ROUTE 66
Session Number Two
Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Review:

Last week we studied THE TORAH or THE PENTATEUCH (five books) - Genesis and Exodus and I’ll touch briefly on Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy tonight before launching into THE HISTORICAL BOOKS of the Old Testament. These first five books in the Bible are commonly known as the Books of Moses. Genesis told us the story of the BEGINNING of everything and concluded in the days of Joseph, then Prime Minister of Egypt, with all of the Jewish people known at that time living in the Nile Delta, probably then the most fertile soil in the world. In Exodus we learned that a revolt had taken place and there was a new government in Egypt (a new Pharaoh who knew not Joseph) and the first effort at genocide. Moses was rescued from the reed basket in the Nile by one of the daughters of Pharaoh and raised in the royal family. At age 40 he was thrown out of the country and lived in the Sinai Wilderness for another 40 years before God summoned him to deliver the Jews from Egyptian bondage, which he did. Exodus closes with Moses’ death.

MEMORY LESSON

Let’s do it again: from memory quote the five books of the Torah!

LEVITICUS

Very quickly now, let’s finish the Torah. We start with the third book in the Bible: Leviticus. As we learned last week, this book is named after the Tribe of Levi, responsible for being the priestly leaders of the people of Israel. Levites, just one of the twelve tribes, were chosen by God for His work among the people. They were supported by tithes from the people. Aaron and his sons were chosen to be the high priests for the nation.

The early part of this book dealt with various kinds of offerings. Throughout the Old Testament we read of the Jews coming to the Tabernacle or the later two Temples with their unceasing sacrifice of animals. God burned into their minds and consciences a sense of innate sinfulness and the need for repentance and forgiveness. In the New Testament, Jesus Himself, the Son of God, would become the great sacrifice, once and for all ending the lineup at the altar in the Temple.
On several occasions I have had the privilege of visiting the church known as St. Peter in Chains (San Pietro in Vincoli) in Rome.

There one finds one of the most magnificent statues ever created, this one by Michelangelo Buonarroti. The statue is Moses, commissioned by Pope Julius II for his tomb (however, it never made it to his tomb).

The statue is so “alive” that historians say Michelangelo would gaze at it and burst out, “Why won’t you speak to me?”

The statue has what are commonly accepted to be two horns on its head ( tho not visible in this picture). The book of Exodus tells us that when Moses came down from Mount Sinai, holding the tablets of the Ten Commandments, and his face radiated the glory of God. The Douay-Rheims Bible translates that ext to read, “Moses knew not that his face was horned from the conversation of the Lord.” When Jerome translated the text (the Vulgate) he used the word karan, which sometimes meant horns. The Greek Septuagint translated the verse as “Moses knew not that the appearance of the skin of his face was glorified.”

What is a fact is this: Magnificent or not, Moses did NOT have horns. But it is still an incredible statue of one of the greatest leaders in all mankind’s history.
All sorts of issues are dealt with in Leviticus including tests for leprosy, uncleanness, the annual atonement, polygamy, divorce, slavery and capital punishment. Even such issues as vows and tithes are dealt with in chapter 27.

NUMBERS

For those who think God discounts numbers.....well, there’s a whole book dedicated to numbers.

When Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage about 1450 B.C., a census taken at Mount Sinai indicated there were 603,550 Jewish males above the age of 20. Add to that the number of women and children and you can see clearly what a vast group Moses led across the cruel wilderness.

The journey from Egypt to the Promised Land (Israel) could have been undertaken in a few months; however, unbelief and dissension lengthened that time to 40 years. This book of Numbers gives us the story of the twelve spies that Moses sent into Israel. Ten of the twelve brought back a discouraging word and the people refused to move on. In fact, they would have executed Moses had it not been for God’s miraculous intervention. The two spies who brought back a positive report were Joshua and Caleb - the only two of the over 600,000 men who left Egypt who actually made it to the Promised Land.

Not only did Moses contend with malcontent Jews in his “entourage,” but the Amalekites attacked as did the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Amorites and Midianites. Also in this book (chapters 22-25) is told the remarkable story of Balaam.

DEUTERONOMY

As I mentioned last week, the word “Deuteronomy” means “second law” or “repetition of the law.” After forty years, the people of Israel now faced actually entering the Promised Land. God’s laws were carefully repeated to the people. In chapter six, the great commandment was repeated over and over: THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART AND WITH ALL THY SOUL AND WITH ALL THY MIGHT. The people were admonished to destroy all false gods they might encounter in the Promised Land.

The three great annual feasts were set: Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Passover, also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread, was kept in the spring on the 15th day of the first month as a memorial to God’s deliverance of the people from Egypt.
Pentecost, also called the Feast of Weeks or Harvest or First Fruits was a one-day feast celebrating God’s bounty from the crops. It is vital for us Pentecostals to remember that the Holy Spirit was first poured out (Acts 2) on the Day of Harvest. True Pentecostals are “harvesters.”

Tabernacles, also called the Feast of the Ingathering, was celebrated to remember how the people lived in temporary dwellings enroute to the Promised Land. All male Jews were required to keep these feasts.

There are other fascinating highlights of this book including: The prediction of a king (17), the cities of Refuge (19) and the death of Moses (34). He was buried by God Himself on Mount Nebo (which overlooks the north end of the Dead Sea (eastern side).

WINSTON CHURCHILL’S OPINION OF MOSES

_We reject with scorn all those learned and labored myths that Moses was but a legendary figure upon whom the priesthood and the people hung their essential social, moral and religious ordinances. We believe that the most scientific view, the most up-to-date and rational conception, will find its fullest satisfaction in taking the Bible story literally. We may be sure that all these things happened just as they are set out according to Holy Writ._

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS PART ONE

We have now surveyed the first five books of the Bible - the Torah, or Pentateuch. Now we come to The Historical Books - twelve books that follow in sequence, and tell the stories of the heroes of Israel from 1450 B.C. to 480 B.C. - nearly a thousand years of Israeli history. Here are those twelve books:

- Joshua
- Judges
- Ruth
- I and II Samuel
- I and II Kings
- I and II Chronicles
- Ezra
- Nehemiah
- Esther

In these 12 books, the Holy Spirit covers a large swath of history. These books tell the story of ancient Israel’s formation, its rise to prominence under such leaders as David and
his son Solomon, its collapse into moral and physical defeat and restoration. Many of
the most famous characters in the Bible - David, Elijah, Solomon, Ahab, Esther and many
others - make their appearances in this section.

I have divided this study of the historical books into several sections in order that we may
give reasonable time to each of the twelve books.

JOSHUA

We believe that most of this book was written by Joshua with the exception of the last
five verses, written by Phinehas. To say that Joshua was a great man is a gross under-
statement. He was born in slavery in Egypt. He was forty when Moses led the people
out of bondage. He was eighty years old when he received his commission to succeed
Moses. For the next thirty years he led to people of Israel into possession of the Land of
Israel.

Rahab

In Chapter Two we learn of the two spies Joshua sent out to Jericho. At this time the
people of Israel were still coming down the steep slopes of the mountains east of the
Jordan River (The East Bank). Rabbinical scholars claim that one of those spies was
named Salmon - the same man mentioned by Matthew in his genealogy of Jesus in
chapter one (who was married to Rahab and they had a son named Boaz (Matt. 1:5).
Rahab hid the two spies who otherwise would have been captured and killed. She risked
her life in order to cast her lot with Israel and their God.

In the succeeding chapters, the people crossed the Jordan River (which God made to
part). 1400 years later, John the Baptist would stand in the Jordan at about the same
place and baptize Jesus Himself.

In chapter 6 we read of the Fall of Jericho. This fort city was the key to the invasion; it
had to be conquered. Dr. John Garstang, Director of the British School of Archeology,
made a thorough excavation of Jericho in 1929-36. He concurred with the Bible record
of how Jericho fell. He found that the walls did actually fall flat. The wall was actually
double. The two walls were 15 feet apart; the outer wall 6 ft thick; the inner wall, 12 feet
and both walls were about 30 feet high. The two walls were linked together by houses
built across the top - as Rahab’s. Dr. Garstang found that the outer wall fell outwards
and down the hillside, dragging the inner wall and houses with it.
God had warned the people not to take anything from Jericho - but to destroy everything. But a man named Achan disobeyed that divine edict:

Joshua 7:1

*But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel.*

How was that anger manifest? Well, after the conquest of mighty Jericho, the next point of conflict was the dinky town of Ai. Joshua did not even send all his troops - just 3,000 soldiers who were soundly defeated by the sparse warriors of Ai and 36 Jewish men were killed. Joshua found out that Achan had stolen material from Jericho – silver, gold and garments and hid them. Not a good idea!

Joshua 7:24-26

*And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor.* [25] And Joshua said, *Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.* [26] And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.

Chapters 9 and 10 record the story of the sun standing still. God did this to provide Joshua’s armies time to conquer Gibeon.

From chapters 12 to 22 we learn how Joshua and his leaders sub-divided the land for distribution among the twelve tribes.

In chapters 23 and 24 we read Joshua’s farewell address in which he pleaded with the people not to engage in idolatry. In subsequent books of this historical section of scripture we read that Israel disregarded Joshua’s warning and went after “many strange gods,” which resulted in their defeat by Babylon in 586 B.C. (And the northern kingdom of Israel was defeated by the Assyrians 721 B.C.

Here is a small portion of Joshua’s impassioned farewell address:

Joshua 24:14-16

*Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away*
the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and
serve ye the Lord. [15] And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord,
choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served
that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye
dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. [16] And the people
answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods;
The heartcry of that great 110 year old man still resounds to us today:  CHOOSE
TODAY WHOM YOU WILL SERVE!

JUDGES

The Book of Judges (probably written by Samuel for the most part) encompasses the time
from the death of Joshua to the birth of Samuel - a period of about 400 years. It
represents the “dark ages” for Israel, a time of cycles of victory to defeat.

Note the picture on the following page.  Going from left to right and then down around
the circle.  This happened to Israel nationally again and again in Judges.  Note this
carefully:  Once an individual or a nation reaches the top of the circle there is no place to
 go except down .... UNLESS .... unless that person or nation allows God to take them on a
whole new trajectory where they have never gone before!

This book is called “Judges” after the twelve men and one woman who served as judges
during these perilous centuries.  Those judges were:

• Othniel
• Ehud - the left-handed judge who slew Eglon (Moab)
• Shamgar
• Deborah and Barak (Canaanite victory)
• Gideon (who defeated the Midianites with 300 men)
• Tola
• Jair
• Jephthah (son of a harlot who made a rash vow)
• Ibzan
• Elon
• Abdon
• Samson (blinded by the wiles of Delilah)

The theme of this book is “everyone did that which was right in his own eyes.”  It was a
brutal time, broken only by the birth of one man who would change the entire nation – the
prophet/priest Samuel.
JUDGES CYCLE

NATION SERVING GOD

DELIVERED

JUDGES RAISED UP

REPEL

TURNED BACK TO GOD

CRIED TO GOD

SERVITUDE

SLAVERY

DID EVIL

FORSOOK GOD

FOLLOWED PLEASURE
RUTH

Ruth’s story took place during the time of the judges. It began in the little town of Bethlehem with a family – Elimelech and Naomi and their two sons Mahlon and Chilion. Bethlehem, and the entire area, was going through a time of famine and drought. How ironic – for Bethlehem means “house of bread.” So Elimelech took his family to Moab - on the eastern side of the Dead Sea. The Moabites were descendants of Lot (Gen. 19:37), Abraham’s nephew. They were idolaters who worshiped Chemosh - to whom some killed their children in sacrificial offering.

In Moab, Elimelech died, leaving Naomi a widow. Her two sons married Moabite girls - Ruth and Naomi. Then the sons died and Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem, not knowing how she would be received. Naomi went back to her Moabite family while Ruth stayed with Naomi, her mother-in-law – going to a place (Bethlehem) very foreign to her.

About a mile or so east of Bethlehem is a field known as the “Field of Boaz.” - Boaz who was an unmarried man of some means in the town. Boaz, you may remember, was the son of Salmon (one of the two spies) and Rahab. This field took on even more significance as Luke tells us when centuries later angels announced the birth of Jesus to shepherds. Neither Naomi or Ruth had any funds and so to have something to eat, Ruth became a “gleaner” in the field of Boaz.

We go back to the book of Leviticus to understand this “gleaning” business: Leviticus 19:9-10 And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. [10] And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the Lord your God.

This was God’s way of taking care of the poor in that day. So Ruth a young and beautiful widow - would make her way to the field of Boaz day after day to pick up wheat or corn or whatever was growing there.

One day Boaz saw her and was immediately smitten. They were married soon after and one of their sons was Obed (who became the father of Jesse who was the father of David). So the Book of Ruth is a book of new beginnings, of hope when there is no hope and a guide to the ancestry of Jesus. Remember this glorious story took place in that centuries-long period of time of the Judges, the dark ages of Israeli Old Testament history.
I AND II SAMUEL

In the book of Leviticus, we learned of the Levites, who became the priests of Israel. Somewhere around 950 B.C., one of those Levites (Elkanah) was married to a woman named Hannah. She was childless. This situation was breaking her heart.

1 Samuel 1:10-18

And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. [11] And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will will him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. [12] And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. [13] Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. [14] And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. [15] And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunken neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. [16] Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. [17] Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. [18] And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

In due course of time, Hannah had a son and his name was Samuel. Again - her reaction:

1 Samuel 1:27-28

For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: [28] Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there.

“Lent to the Lord....” What a perfect phrase. We parents should understand that our children came from the Lord and are given back to him, hence our belief in “dedication of our children to God.”

Samuel grew up in the Tabernacle and became a great leader in Israel. However, he was not a good father and his sons were not what they should be - certainly in no spiritual position to become leaders in their father’s place when he would pass on. Now the people of Israel began to clamor for a king. They wanted to be like other nations, led by a monarch. Samuel tried to warn them, but they insisted. When Samuel took the matter to
God, he got this response: 1 Samuel 8:22 And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king.

The first king of Israel was SAUL. 1 Samuel 9:1-2 Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish....a mighty man of power. [2] And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly; and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.

Saul gets a bum rap from many readers of Scripture. However, he had some admirable qualities as well as bad ones: He was the first man to truly unite most of the tribes of Israel and he was an incredible father. David, on the other hand, was a terrible father whose children cause him great pain. Saul’s main point of contention was that he felt sometimes he didn’t need God and he could get things done on his own. God told him and his armies to defeat the Amalekites and wipe them out. However: 1 Samuel 15:9 But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

It was this act of disobedience to God that cause Saul to lose his throne and power. God told Samuel to anoint David as his successor.

In chapter 17, quite awhile before David ever became king, he was still a shepherd boy in Bethlehem - even though Samuel had already anointed him. The enemy of Israel was the Philistines and their giant warrior Goliath. While Saul and his men cowered before Goliath, David did not. He went down into the Valley of Elah and killed the giant. It was this and other victories that spawned Saul’s jealousy of David. He actually attempted to kill David, but God protect him. This book ends with the death of Saul and his sons and his armies on Mount Gilboa. 1 Samuel 31:8-13 And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa. [9] And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people. [10] And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

[11] And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul; [12] All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there. [13] And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.
Even though David was the “heir-apparent” to Israel’s throne, he grieved for the death of Saul.

II SAMUEL

David ruled for the first seven years from Hebron before the way cleared for him to go to Jerusalem (actually near the Gihon Spring in the Ophel - the deep canyon east and south of Jerusalem). Once in Jerusalem he ruled there for another 33 years - 40 in all.

In this book we learn how David came to get that property north of Silwan - or the Ophel. It was purchased from a farmer.

The early chapters tell of David’s military victories and his consolidation of the Kingdom known as “the Golden Age” of Israel.

Trouble arrives in chapters 11 and 12 when we learn of David’s adultery with the wife of one of his soldiers, Uriah. Her name was Bathsheba. When David learned she was pregnant with his child, he had Uriah killed on the battlefield. This would bring about a lifetime to follow of great difficulty in David’s life, including the falling apart of his family and the attempted coup of his throne by his own son Absalaom.

In his Bible Handbook, Dr. Henry Halley summarized David’s life thusly: All in all, David was a grand character. He did some things that were very wrong; but, for an oriental king, he was a most remarkable man. He was heart and soul devoted to God and the ways of God. In a world of idolatry, and in a nation that was continually falling away into idolatry, David stood like a rock for God. In every circumstance he went to God directly - in prayer, in thanks, or in praise. His two great accomplishments were: the Kingdom and the Psalms.

Next week we continue with the Historical Books.