in their thoughts. These people simply lived in a world where a great number of people did not truly seek God or have real faith. At the same time and it in spite of what many individuals may have thought about their own personal salvation, there were clearly and specifically individuals who served God and lived in faith. These people stood out as giants among men at a time there was no religion to elevate random people to some high spiritual status by just giving them a title and there was no religion that defined what it was to be a "saint" or the like. While this was a true step down from having two clear camps of people, one of which all the people in it walked in faith, there were still two manners of people just like verse 23 is telling us when it comes to Rebekah's twins. There were still those who called upon the name of God, strove to live for God and walked in faith. Then there were those for whom it simply did not matter to what degree they rejected such a thing, its ways, or the righteousness faith teaches us. This was what Jacob and Esau represent in the

overall picture of representation we are being given through Abraham and his descendants who would eventually grow into a chosen nation of people, used to represent the camp of those who strove to know God in this world.

This has a lot to do with why in describing these two children in the womb of Rebekah this verse in the King James doesn't just speak of their manner, it also uses the word nations. Due to the fact there would not be so much physical separation ever again between those who serve God and those who do not that might seem odd to some people considering we look at nations of people defined largely by geographical location and today more so by what government they answer to. However, the use of this word is not a mistake in that this is exactly what we are being shown when it comes to the two camps idea. No matter where in the world and wash of people true people of faith are, they are to follow the instructions given to believers about coming out from among them and being separate. (Isa. 52:11-12, II Cor. 6:14-18, Rev. 18:1-8) This is not always such a physical proximity thing we can do in the here and now but at the very least it must be a mental and lifestyle state we find ourselves in. The fact what calls itself the church long ago stopped striving for separation from the world and instead began to gauge what it believed and how it acted on what the world was doing/is doing is what's created a world getting very close to, if not actually just like, the one that existed in the days of Noah. (Luke 17:26) To be separate is not to lash out at the world in every way we can or to generally reject the people of the larger world who do not live in faith. That said, it is about rejecting the ways of sin such people live in and in so doing we create separation that more times than not is hated by the world.

This is where the strife really comes in. The things of this world are an enemy of the things of God. (James 4:4) This is true if for no other reason than the fact living in faith is so contrary to living without it the two just cannot mix in reality. Thus, we don't have the two separate camps in a physical way and the giants issue may also not be so clear as it once was so very long ago but there is still true separation no matter who likes it or who doesn't. When God told the chosen nation to be separate from the world He was not asking them to do anything more specific than live in faith and allow where that took their lives to be at odds with the world without concern for that fact. This is where what calls itself the church today fails miserably! The idea now is that we as true believers can't afford to get too far away from the world or we won't be able to reach the world. We don't get what Jesus came to clarify and make as simple as possible for us to see, and that's the point we don't need to worry about such things. What we do is live for God and in so doing we lift up His ways of righteousness for the world to see. They can hate it or come to be part of it but it's clearly there for them to see! Jesus put this in very simple terms by telling us to lift Him up and He would draw all men unto Himself. (John 12:32) In violating this most basic of evangelistic precepts we as a group of so called believers become nothing for the world to see as anything different. We become just another group among many groups of various religious notions. Instead of being people who represent the only truth in this world we become just another theory as to how to live life.

This type of issue is why churches can so easily

become social clubs more than a place teaching the Word of God. Church can easily be seen as a self help type thing instead of the place where the real meaning of life is found in a relationship with God. It also lends itself very easily to there being little to no cohesion seen by the world and practiced by what calls itself the church when it comes to what we believe or how we act, talk, and generally conduct ourselves. Far, very far from the days of even having giants in our world are we! We also don't answer to the true governing power of the universe, which is The Only True God. The religion of Christianity teaches us to answer to the Asshur theology. Instead of men used of God to help individuals learn to walk in faith we have established authorities of men just like the rest of the world does. With little to no physical separation and the way in which we answer to authorities of men it's legitimate to ask why a word such as "nations" would be used to describe those who walk in faith versus those who live after the flesh. We just don't see it like we should and it's really true due to the fact those who truly walk in faith are becoming as rare as they were in Noah's day. All this being true, make no mistake about it, no matter how small the camp of faith is, the truth of there being two nations still exists. It may be much harder to see than the days when there were two distinct camps or even the days there were giants of faith in the world. However, nations is still an applicable description for those who walk in faith. Such people simply cannot be so mixed up in worldly things or there will be no room for their faith to operate. Again, it is only our clouded religious perspective that causes us to believe otherwise and we even like that perspective because if we look at our own lives and see little to no separation between who we are and what the world is, with a verbal claim of faith we can fool ourselves and many others into believing we are already saved. Be aware, no thoughts of men can change the truths of God. No matter what we fool ourselves into thinking, the true sheep will be separated from the goats in the end and it will only happen by the determination of God. (Matt. 25:31-46)

These truths are shown to us in so many ways from Genesis to Revelation they should be impossible to miss. Revelation paints a picture for us of standing before a great white throne of judgment and either being welcomed into the Kingdom of God or rejected on the basis of what is written in books; in particular The Book of Life. (Rev. 20:11-15) Early on in Genesis we were shown the truth as it still existed physically on the earth, telling us there were sons of God versus sons of men. Here again in the beginning representation of the chosen nation there would be preserved for the world to see two children in the womb of Rebekah. Two children who in spite of being totally there due to God's will and timing, fought with each other, not because events of life caused them to be at odds with each other, but simply because they existed. This is because of what we talked some about in our last segment. It didn't matter how virtuous Jacob might have looked or truly been compared to his brother Esau, the important thing was/is Jacob wanted to know God and Esau didn't care about that. Jacob wanted the birthright because it meant something special to him to be part of what God had promised to bring through Abraham. To Esau there was nothing more than an inheritance of earthly things. Like his grandfather Abraham, Jacob believed in God, and if we see it correctly it is that which was counted unto him in place of the righteousness he lacked.

What About God's Chosen People?

Part LIX

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."

In our last segment we continued our rundown of the Roman emperors as we led our way up to seeing how Rome eventually came to be considered a Christian empire. In this rundown we talked last time about how Rome was actually losing ground in so many ways it was getting hard to see how it could hold together as an entity at all. While Rome had gone through a long time period of internal strife, not the least of which came over the greed of different men who wanted to be emperor, that is no longer Rome's biggest challenge. In truth the bigger challenge was becoming, finding someone who was even capable of running the empire. Thus, we talked about emperor Philip who actually attempted to resign but whom the senate refused to release from the job. As a part of the army went once again to face the ever increasing threat from the so-called barbarians, the man at the head of that army, who had greatly supported Philip remaining emperor, was declared emperor by his troops after their victory. This man wanted to negotiate with Philip but in what should be no surprise Philip met what he saw as a threat to his power with force and was killed in the fighting that followed. Thus, a reluctant Decius would become emperor and tried to bring back some of the glory of the empire by attempting to rebuild the state religion and the people's pride in it. For all the trouble this would cause Christians and Jews of the empire it would mostly end up being irrelevant to the empire as an entity due to the barbarians' continual assault. We ended last time discussing how the barbarians once again made a major push and were confronted by Decius. There, much in the same place he had been declared emperor, Decius would meet his end at the hand of a very skilled barbarian leader in the summer of 251 A.D. History would declare him the first Roman emperor to die in battle at the hands of a totally foreign enemy.

Considering the success the barbarians gained during that battle which killed both Decius and his son, the barbarians now stood in a very good position against Rome. While many would argue Rome was still vastly more powerful than the barbarians, Rome was actually very fortunate that the barbarians were more interested in land and its resources than they were in any thoughts of starting an empire of their own. As any student of history knows, the Roman Empire was the last in a string of successive empires and this was due to the Tower of Babel effect. No one empire could stand for too long before another power desiring the lead role in the world would gain the upper hand and take that role for themselves. However, in one of the most obvious ways we've covered thus far the Tower of Babel effect shows up in how Rome came to an end. At the time we've made it to in Rome's history there was no great power wanting to ride in and overthrow Rome as the great leading power of the world. There were some minor power struggles with a few who

wanted to bring back past glories of their particular people, but on many levels there was almost more of a hope than anything Rome could be brought back to a full functioning empire as it once had been. The bottom line is, Rome had come to be a symbol of what a great world power could be. To this day it is still looked back on with that view by a large part of the world!

What makes the people history calls barbarians so interesting is that they can be accused of being oblivious to this fact! They had not benefited from the empire, at least not in the direct ways the people living in the empire had. They had not held some previously known kingdom from the past which they desired to resurrect. They were a people who had no reason to see the empire as anything other than something in the way of their daily survival and betterment. While having no desire to take the empire for their own, they also had no reason to desire the empire survive. The truth is, the barbarians themselves were not a cohesive group. There were many different tribes/clans among them and this was true even among the larger groups history recognizes as specific people. This is why I say the barbarians represent the Tower of Babel effect in full bloom. There were several different groupings of them but no great singular power to congeal them together as a power, even at moments when they had success in making serious inroads into the Roman Empire's territory. This is why in spite of killing the emperor and annihilating the part of the Roman army that was with him we would still see no movement on the part of the barbarians as a whole to march their way to Rome itself and collapse the empire or, at the very least, greatly threaten its existence at this time. In many ways this shows us the point about how well the confounding of the language at the tower had accomplished the goal of allowing people to see their own independent way of living. In spite of the long existence of very large and powerful empires from the time of the Assyrians to the Romans, there was still a vast amount of people who didn't even think imperial thoughts or maybe even have much of a clue why anyone would desire such a thing!

This is a full and total break from the idea of the beast which Revelation speaks of. (Rev. 13:1-10) The deadly wound that was put in its head at the tower truly had killed it for a time. It was people like the Assyrians who resurrected the beast and made the first attempt at a new Tower of Babel for the world. They would begin the string of empires which are represented by the beast growing multiple heads. Much of the world had gone after this beast and the idea centralization was/is the key to human progress. It's simply how a vast amount of the world had come to think, especially by the time in history we are covering now. However, the barbarians show us not everyone was thinking the same thoughts. The very fact the people of the North were called barbarians, and that term stuck as an expression for us today, has to do with a recognition by those who considered themselves "civilized" (due to their great

centralization thinking) that these northern people lived lives that did not answer to any centralized power such as a government structure. Sure, one can see their tribal leadership as a form of government, but in truth it was far more about organization than rulership. By and large in ways people of the empire and most of us today just can't understand, these people lived lives focused on survival and the freedom to survive without having to answer to a government.

Now don't misunderstand what I'm saying here, these people were not, for lack of a better term, "saints" by any stretch of the imagination. That is to say, they were not righteous Godly people in anyway. They were as pagan as people get in their religious notions. All I'm attempting to point out is that the way these people lived and thought about existence was more in line with how God created humans to live. There can be no doubt that when Jesus told us the Gospel was to be preached first in Jerusalem and all Judaea, then in Samaria and on out into the uttermost parts of the earth, He was speaking of people such as the barbarians. (Acts 1:8) We can talk all we want about how the Romans did the Gospel a favor in the protection which allowed for extensive travel by the apostles without fear of going into very "unknown" parts of the world right off. The efficiency and availability of the Roman road system made travel to a large portion of the world a very straightforward and organized thing. These facts are why we see the early history of the church being that the Gospel was spread to places easily accessible throughout, and due to, the Roman Empire. All that said, a great part of what Jesus meant when he said, the fields were white and ripe for harvest was not the simple idea people we considered civilized needed to hear the truth but that there was still a large more untouched portion of the world out there that could be reached with the message of the Gospel before it was tainted by the imperialistic thinking the beast was all about.

I know as people read these studies I write, many wonder why I hit so hard and often on the fact faith was never designed to be a religion. Faith should be lived "religiously" in that our personal relationship with God should be our top priority, but it is not about living a religion! People living more like the barbarians would understand this more readily. They would get the point that as you live your life you should live it in a relationship with The God Who created you. People already wagging their tongues after the beast had far more trouble understanding how to live any kind of serious portion of one's life without answering to a higher power structure of men. This is why even history looks back and applies far more serious rulership meaning to position within the church than they were understood to be at the time. It was easy enough for people of the day to say, the leader of the church in Rome makes sense to be more of a leader of the church at large because he is the leader of a church that resides within the capital of the empire! However, it's even easier for later historians to look at it that way and go so far as to declare the "Bishop of Rome" the true leader of the church from very early days. In other words to recognize the position as the same thing it later became using the more familiar term of calling the Bishop of Rome the, "Pope."

These are all symptoms of a sickness which started to infect mankind at the Tower of Babel. It's a sickness God gave us an ability to see the fallacy of by confounding our language. As much as the beast has lived in this world and been worshiped

by billions throughout our history, there is still beacons of hope for people to see this for themselves. To see that living for God is not about living a religion. It's not about answering to a power structure of man. It's about a personal relationship between you and your Creator. That said, don't think that means you are totally free to believe and live however you want because you don't have to answer to a power structure of men. A life of faith is a grave responsibility! This is why it seems to make so much sense to put this responsibility in the hands of leadership who can tell us what to do, but that's an illusion. We must each answer to God Himself no matter who or what structure of religious thought we believe. Humans do play a role in how we are to live in that they see our lives as believers and should see Jesus in our lives. We owe the world that, but the way to figure out how to get that right is not to sit in the comfort of a church pew; it's in the voice of God speaking directly to us. It's in doing what The Holy Ghost is instructing us to do and how to live in spite of how many who call themselves Christians believe you're wrong!

The barbarians, for all their pagan ways, show us a people who still knew how to live without worry for a centralized power. In time, after tearing the beast down, they would become infected too and desire to raise whatever image of the beast they could because they eventually worshiped the beast themselves. However, that's what makes this part of the study of God's chosen people so important. It was not just God's chosen nation that was caught up in all this. Along with them were all those not of the chosen nation's blood who were attempting to live in faith. Satan and evil men would seek to replace the chosen nation with a religion; a religion that would hold itself up as the centralized authority of what it was to live for God. This religion would attempt to suck up all those both of the chosen nation as well as those believers outside the nation and it would do a very good job at it. The final beast to exist in the world is not a lion, bear, leopard, ram, or goat, but the beast that has the appearance of a lamb and speaks with the voice of a dragon. (Dan. 7-8, Rev. 13:11-18) It's the beast that attempts not so much to hold rulership over your life as a centralized governing structure defining what civilized is; it's a centralizing structure attempting to tell you what living for God is!

When people read things like that there is often the temptation to point fingers at this denomination or that denomination as who represents this beast. No small portion of those calling themselves Christians would point their finger directly at the Catholic church. However, that's why it's important we see the Tower of Babel effect is not limited to holding back centralized secular government. It has also worked to hold back the power of any church, regardless of its name, to become the universal church of mankind. It has even kept in check the power of any one denomination or the like among men from being the undisputed authority over what it means to live in faith! In truth this is more important for us to see than the secular side. The problem is, people don't want to be people of faith, people are drawn to centralized power. So, far more often than not, one frees one's self from one power structure only to seek, if not form, yet another. We have trouble seeing how to live our everyday lives outside the centralizing power structure we know as government. Should it come as any surprise we would find it hard to live in faith outside of one? The answer is no, it's not hard to see why people want it. However, that's why

the instructions in the Word of God tell us to recognize the power structures that exist on the secular side with the understanding they bear not the sword in vain. (Rom. 13:1-8) We recognize God has allowed them to exist in the form we see them able to exist. This is why we are told God "ordained" the power for good. Like the advantages the Roman Empire provided for the spreading of the Gospel more quickly in a larger area of the world, government can give benefits. Because that is true God has not totally stopped man from having governments, even ones which rule over very large areas.

The real point is that through the confounding of language God has provided the space for us to live in this world but not have to be of it. Man's free will allows him to shape this world as he chooses, and more and more as time moved ahead that became forced cooperation more than a collaboration. In truth, man could never really stop any of us from living for God as individuals. They could kill every last one of us and others could still choose faith for themselves. The point has never really been about making it possible as much as it has been about allowing us to see it's possible. You might live in a very restricted country where the ways of God are practically outlawed but you can still live in faith. What's really restricted is one's ability to share openly with others so they too might come to live in faith. However, the Tower of Babel effect has helped in that way as well, allowing and compelling many believers to seek a place in the world where they can openly live and share their faith. This is exactly what the people of the chosen nation have been doing for centuries! They were scattered by the actions of empires and the allowance of God. They were further scattered by the desire to find a place where they could live as Jewish people without it being illegal or persecuted in a great way. Because this world has provided so little space where that is true, they have in our modern time returned to the promised land to fight for their right to be who they are on a land they control. This will never be something true Christians have an opportunity to do in this world but as all things concerning the chosen nation are meant to be on so many levels, the chosen nation's plight shows us a physical example of a more spiritual truth. One day all believers, both those of and those outside the chosen nation, will go to live for eternity in the place Jesus said He went to prepare for us! (John 14:1-3)

In that place, those who desire to worship the beast will not be allowed. We will not live as or in a religion, we will simply live and we will do it in a place where God's presence is continually with us in a very tangible way we can hardly imagine in the here and now. If that's what heaven is, and I assure you that's what it is, then we must understand that purpose in order to understand why God asks of us what He does in the here and now. None of us can earn our salvation because that is something we have all fallen short of earning. (Rom. 3:23) Thus, God offers us salvation as a free gift but that gift still has meaning and it's not just about making it to heaven. To see clearly we must understand heaven exists because man's choices on/in this universe have left those who want to walk in faith no real place to call their own and truly live with God's presence so close with us. Not even the chosen nation with all the instructions God Himself gave them for how to do such a thing found success in accomplishing it; at least not in any great way for any great period of time. That fact is what we have been studying. There

is no temple of God in Jerusalem and the earthly throne of God, known as the mercy seat is on/part of the Ark of the Covenant which no one even knows where it is anymore.

In all these physical symbols we see a place for God's tangible presence in this universe among men, cannot be accomplished without God carving out some specific space where only certain people are allowed to live. When Jesus sits on the throne of Jerusalem He will prove even He will not attempt to make such a place in this world because His presence will still be about showing the world God is giving us all a chance, not blocking anyone out or making them be with Him. Attempting to make a place in this world/universe where only certain people (those of faith) can live would be pointless to the rest of the world. That is why Jesus said He would go to prepare such a place. In other words, He would go outside this creation to create a new place where those of true faith can go for eternity. Once this world ends those of true faith can go there because there will be no larger world on the outside of that place to consider. That's what John saw in Revelation and described it as seeing a new heaven and a new earth for the old heaven and old earth had simply ceased to exist! (Rev. 21:1)

Thus, in the here and now, a place where God's presence can reside in a very tangible way can only be accomplished in the hearts of individuals who are willing to walk in faith. God will not allow such individuals to simply perish as those without God perish. In truth, God has no desire to see any human perish, but in order for that not to happen we must repent of what the temporal flesh wants and desire what God created us for. (II Pet. 3:9) For now faith is the only substance of what we hope for which is for that place where we can live before God. Faith is also the evidence of the fact it does exist in spite of the truth all we see around us now is death and destruction of men. (Heb. 11:1) This is true for now and it's why to live is Christ but to die is gain. (Phil. 1:21) God has made a place no group of individuals would. In that place we can be with God without the inhibitions men who don't desire God cause here, but for that to be true there must be a separation of the sheep from the goats. (Matt. 25:32) Salvation is freely offered and given but regardless of any religious notion, we accept salvation or reject it not by some prayer or even by our perfection (aka level of righteousness we achieve). We accept it by desiring faith and living in it. It is to point out what I say so often, heaven exists for a purpose. If you desire and strive to live that purpose not because you want to go on to a better place but because you want that purpose, then heaven is reserved for you. No religion can give you that!

So we are back to what it means to live, not the facade man has put on it with his beast ideas, but live as free-willed human beings created by The Only True God of the universe. Can we chip through all we have to suffer here and now to find what that means? More importantly, do we want to chip through all this world offers us in order to find it? This question is why I point out the barbarians standing around that swamp, having killed the emperor of Rome and his army, cheering their victory did so not because they were the Medes and Persians who had just brought down the Babylonians to take the empire for themselves. They were not the Greeks who rid themselves of the Medes and Persians to rise as an empire of their own. Nor are

they the Romans who slowly grew to be the empire of the world in spite of all the Greeks had become. No, they were farmers, hunters, and craftsmen of the trades their simple lives needed. They were looking for resources to feed their families and grow what they saw as community. They wanted to exist in this world as equal humans and they saw no point at the time in why Rome stood in their way other than being people who wanted to keep the resources for themselves. Theirs might be looked at as a simple-minded kind of thinking but it was a more correct thinking than the Romans who were desperately clinging to something God had already shown He would never allow man to have, and that was to be an all encompassing centralized power of men who didn't need their Creator.

Maybe in some ways that's romanticizing the barbarians a bit too much but it's my hope we can see the main point in all this. There is a lot that can be said at this point in our study concerning what was going on with Christianity but as I point out over and over, the only important information concerns the ways individual believers were being affected by the beast. The other history which is looked at as the history of the church which was going on at this time is a whole other study in and of itself and it concerns how the meaning of faith was being twisted into a blind belief instead of an eyes wide open walk in the truth! It's about how a beast was being formed who could wear sheep's clothing for centuries to come while persecuting true believers as much or more than a purely secular part of the beast had. The way it affects God's chosen nation is in the way I have spoke about on many occasions, which is the fact this religious beast proclaimed itself the replacement of God's chosen nation which is the epitome of what is said about the son of perdition puffing itself up with pride and declaring itself above all that is of God! (II Thes. 2:3-4)

Getting back to what happened with Rome now that its emperor and his successor had both met their end, not at the hands of those who desired to replace them or proclaim a replacement but by a foreign enemy who had little to no interest in Roman politics, we find there was little thought about where the empire should go next. There were those all but irreverent men, one particular one in the East, who believed themselves emperor but who never received any official recognition of their claim. These men's claims were so weak that even in this time of there being almost a vacuum of power, they made no significant moves toward Rome and the true throne of the empire. The senate also made no move to place one of their own on the throne and this was likely because they feared the all too common by this point truth that more often than not the army would pick someone from within their ranks to be emperor. That would only lead to the swift death of whoever the senate put in place. What the empire was left with, as any obvious choice, was Decius' younger son named Hostilian. In technicality Hostilian had been given the title of Caesar along with his brother which made them both heirs to the throne should their father die. Later Hostilian's brother Etruscus was raised to Augustus, making him co-emperor with his father. Thus, when both Decius and Etruscus were killed in battle Hostilian technically became the legal emperor.

Of course, legal didn't mean a whole lot by this point in Roman history. In many ways being the heir apparent to the throne in Rome was a death wish more than anything. Emperors were almost always killed due to assassination or in a power struggle of some kind meaning any rightful or even perceived rightful successor was killed along with them. In the case of Decius, he being killed by an enemy in battle would mean the rightful successor should have taken power with no problem but the way history speaks of Hostilian, he seems more of a footnote than any real legitimate answer to the problems Rome needed an emperor to handle. Of course, as had become almost a habit, the army did in fact choose who they thought should be the next emperor. What was fortunate for Hostilian is that the man they chose was not a hungry for power general but one who was on good terms with Decius' family. That man's name was Trebonianus Gallus. He would not reject the position of emperor on the basis Hostilian had legally ascended to the throne in Rome but moved forward almost as if Hostilian didn't exist. As bad as that might sound, it was a good thing for Hostilian because it didn't mean as it had at other times that the newly proclaimed by the army emperor was on a march to Rome to kill anyone who threatened his power.

The empire seemed to be running out of men who even wanted the position of emperor but that said, Gallus did want to return to Rome and secure his position as emperor before anyone got too comfortable with the notion Hostilian was their man. The particular group of barbarians the Romans had been facing when all this happened were those known as the Goths. Thus, Gallus would offer peace terms to the Goths which allowed them to keep the captives and possessions they had gained during their invasion of Roman territory in exchange for leaving Roman territory. The Goths would be happy with those terms for two obvious reasons. First, heading back out of Roman territory with the plunder they had gotten during their invasion is what they were doing when Decius went after them for the sake of retrieving what had been taken. It was as if Gallus was admitting that was a mistake which Decius should never have done. The second reason the Goths would gladly accept these terms is, how many times had the barbarians crossed into Roman territory and had to be driven back? There was no reason for the Goths to believe making peace on these terms with Gallus said anything about their ability to return at will. This shows us how much the treaty made between Gallus and the Goths was more like an acquiescence on the part of Rome to the idea the barbarians would come into Roman territory almost at will and there was little Rome could do to stop it. A secure border against the barbarians was fast becoming a forgotten hope of the past. The barbarians knew it and it would seem by offering these terms Gallus and thus, Rome knew it. This truth would set the stage for Rome eventually using barbarians to fight back barbarians in a futile attempt to save the Roman Empire.

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

*Questions submitted to the Institute, answered by
Philip E. Busby.*

FBS continued from pg. 4

(Rom. 4:1-3) No matter how much Esau might have literally been more righteous in any way(s), he did not believe in or care about the promises and things of God.

Since all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, Esau's righteousness was never going to save him and he had no faith in God to be counted in place of his falling short. (Rom. 3:23) The truth of how much this separated Jacob and Esau showed up in causing them to wrestle literally in their mother's womb long before they ever breathed the first breaths so many people, even many claiming to be Christians, believe is important in determining when life begins. It disturbed their mother so greatly she had to ask God the all too familiar question, "If this is your will God, why?" Asking the question was important but just as important was getting the answer. As one looks and considers verse 23 let's not miss the fact receiving the answer didn't solve the problem Rebekah was originally concerned about. She, as a mother who believed her womb had been reserved for the purposes of God (holy), was troubled by the fact something that was of God involved such conflict. Finding out why that was true did not stop the conflict. In other words, God didn't take Rebekah out of the storm He simply gave her the understanding of why it was happening. Since this was confirmation what was happening was God's will, Rebekah would ride out this storm knowing God would bring her through. In God's explanation as to what was going on inside her body, God confirmed Rebekah would successfully give birth to two children who would be healthy enough to live lives with purpose going into the future. That future would also mean strife for Isaac and Rebekah, for it would be their job as parents to raise these two children who would always be at odds with one another.

That fact is something we all need to keep in mind as we move through the story of their lives. Growing up hearing the stories of the Bible I was always struck by how long and varied the stories of Abraham were. This can also be said of Jacob, but Isaac's life is very short if measured by just the words that cover his actions. In time, and very much so with God's help, I began to see what all was being represented in these stories and it became very clear Isaac represented God the Son. Jesus' specific physical appearance on this planet would have a major impact on the world; an impact we still clearly see today! However, the time Jesus lived physically with us was very short. Jesus was just over 30 years of age when He was crucified and that means even judging by the standards we do after the 120 year cap, He did not live to an old age. Add to that the fact His parents lost him in Jerusalem and had trouble finding Him when He was twelve years old because they did not understand He'd be about His Father's business. (Luke 12:41-52) Mary and Joseph had so little understanding, in spite of being the hand-chosen earthly parents of The Messiah, they did not seek to facilitate Jesus' ability to begin His ministry at a very young age. Thus, for Jesus to be the example of a child who is obedient to their parents as God's commandment demands, Jesus would go home with them instead of teaching in the temple as He had begun to do. Thus, due to the reaction of Jesus' own earthly parents, Jesus did not begin his earthly ministry until many years later as a full physical adult.

This is in no way to suggest Jesus' life did not go according to God's plan, but it is to point out The Messiah coming to live among men and walk a perfect example of a life of faith meant human choices and shortcomings effected what He was able to do in His lifetime. Jesus would be without sin, perfect before God, never having fallen short of God's glory yet His time on this earth, which could have been longer than any other human who ever lived, was shorter than most and His ministry even shorter than that. The quick passage of the stories of Isaac's life confirm to us this was all part of the truths God would show us by sending The Messiah. In a representation of the life of The Messiah, the shortness of the stories we are told about Isaac's life is not due to his failures but due to his success. Right here in the very words we are studying about how Isaac and Rebekah would come to have children we see they faced the same obstacle Abraham and Sarah faced in being unable to have a child. What's totally different is that there is no need for a story about a son such as Ishmael being born outside the will of God. This is not to put a mark on the righteous character of Abraham, it's simply to point out the fact there's nothing to be said here other than the explanation of how Rebekah did eventually come to be with child. During the pregnancy Isaac and Rebekah faced something Abraham and Sarah did not, and that's the fact Rebekah was to have twin boys who were at such odds with each other it made for a difficult pregnancy. Yet the understanding from God was sought and the answer caused them to be able to weather the storm.

Moving on into the childhood of these two boys we continue to see the strife they were obviously continuing to have. They were simply two different men headed in two different directions in life. Raising these two sons could not have been easy and for all the mistakes we might attribute to Isaac and Rebekah when we get to the story of the birthright being "stolen," it should once again strike the student of the Bible what is not there, and that's the lack of any story about some problem arising between these two boys which caused major trouble in this family before that time. There is every reason to believe the lack of such an event, or events, in the life of Isaac and Rebekah has to do with what we are seeing in the opening verses of telling us about their lives together. When Isaac and Rebekah had troubles and needed answers they simply went to God and waited upon Him. This was made far easier for the two of them because every indication of their lives, both before they were married and after, shows us they were both people who walked in faith. Coming to God with their troubles was not some specific event in and of itself; it was nothing more than part of their normal way of living their lives! There are those who might fault me for spending so much time covering the details of how the servant went to get Rebekah and how she reacted to what happened at that time but we see in these moments how much those are not stories that simply are behind us now; they are character studies in why so little would need to be covered about the events of Isaac and Rebekah's lives!

Getting more specifically back to verse 23 we see the last part of what God told Rebekah about these two children in her womb was that out of the two groups of people they would bring about, one would be stronger than the other and very specifically the older would serve the younger. This second fact is, of course, a reversal of the human tradition that the elder son

take the lead in the family. However, one fact I want to point out here is that Isaac was not the eldest of the sons of Abraham. That fact may or may not have crossed one's mind when reading through the stories because it doesn't seem significant, and in many ways that is due to the fact it might not seem relevant considering Hagar and Ishmael were sent away. In many ways that perspective is true and valuable but that's because it is the simple illustration God's will is to be done in spite of man's traditions. We touched on that fact when we talked about Abraham pleading with God to allow Ishmael to be the one God would use to bring about the promised nation. God told Abraham not to worry about Ishmael because God had things in store for him but he was not the son of promise as Isaac would be. Man made his choices and it effected how their lives unfolded but in no way would it shake the will of God. God would use Isaac to form the chosen nation, not Ishmael.

Of course, the real reason this older and younger issue between Ishmael and Isaac doesn't seem relevant is largely due to the fact Isaac was the son of Sarah and Ishmael was the son of a handmaid. Transversely, both Jacob and Esau would be the sons of both Isaac and his God-given bride Rebekah. That makes the fact the older would serve the younger in contradiction to the traditions of men seem more relevant. However, it serves us to see both these situations as relevant. In one case we specifically see God's will was not shaken or changed by the choices of men in that Abraham had a son with a handmaiden and that son would be older than the son of promise who came through Sarah. That holds weight and meaning but now we also need to see God was willing to go against the full traditions of men directly because the choices of men do matter! What we find if we jump ahead to the birth of Jacob and Esau is that they were wrestling right up to and through their birth. They literally fought over who would come out of the womb first! In the end result Esau would be considered the older and Jacob literally on his heels but second thus, "younger." It's a technicality but it was plenty enough to make the determination important to the traditions of men.

However, it mattered not how much both of these men were sons of Isaac and Rebekah, only one cared about the promise of God which had to do with why Abraham came to Canaan to begin with. Thus, the traditions of men would be out weighed by the reality of the choices these two men made when it came to God and His will. Their choices would greatly affect who God would use to carry out His will. This is why it's a fact God's will will ultimately prevail but we affect God's will by our actions. That lesson is clearly seen in the story of Jacob and Esau as Esau physically is seen as the older and the traditions of men dictating things be one way but the will of Jacob to strive for the things of God while Esau did not caused something opposite to happen. All this also has directly to do with the fact God told Rebekah the one would be stronger than the other. This too should be looked at with both eyes of flesh and eyes of faith. When we look at Esau we see a man who would become greatly skilled in the art of hunting animals while Jacob was a more subdued man who didn't do such things. Also Jacob ultimately ends up running from his brother

because he feared for his life. It would appear to be obvious through fleshly eyes who was stronger and who was weaker. In time we see Esau's descendants became a strong and prosperous people who subdued a harsh land to the south of the Dead Sea while Jacob's descendants became slaves in Egypt. This also would seem to fleshly eyes to say Esau was the stronger of the two.

However, as true as all that is, eyes of faith can clearly see Esau relied on physical strength which in time fails all of us due to age if not something before that. Esau did what he wanted to do which was a life of ease in many ways. He just followed the desires that struck him and ignoring any larger picture outside himself. Years later, we clearly see that selfishness as his descendants did not allow Israel to cross their land on their way around the Dead Sea. It simply was an inconvenience, a concern the Edomites didn't want to bother with. In spite of Israel promising to use their own resources for food and drink as they traveled through, the Edomite king still wouldn't allow it. Is this a show of strength? The fleshly path can often seem to bring prosperity with it and in doing so accolades men care about which the path of faith does not give. Success can, in the fleshly eyes, seem to indicate the strength to make good things happen when the truth is, many people who experience prosperity do so on the backs of many people who pull the heavier loads for them. This is not to say all people of faith should be destitute, poor, and unsuccessful. It is simply to say, those are not the things people of faith seek which means, if they come they come but if they do not it's not something people of faith worry about. That's a different kind of strength!

Eyes of faith see the stronger of the two boys in Rebekah's womb would be Jacob. As we have touched on in the past when referencing their story, Jacob did not really steal the birthright from Esau as much as Esau gave it away for a meal. This is not the picture of a strong man but again, a man who takes the path of least resistance focused on what makes his flesh feel good. Jacob, to this day, is ridiculed by some for being a con man of sorts but he took those actions because he was always looking for a way to bring more of God's plan and ways into his life. God would not simply reward Jacob for this as we see Jacob having to leave his home in Canaan and do what Abraham had ordered his servant never to do with Isaac, which was take him back to Mesopotamia. Jacob would strive with his father-in-law over the daughters who would be his wives and in the end, his ability to leave and return to Canaan where he belonged. Jacob would face a lot of strife with the competitiveness of his two wives and as a whole Jacob would live a hard life filled with many sorrows. Through it all he would put his head down and drive ahead looking for the will of God to be done no matter what the cost. Jacob would not just be the younger ruling over the elder due to birthright. He was the stronger man!

Until next time, Shalom!

The Bible As A Book continued from pg. 2

them like never before, but we see the nation rejected The Messiah to the point they sought to have Him put to death. Samuel being the last judge of Israel was an example of the truth we see the ultimate end of when men want their ways instead of listening to God. That truth is why when God used Samuel to anoint the first, and second, king of Israel God tells Samuel, it was not him the people were rejecting but it was God Himself. (1 Sam. 8:4-9) In rejecting Jesus as The Messiah, we don't just reject God as our King by wanting to replace Him with a man but we reject God in a more direct way, for The Man Jesus was/is God!

These are important truths we learn in looking at the example of how the chosen nation handled what God offered them because God is ultimately offering the same basic truth to all of us. God wants us to find faith, a relationship with Him, and that's a personal thing obviously not something that happens as part of a group or the chosen nation would have turned out very different. Simply put, people living in faith might form a group but a group does not grant us faith. We have to accept or reject it on our own no matter what group we may or may not be a part of. This is the large glaring example Israel shows us and we need to see it and understand it. That truth takes us to the next book of our study. To see clearly the fact that if there had to be an earthly king of Israel, God would be the one Who should choose that individual, and did, the next book in the Bible is not the book that chronologically meets the Book of Judges' ending story. Instead it's the book that clearly shows us, during the time of the judges God was already at work to provide Israel the king He wanted. This is why we have a book that overlaps with the time period the Book of Judges covers, and as was pointed out during our overview of Judges, that is the Book of Ruth. Interestingly the Book of Ruth does not connect us to the story of the first king God would give Israel who was Saul, but the second king of the nation, David. The very existence of the Book of Ruth shows us just how much God had it all in His plan to do what He did in establishing the throne of David which one day would be occupied by God Himself in The Man Jesus Christ!

Thus, as we do with each book we want to answer the standard questions we have tried to cover, but in doing so I hope we can all see even more solidly that the reason the story this book shows us was preserved and made a part of the Bible was not because of what happened but it's there because we needed to see how much God planned what happened, to happen. God was prepared for the choices of men to desire a man like Saul who God would give Israel as their first king. Saul was tall, strong, and even started out with a humble attitude a good leader needs. The problem was/is that a man can be all we as humans would instinctively look for but easily fall to the corruption power brings. On the other hand, if we let go and let God choose who our leader(s) should be, God can give us a man who is not necessarily the physical choice we would make for our leader but be a far better man to be king in the simple fact he (as much as any man ever does who sits in a position of earthly power) will look to God for the answers and how to lead a nation. God being prepared to provide the nation with just such a man even before they totally demanded to have a man on the throne of the nation is what we see in the story of Ruth. What we also get to see in this story is how God was winding the thread through the history of man to one day bring about the man we really needed, and that was/is The Messiah!

So what are the questions we try to cover with each book in this study? First, we take a look at why the book is named what it is. Second, we like to look at who wrote the book or how it was written? Third, we look at the amount of time the book covers, and fourth, how much time, if any, is there between it and the end of the last book. The other question we looked at for the first five books of the Bible (the Torah) was the question of how much is the information solid history versus it being commandments of God or other information like prophecy, poetry, etc. However, as of the Book of Joshua we are truly into the books of history so our question about, is Ruth a solid history, doesn't need covered. Ruth is by far a pure history book and it's part of the cannon of Scripture because of the historical background it gives us for the line and lineage of David and thus, The Messiah. In it we don't see the nation as a whole but the story of people whose names we find in the genealogy given at the first of two of the Gospels. Even saying all that, the Book of Ruth's value is not just in the history it covers. It's an amazing story of love and individuals finding God's will in their lives even through great hardship and pain. As I have mentioned from time to time, one of the biggest things I have always taken from the Book of Ruth is how God used a Moabite woman to further the line and lineage of David and The King Eternal, Jesus Christ.

As I have hammered on over and over, it was not God's perfect will that the chosen nation have a king. However, God knew in forming a nation of humans to use for His purposes, there was only so much such a group would accept in being different from the rest of the world and the greatest example of that is in the nation's insistence they have a king of flesh and bones. Thus, God would be sure to show us how much we are all loved and part of God's plan by bringing into the direct bloodline of King David a woman whose nationality was not just outside of Israel but whose heritage was part of one of the biggest thorns in Israel's side. This brings us to that first question which concerns the name of the book because that Moabite woman named Ruth would not just be a part of the story this book tells, the book is the telling of her story! As I write this I am struck again at how amazing God is for Ruth has so many parallels to what we are talking about at this very time in the other on going study, "Following The Biblical Stream." There we are talking about the difference between Jacob and Esau who both were in the line to be the chosen nation. However, only one would serve the purpose because only Jacob, no matter his flaws, desired the things of God. On the other hand, Ruth stands on the outside of the promised nation for she was a Moabite woman. Due to their history Moabites were a people many in Israel despised, yet God would not hesitate to make Ruth a part of the chosen nation's most important mission which was and is the coming of The Messiah!

Why would God, after all He had done in forming the chosen nation to begin with and all He said in the Law about keeping Israel's bloodline pure, be willing to use a Moabite woman to bring about the lineage of The Messiah? The answer is found in what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 12 verses 46-50. Jesus was teaching a group of people who really desired to hear His words when a part of his immediate earthly family came to speak to Him. When Jesus was told they were outside asking to see Him, Jesus said His true family were those who desired and did the will of His Father. God did not want the chosen nation to end up lost in the wash of humanity for then they would not be a distinct people easily recognized in this world. However, all through the stories of the Bible there are those times we see the

real point was not to save a specific nation of people but God wanting to save the world! It's important we see this desire did not just begin when God sent Jesus to this earth. It has always been God's will and a story such as Ruth's shows us that. Ruth was no one special by any human standard. The parents of her first husband left Israel because it was not a land of promise to them. In rejecting God and His ways the chosen nation suffered greatly on physical levels instead of being as God intended which was to be the most physically blessed people on the earth. In fleeing Israel this family would come to Moab and in that land their sons would find wives. One of those women would be Ruth, but things would not go any better for the family in Moab than they had been going for them in Israel.

The father of this family would die in the land of Moab and eventually the sons would die as well leaving the mother and her two daughters-in-law alone. The mother, named Naomi, would realize she was better off returning to her people. As she returned to Israel her daughters-in-law followed her but she tells them to turn back for she had nothing and could offer them nothing. Naomi was returning to her people in the hope she could survive off of what family she had left there might be willing to give. One of the women would follow Naomi's plea for them to return and make a life for themselves among their own people in Moab, but this is where some of the most beautiful words in all the Bible come about. They are spoken not by a prophet, a judge, a king, or the like. The words God is looking for were spoken by a simple Moabite woman who by all human thoughts had no reason to see a future in saying them. Again, the family she married into had left the land her mother-in-law was now returning to due to famine and hardship. If luck was a real thing, this family had suffered some of the worst, yet Ruth saw something in the chosen nation so many born into it could not see. She had been made a part of that nation by marriage and while her husband was gone she could cling to one piece of that union she still had. In much the way the woman with the issue of blood knew she could find healing if she could only touch just the hem of Jesus' garment, Ruth knew she could find life in clinging to her mother-in-law who was returning to the chosen nation.

Ruth would tell her mother-in-law, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." Ruth 1:16-17 While the book's story is logically preserved to show some back history of the line and lineage of King David, its point is also to show us again what we see in Jacob and Esau. Though small and fleeting, two women had an opportunity to be a part of the chosen nation of God; a part of God's plan to save this world! One would choose to turn back to her people and their false gods, but Ruth would cling to the promises of God unto her dying breath! It is for that reason the book is not named after the man she would go on to be married to; a man of the tribe of Judah who could make her the mother of the lineage of Christ. It would not be named in such a way that indicates the fact we are being shown the lineage of Christ or that of King David. It would be named for the woman who struggled like Jacob struggled with the angel at the ford Jabbok. (Gen. 32:24-30) Jacob fought with that angel until the

angel was so determined to leave at the morning light he permanently injured Jacob's hip as a way to get Jacob to let him go. The truth is, the angel could easily have gotten away but he would not use his strength to make Jacob let go. He only tested Jacob's determination until it was seen to be so strong Jacob would receive a blessing from the angel or die trying! This is what Ruth was saying with her words. She did not care what was happening to or among the chosen nation at the time. Ruth would stay with her mother-in-law who was her link to it and The One True God of the universe or she would die trying! Can there, or should there be any reason to wonder why the book is named after an individual with such dedication and determination for the things of God?

If we jump over our second and third question and look at question four which concerns the time between this book and the last, we find we can answer it very easily and already have. However, this question really has always been about where each book chronologically fits within the time period of the Bible's storyline. Of course, we've already covered this in that the book takes place within the time period of the Book of Judges. If not already obvious we can be more specific in saying it takes place during the ending portion of the Book of Judges but it does not actually take us right up to David or even the birth of his father Jesse. While the ending words do tell us the genealogy leading up to Jesse and David, the story's real point is to show us the birth of David's grandfather Obed. This fact causes me to point out yet another parallel in this small story of the Book of Ruth, for at the very least the point about Obed reminds me of another story in the Bible. We've already talked about the overall paralleling there is between Ruth and Jacob, but the Book of Ruth begins with a story of despair. It's the whole reason the Israelite family leaves the promised land and Ruth becomes part of the picture. By the time we get to the end of the book we are being shown great hope and the birth of David's grandfather Obed. This has all the same feel as what we see in Genesis and the story of how Adam and Eve sinned and were banned from the Garden of Eden and The Tree of Life which the promised land and Jerusalem were later to symbolize.

Adam and Eve went out from the garden and had two sons only to have the one killed by the other. That was/is truly a story of great despair. It appears hope for humanity is lost. The first two humans who were created directly by the hand of God had fallen to sin. The one son they had who desired the things of God was killed by their other son who rejected God and went out to live a life without God. What hope could there be? The answer isn't just in that Adam and Eve would obviously have another son, for we have no record to tell us just how many sons and daughters Adam and Eve had. The answer is in the fact they had a son named Seth and he eventually had a son named Enos. A new branch of the family had been formed but not just any branch. This branch would be the beginning of men once again calling upon the name of The Lord! (Gen. 4:25-26) Ruth and Boaz would begin a new branch within the tribe of Judah, but not just any branch. This branch would one day bring Emmanuel which being interpreted is, God with us! (Matt. 1:23)

Let's stay in God's Word!