

Truth and Reason

Speaking the Words of Truth and Reason ♦ Acts 26:25

Volume I

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The Church of the Lord

CENTRAL IN GOD'S SCHEME for the redemption of mankind was the sending of His Son to earth to live as a man and die on the cross for the sins of all people. A major part of Jesus' mission while on earth was to prepare people for His kingdom which would be established following His death. Repeatedly during His personal ministry, He gave the same message to His audiences, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). He continually emphasized the kingdom in His teaching, especially in the parables, because of its key role in God's eternal purpose.

Preparation for and Purpose of the Kingdom

The importance of that kingdom is seen in the fact that throughout the time which preceded it, God tried to prepare men for its coming. Even hundreds of years before the earthly ministry of Jesus, prophets such as Daniel (Dan. 2:44), Isaiah (Isa. 2:2-4), and Micah (Micah 4:1-2) prophesied

of its establishment. John the Baptist, the one who, as His forerunner, was to prepare the hearts of the people for Jesus, spoke of it and how near it was to being a reality upon the earth (Matt. 3:2).

God's purpose for the kingdom was made plain when Jesus, while with His disciples in Caesarea Philippi, said, "...on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18; cf. Eph. 3:10-11). Jesus was to rule over a universal church composed of people from all nations of the earth who would submit to Him and His rule over them (Mark 16:15).

Less than one year after He promised to build His church, Jesus was betrayed, condemned, crucified, and entombed. But three days later He was raised from the dead (Luke 24:1-35). He was raised "the Son of God with power" (Rom. 1:4). By His resurrection, He claimed victory over death and sin and proclaimed the beginning of His reign over heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18).

The Reality of the Kingdom and the Church

In the city of Jerusalem on the Jewish festival day of Pentecost after His death, Jesus' apostles preached, for the first time, the wonderful news "...that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Jews from every nation under heaven were present. They had been guilty of putting Jesus to death. Therefore, "...when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:37-38).

On that Pentecost day, those who were obedient to the commands of God given through Peter and the other apostles were given salvation. Having been saved, they were added together (Acts 2:41) to the church (Acts 2:47). We can therefore conclude that the church of Jesus

Christ is the body of saved people.

Those who were added to the church were, at the same time, made citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Having been purchased and sanctified by His blood (Eph. 5:25-30), they were placed under His rule. Such passages as Mark 9:1; Luke 24:49; and Acts 2:1-4 show that when the church of the Lord was established (Acts 2), His kingdom became a reality.

In Mark 9:1, Jesus said that there were some who stood before Him that day who would see the kingdom come with power before they died. In Luke 24:49, He commanded His apostles to remain in the city of Jerusalem where they would be clothed with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came upon them. In Acts 2:1-4, the Holy Spirit came and the power came, therefore, the kingdom came with power.

The Church: A Present Reality

Under His rule, Christ's church continues to exist because He continually adds the saved to it. This means that if one is going to have salvation, he must be a part of that church. One becomes a member of it by giving obedience to the conditions given in the Gospel for the salvation of one's soul. For, you see, the very means by which one receives forgiveness of sins is the same means by which he is made a member of the Lord's church. For example, Scripture tells us that baptism "saves us" (1 Peter 3:21). But the New

Testament also says that it adds one to the body, the church (1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 1:18,24).

Therefore, it is impossible for one to be saved and not be in the church that belongs to Christ (cf. Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Cor. 12:13).

Many, though, have the idea that one is saved and then later joins the "church of his choice." That is not true. According to the New Testament, there is "one body" (Eph. 4:4) and that body is the church to which the Lord adds the saved (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:24).

Even though men may hold forth many hundreds of denominations which they claim belong to Christ, He built just one church (Matt. 16:18), purchased just one with His blood (Acts 20:28), and will save just one in the final day (Eph. 5:23). Jesus has never promised to save any person who has not done those things that put him into Christ and His one body. He has never promised to save anyone apart from the Gospel or separate from His church.

Identifying Christ's Church

How can one be sure that he is a member of that church? Again, the word of God supplies the answer because it gives the identifying characteristics of the church of Christ.

Builder and Founder. Jesus (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:11). Any religious body whose founder is not Jesus Christ is not His church.

Head. Jesus (Eph. 1:22-23). He has all authority (Matt. 28:18-20) and everything is to be done

in His name, i.e., by His authority (Col. 3:17).

Name. Members of His church are called "Christians" (Acts 11:26). If one belongs to a church whose members wear another name, is he a member of the Lord's church?

Creed. Christ and His word (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 John 9). If one is a member of a church that has written its own creed, is he a part of the Lord's body?

Terms of Admission. Those things which grant salvation to the individual. Any religious group having any other terms of admission has substituted its own terms for those of the Lord. Such denies His headship, rule, and authority.

Worship. New Testament Christians met upon the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-28; Acts 20:7); to give as they had prospered (1 Cor. 16:1-2); to sing (Eph. 5:19); to pray (1 Thes. 5:17); and to give and receive instruction in the word of God (Heb. 10:24-25). If one's worship today is going to be acceptable to God, it must be in "spirit and in truth" (John 4:24) and include only these things. If one is a part of a religious group that either omits any of these or adds others, can he be offering acceptable worship to God?

Conclusion

The church of the Lord is the one He will save in the final day. One must be a member of it if he is going to have eternal life. 🙏

- Gene Taylor



Book of the Month

A Study of the Books of the Bible from Truth and Reason

Ruth

I. General Data

A. Name: Ruth.

1. The name of the book is taken from the main character, a Moabitess who married an Israelite and later married Boaz.
2. Ruth was the great-grandmother of David (4:17-22) and an ancestor of Jesus.

B. Author.

1. The authorship of the book of Ruth is unknown.
2. He was most likely a contemporary of David. (cf. 4:18-22) It could not have been written before David's birth.
3. Some have suggested that Judges and Ruth had the same author.
4. Some have attributed it to Ezra, the scribe who did much of the Old Testament historical writing.
5. Some, noting how it serves as a kind of introduction to the books of 1 and 2 Samuel and gives the historical background of the birth of David, point to Samuel as its author.

C. Time span.

1. The events of the book of Ruth occurred during the days of the judges (1:1), three generations before David.
 - a. At first Israel is found to be in a period of famine and need. (Jud. 2:16-19)
 - b. Some think the events occurred during the reign of Shamgar, a judge of Israel.
 - c. The events of the book occur between a 15 to 20 year span of time.
2. "In the book itself (the book of Judges-GT), the intervals during which 'the land had rest' make up a large aggregate of years, though we are apt to overlook them from the brevity of each notice. These hints are in some degree filled up to a finished picture in the exquisite scenes of rural tranquility set before us in the Book of *Ruth*. The events there related are merely said to have happened 'in the time of the Judges;' but from the genealogies we gather that they fell in the generation after the troubles above related. (Ruth 4:18-22)." (William Smith, *Old Testament History*, pp. 366-367)

D. Purposes.

1. The book serves as a connecting link in the genealogy between Abraham and David which ultimately led to the Messiah. (4:14-15;17-22). "A genealogy is a striking way of bringing before us the continuity of God's purpose through the ages." (Leon Morris, *Judges and Ruth*, p.318)
 2. The book illustrates that there was still some decency, uprightness, and courtesy among God's people at a bad time in their history. If not for the book of Ruth, we might have a distorted view of life during the period of the Judges.
 3. "This (purpose-GT) may have been twofold: It shows the ancestry of King David, his tribal lineage, and background...Again, it points up the beautiful devotion of Ruth to her mother-in-law, and her conversion to Israel's God. It also shows God's impartiality
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- toward all people; He accepted her into His peculiar people as a part of them. It reveals also how Israel accepted strangers who wished to come and accept the Lord as their God and Israel's way of life. It forever secures Ruth's niche in history as the ancestor of King David and of his far more important, though then distant, Son in the flesh, Jesus Christ." (William S. Deal, *Baker's Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, p. 83)
4. The book illustrates the practicality of the law of Moses in its application to the everyday affairs of the people.
 - a. The kinsman redeemer. (Deut. 25:5-10; Lev. 25:25)
 - b. The provisions for the care of the poor. (Lev. 19:9-10; Ruth 2)
- E. Theme: The promise and purpose of God reaffirmed.
1. The principle theme of the book of Ruth seems to be the tracing of the lineage of Jesus. Without the book there would be a "missing link" in that genealogy.
 2. "This lovely story of a lovely woman, following, like calm after a storm, the turbulent scenes of Judges, is a delightful and charming picture of domestic life in a time of anarchy and trouble.
"A thousand years earlier, Abraham had been called of God to found a Nation for the purpose of one day bringing a Saviour to mankind. In this book of Ruth we have the founding of the Family within that Nation in which the Saviour would come. Ruth was the great grandmother of king David. From here on Old Testament interest centers mainly around the Family of David." (*Halley's Bible Handbook*, p. 175)
- F. The kinsman redeemer.
1. "The Old Testament law provided a way through which an inheritance that had been lost could be redeemed through a 'go-el' or kinsman redeemer. If a man through poverty was forced to mortgage his property, and then was unable to meet the payment on the date of the maturity of the mortgage, then the man holding the mortgage could hold the land until the year of Jubilee (which came every fifty years), at which time it reverted automatically to its former owner. But before this date a Kinsman Redeemer (nearest male blood relation) could go into the civil court and by payment, recover the land for his relative. If the relation had died without an heir, then it became the duty of the kinsman-redeemer to marry his widow, and raise up the name of his brother." (Fred H. Wight, *Manners and Customs of the Bible Lands*, p. 250)
 2. Levirate marriage: "Jewish custom according to which when an Israelite without male heirs died the nearest relative married the widow, and the first born son became the heir of the 1st husband (Deut. 25:5-10)." (*Handy Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 92)
 3. Another instance of the custom of the kinsman redeemer, before the Law of Moses, is found in Genesis 38. (See also Deut. 25:5-10; Matt. 22:23-28)
- G. Summaries of the book.
1. "This little book is named for Ruth, the Moabite daughter-in-law of Naomi. Naomi and her husband had gone to Moab during a famine in Israel. Their two sons married Moabite girls. About ten years later, following the death of Naomi's husband, both sons died. Naomi decided to return to Palestine, and at first both daughters-in-law were going with her. But Orpah turned back. Ruth, however, held steadfast in her purpose and came with Naomi to her home town of Bethlehem." (Deal, 82)
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2. During the period of the Judges, because of a famine, Elimelech journeyed, with Naomi his wife and their two sons, Chilion and Mahlon, to Moab. They lived there about ten years and their sons married Moabite women—Chilion married Orpah and Mahlon married Ruth. While in Moab, Elimelech and both his sons die. (1:1-5)

Naomi returned to her homeland with one daughter-in-law, Ruth, who refused to leave her. (1:15-17) After returning to Bethlehem, Ruth went into the fields of Boaz, a near relative of Elimelech, to glean. Boaz looked favorably upon her and made provisions for her to have plenty.

Since Ruth had no children but wanted to pass on the inheritance of her husband to a son, Naomi appealed to the custom of Israel of the kinsman redeemer and encouraged Ruth to convince Boaz to receive her and her land. Boaz was the second closest kinsman to Elimelech. After the nearest relative refused to take Ruth and her land, Boaz bought that right to be her kinsman redeemer (4:9-10), married her and gave her a son, Obed.

II. An Outline of Ruth

- A. The Sojourn at Moab. (1:1-5)
- B. The Return to Bethlehem. (1:6-22)
- C. Ruth and Boaz. (ch. 2-4)
 1. Gleaning in the fields of Boaz. (ch. 2)
 2. Ruth marries Boaz. (ch. 3-4)
 - a. A bold act. (ch. 3)
 - b. Redemption of Ruth and Naomi's inheritance. (4:1-12)
 - c. Ruth becomes the wife of Boaz. (4:13-17)
 - d. The genealogy of David. (4:18-22)

III. The Lessons of Ruth

- A. Often out of great distress and unfortunate circumstances, God will bring about abundant blessing.
 1. The situation of Naomi: she had lost all—because of famine she lost her home and then her husband and sons.
 2. Had it not been for her journey to Moab, she would have never met and been blessed by Ruth.
- B. True love always shows its depth in crises.
 1. Orpah loved Naomi but not more than her homeland.
 2. Ruth's love proved stronger than material attachments.
- C. Ruth's choice to go with Naomi showed a greater love for God.
 1. Her choice may have been a little painful at first, suffering leaving her homeland, etc., but look to the greater happiness and blessing it afforded her.
 2. Choosing to be a Christian and surrendering one's old life to follow Christ may bring some suffering, hardship, and pain along the way but when one shows a greater love for God, God rewards him who commits all to Him for time and eternity.
- D. Ruth's blessings came when she responded out of love to the will of God and for the good of others.
 1. Her humility and dedication brought great reward.
 2. Loving God with all your heart and loving your neighbor as yourself are principles of God which will never fail the one who applies them. (Mark 12:28-31)

Ruth Study Questions

Chapter 1

1. When did the events of this book take place?
2. Identify the following characters.
 - a. Elimelech.
 - b. Naomi.
 - c. Mahlon.
 - d. Chilion
 - e. Orpah.
 - f. Ruth.
3. What caused Elimelech to take his family into Moab? What does Leviticus 26:3-5, 14-20 indicate about such times?
4. What happened in Moab that caused Naomi to want to return to Canaan?
5. What did Orpah and Ruth decide in regards to Naomi's departure from Moab? Were the decisions they made only a matter of loyalty to their mother-in-law or did they involve spiritual considerations too? Explain your answer and support it by Scripture.
6. How did Ruth react to her situation? How could she have reacted? What kind of woman did she show herself to be?
7. What evidence is given with regard to the time of year the women returned to Bethlehem?

Chapter 2

8. How did God provide for the poor people? What is "gleaning?" (See also Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-22)
9. Who was Boaz? What kind of man was he? How did he treat Ruth? What reason did he give for showing her such favor?

Chapter 3

10. What did Naomi want to do for Ruth? What was her plan to accomplish this purpose?
11. What is "winnowing?" How was it done?
12. About what was Ruth asking Boaz in verse 9? Explain.
13. What was there about Ruth that greatly impressed Boaz?
14. Does Boaz seem careful to preserve the reputation of Ruth? How would his caution tend to protect her from the risks to which she was exposed by Naomi's (well-intended) indiscretion?
15. Describe the character of Boaz.

Chapter 4

16. Why was Boaz unable to marry Ruth without any further ado? What was necessary before he could marry her?
17. What two transactions are bound together in verses 1 through 6?
18. Why did "the near kinsman" say he could not redeem the property? What did he mean?
19. What was the significance of removing and handing over the man's shoe? (cf. Deut. 25:5-10)
20. What purpose was served by the "ten men of the elders of the city?"
21. What blessing was pronounced upon Ruth by the people? Why did they refer to Perez? (cf. Gen. 38, esp. v. 29)
22. What did the women say about Ruth?
23. What consequences did Ruth's marriage have for Naomi?
24. What famous men descended from Ruth and Boaz? Who else descended from them? (Matt. 1:1-16, esp. vv. 2-6a)
25. What does the book of Ruth add to our understanding of the period of the judges?

- Gene Taylor

“Watch What You’re Saying!”

ALMOST EVERYONE AT various times has misused his/her tongue. It is a problem common to all of us but, because of peer pressure, the desire to appear mature, and the shock value of it, the young seem especially vulnerable. Among young people filthy stories, taking God’s name in vain, dirty jokes, suggestive remarks, and cursing are all too common. It should not surprise us, though. The media is filled with such things— filthy, vulgar language is in magazines, newspapers, videos, movies, popular songs, TV shows, and sometimes even in required reading materials in school. There is also the influence of adults who incorporate all of these things in their everyday conversation.

Some want to laugh these things off and say that anyone who would object to them is puritanical, a “goody-two-shoes,” or even worse. But sins of the tongue must be given serious consideration because God takes them seriously.

Some Sins of the Tongue

Taking God’s name in vain (Ex. 20:7; Matt. 5:33). God’s name is holy and should not be spoken except with reverence and awe (Psa. 111:9).

Cursing (Jas. 3:9-10). Vulgar and obscene words and gestures

should never be spoken or done by one who wants to please God. Consider Ephesians 4:29, “Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification that it may impart grace to the hearers.” Bad language is a dead giveaway that the speaker is covering up ignorance (He does not know what he is talking about), is lazy, and/or thinks it is smart (It indicates little “smartness” on his part).

Telling dirty jokes. Smutty jokes and obscene stories must be avoided. The dirty joke or story advertises one’s ignorance; displays a lack of a sense of decency; indicates the state of one’s inner character; illustrates the sordid-ness of one’s soul; typifies the meagerness of one’s resources of entertainment; proclaims the coarseness of one’s idea of humor; disappoints parents, friends, and those who love good; and makes one a moral and spiritual inferior in the presence of decent, moral people. Sometimes, though, the problem is not just telling the dirty joke. It is reacting to one when it is told to you. What can you do when you find yourself surrounded by people who are telling dirty jokes or stories? You can politely and quietly excuse yourself for something better to do or lead the conversation into

wholesome channels (Maybe tell a good, **clean** joke). Do not enter into the session by cursing or swearing or by telling dirtier jokes or bigger lies than the others.

Some want to laugh these things off and say that anyone who would object to them is puritanical, a “goody-two-shoes,” or even worse. But sins of the tongue must be given serious consideration because God takes them seriously.

Finding fault (Matt. 7:1). Some good advice: “If you cannot say something good about someone, do not say anything!” Remember, people who talk about others behind their backs will talk about you behind your back. Sometimes people, especially the young, find a great deal of humor in making fun of other people—the elderly, “nerds,” “geeks,” etc. It is malicious to find your happiness at the expense of others whoever they may be. Such cruelty can affect those

who are the object of this kind of "humor" all their lives.

Gossip (1 Tim. 5:13; 4:7). One who gossips is a mean and cruel person. Lives have been ruined, even churches destroyed because of gossip.

The Scriptural Alternative

Do you love life? Would you like to see "good days?" Consider 1 Peter 3:10-12, "He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. Let him

turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

To be religious, one must "bridle" his tongue (Jas. 1:26). Respect the danger that the tongue poses. James 3:5-6 states, "...the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set

among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set one fire by hell."

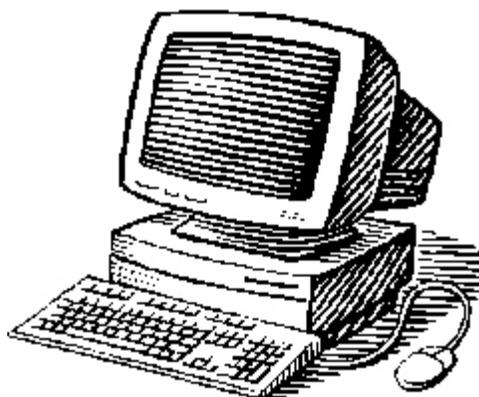
Conclusion

Since our speech is our best character reference, what does your speech tell about your character? It could tell that you are a generous honest, patient, self-confident, clean-minded person who seeks to be holy and do the will of God, if you are pure in speech. ☺

- Gene Taylor

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