

Lesson 3 -God has plans

Rahab was a prostitute – Naomi was a widow

I am not a very good chess player. I know how the individual pieces move, but I'm not a strategist. I tend to react to my opponents moves rather than plan my own. I tend to get irritated when one of my pieces dies as the opponent's queen sweeps all the way across the board. What a mess I make of things when I try to play God.

I am so thankful that God is in control - that He can see the bigger picture, every moment of every life through out time. I am amazed at how he weaves our lives together.

At one point, a friend was involved in a custody battle for his daughter. She had been living with him and his wife for several years and her mom wanted her back. The judge who was to hear the case was very pro-mom, the Guardian ad litem (court appointed council for the child) was also pro-mom. Things looked bleak. Shortly before court was to begin, things changed. The hearings were moved to a different county, with a pro-dad judge who went against the GAL's recommendations, something which rarely happens. Our friend was awarded custody. This father wasn't a Christian and couldn't believe all the coincidences. We all knew that they were God-incidences. That God had answered prayers for this family. Can you share a God-incidence?

In this month's study, we will look at the lives of two women, one a Canaanite and one an Israelite, and see God's long term plans for good.

Scripture Readings

A. RAHAB

1. Read Joshua 2:1. Here we meet Rahab. What do we learn about her in this verse?

2. Read Joshua 2:2-3. The king of Jericho sent a message to Rahab, was she well known? How do you think the king knew to send the message to Rahab?

3. Read Joshua 2:4-7. Why would a “common” prostitute hide enemies of her people? Why would she risk her life by lying to the authorities? Is it ever okay to lie? Do we owe the truth to people who will use it for evil?

4. Read Joshua 2:8-11. Rahab professes faith in God. How did she know about Him? Compare with Exodus 15:15-16a.

5. Rahab struck a bargain with the spies. Read Joshua 2: 12-21. As a prostitute, an outcast, would you expect this kind of devotion to her family?

6. Even during the battle Joshua honored the agreement made between the spies and Rahab. Read Joshua 6: 17.

7. Read Joshua 6: 22-25. ...and she lives among the Israelites to this day. What does this say to you?

8. Read Hebrews 11:30-31 and James 2:25. What do these verses tell us about Rahab?

B. NAOMI

1. Read Ruth 1: 1-5 Here we meet a woman who has fallen on hard times. What are the conditions? How has famine affected others in the scriptures?

2. Who were the Moabites? Read Gen 19: 30-38. How did the Israelites feel about the Moabites?

3. Read Ruth 1:3-5 and Deut 23:3-6. By Mosaic Law, male offspring of mixed marriages could not be admitted into the congregation of Israel to the tenth generation. How would that affect Naomi?

4. Naomi was destitute, hopeless. She decided to return to the land of Judah and urged her daughters-in-law to return to their families. Read Ruth 1:6-15. What was the relationship between these three women? What does Naomi refer to in vs. 11-13? (see Duet 25:5-6) What could they expect from the Israelites? In vs. 15, who does Orpah return to?

5. What was Ruth's response? Ruth 1: 16-18.

6. What was Naomi's state of mind as they returned to Bethlehem? Read Ruth 1:19-22. When did they arrive?

7. Read Ruth 2:1- 2: 3 and Leviticus 19:9-10, 23:22. What were the laws about gleaning? Who was Boaz? What are his characteristics?

8. Who was Boaz? Mat 1:5

9. We learned from Deuteronomy 23 that male children of mixed marriages couldn't enter the congregation of Israel to the tenth generation. Yet, here we have the son of Rahab, a prostitute and Canaanite, described as a man of standing, a man with the power and willingness to be a *goel* (kinsman redeemer) for Naomi, through Ruth. How can that be?

10. Do you think that the fact that he was the son of a foreigner made him more willing to accept a foreign wife? Would their children be shunned? They were only $\frac{1}{4}$ Israelite and $\frac{3}{4}$ foreigners.

C. GOD HAS A PLAN

1. We can't understand the mind of God. Read 1 Cor 13:12. Is this a comfort?

2. Read Jeremiah 29:11-13. How do you seek the Lord? Do you believe that God has a plan for you?

3. Read Psalm 33:10-11. How has God “frustrated the plans of the people” in your life? What are the plans of God's heart?

4. What does the Lord of hosts promise in Isaiah 14:25? Can you claim this promise as your own? God is carrying out His perfect plan for His people. Does this bring you comfort?

Applications for today's life

As you look back at your life, can you see God's plan unfolding in the events of your life?

How can the knowledge learned today help you to boldly step out in faith, knowing God has a plan for your life?

Conclusion

These women are in the genealogy of Jesus. Neither of them fit our definition of “Church ladies”. All they had was faith and still God used them in His greater plan to bless us all. God can use you as well.

When we look at the life of Jesus, none of it makes sense. The King of Kings born in a manger? His disciples were common fishermen? God Himself taking on my sins? But God has a plan. A perfect plan for each of us. May we each find comfort and boldness as we step out in that knowledge.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for loving me more than I can imagine. Help me to find comfort in the knowledge that You have plans for my life, plans to give me hope and a future. Help me to boldly step out in faith, knowing that You are in control.

In Jesus precious name, Amen.