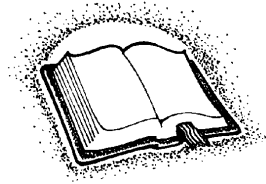


Unlocking the Bible (12)



Choose ye this day.....: Lessons from the Book of Ruth

In our study of the Book of Judges last month, we noted the value of individual initiative in the fulfilment of the purposes of God.

The touching story of Ruth, in the book of that name sandwiched in among the major history books like Joshua, Judges, and Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, is a classic example of such commitment.

On the surface it is a tragedy. Because of the difficulties in the land, as recorded in Judges, Naomi and her sons have escaped to Moab where her two sons marry local women. Tragedy strikes, however, when Naomi's husband and two sons die leaving three desolate widows. Naomi decides to return to her native land but encourages the two daughters-in-law to stay in Moab to resume their old life. But, Ruth has seen enough of the superior quality of life lived by Israelites, such as Naomi, that she decides to return with her to continue that new existence. Her declaration: "*Where you go, I will go; your people shall be my people; your God shall be my God*" has become a classic in our time. She chose to "*cast in her lot with the people of God*". In our terms, she could sing: *I have decided to follow Jesus; no turning back, no turning back*". Experiencing God's purpose always starts with such a major decision.

Subsequently, through a series of remarkable circumstances and divinely ordained "coincidences" she found a husband in the caring Boaz and eventually became the mother of Obed. In her new country she had found favour and blessing, compensating for the sad loss she had encountered in her previous existence in Moab, and enabling her to experience a different existence. Life took on a new meaning for her personally.

But, it had a greater significance in the outworking of the purposes of God, for Obed was the father of Jesse; and Jesse was the father of David" That was King David, from whose lineage came "Great David's Greater Son" – the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of the World.

From the Book of Ruth we can learn the importance of making that crucial decision to be totally committed to God, even if it means abandoning our natural heritage. And, then discovering the benefits and blessings of the new (Christian) life and, often quite unconsciously through God's providential working, being a key part in the fulfilling of God's purposes in our world today; helping to bring about the answer to the prayer: "*Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*"