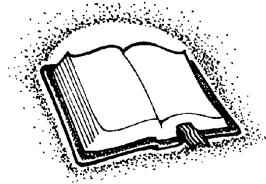


Unlocking the Bible (13)



EBENEZER – Hitherto has the Lord helped us ..

.....:

A Review of the Story So Far (Genesis to Ruth)

In our progression of 'Unlocking the Bible' we now come to an important stage in the story, so it is a good opportunity to stop and review what has happened so far before going on to an important second stage after the summer. This month we are at a critical half way point of the History section with the end of one regime and the beginning of another.

The story began with creation and the setting of humanity in an ideal context. But, with the Fall, sin entered in and mankind became prisoners to Satan and sin. However the Bible records the story of God seeking to redeem His people from that bondage and to release them into a new and better life. He inaugurated a people for this very purpose. Genesis tells the beginning of that story.

The remaining four books of the Pentateuch tell of the miraculous rescue from Egyptian bondage through trust in the Passover lamb and the subsequent crossing of the Red Sea and journey through the wilderness where they learned to trust in God's material provision, follow His guidance and obey His commandments, thus learning to live as a new and distinctive people – the People of God.

Following that experience they were to enter the Promised Land and there establish themselves under God's direct rule through Leaders whom He raised among them. Like Abraham and Moses before him, Joshua's task was to lead the people in the right way, to teach them the ways of God and to ensure they were totally devoted to Him. That leadership was very effective as long as the people followed; but this part of the story reveals many weaknesses in that following and indeed in the exercise of leadership itself. As we saw in the story of Ruth, it depended on individual commitment and personal resolve to follow in the ways of God, regardless of cost and popular disfavour. It could be done, as the story of Samuel shows, but it was a hard way to follow and the alternative ways of the other nations appeared so attractive: the grass seemed to be greener on the other side. Why should they be different?

So, at this critical stage they made a very definite departure from the regime of following God and His leading through His leaders and to a regime that was to be modelled on what the other nations did. In other words, they wanted "a king that we might be like all nations". That is what follows in the period of the Monarchy which will be our next series.

At this pause point, the question for us to ask is: Will we, too, abandon the distinctives of God and compromise our faith and practice? We have lessons from the Patriarchs to help us and disasters from the Monarchy as warnings. Which path do I / we take?