

READING THE BIBLE LIKE JESUS

PRACTICE – MEDITATION LITERATURE

The Bible is ancient Jewish meditation literature that is artistically designed to interpret itself and encourage a lifetime of re-reading and reflection. **When we read the Bible as meditation literature, not only does it translate itself and invite us into a lifetime of reading, it also slowly works on us, transforming us by giving us wisdom.**

It is meant to keep us engaged in its text, engaged in its ancient context, engaged with community, engaged with the Messiah, engaged in unity, and engaged with the Spirit. All for the purpose of wisdom. That is meditation literature.

This week, as you read Ruth again, you may practice any and all of the tools and skills you have learned.

But this time, meditate on it. *Plant* yourself in the book of Ruth, reread it again for the 7th time, and reflect on its words, story, and message. You may even want to read it throughout the week, out loud, slowly, to catch each and every word. You may want to use another translation or read it with someone else. You may want to pray throughout it. Let the Spirit guide you.

But your goal is to meditate on it, see what new things come to life, and settle on what you think the message of this book is according to the author. Then finally, after meditating on it, see how it may be impacting you and what wisdom it is trying to leave you with. Take some notes & come ready to share.

Notice, there is no guiding notes this time except for one example of meditating and reflecting on a theme in Ruth.

The Bible is Meditation Literature, which means that it wants to draw you into repeated reading and reflection. One of the themes the book of Ruth wants us to reflect on is that found in the most repeated phrase, “Ruth the Moabite.” This phrase is something we have looked at throughout this study but why is this phrase so significant to the one of the main themes of this book and of the Bible?

Below is an excerpt from Mysteries of the Messiah: Unveiling Divine Connections from Genesis to Today by Rabbi Jason Sobel, that can help us see how meditating on the words and themes of Scripture can lead us to transformative wisdom and impact for our lives.

Friendship between Israel and Moab was prohibited, as the Torah makes clear (Deut. 23:4-7). Ruth, a Moabite, married Boaz, an Israelite, creating a mixed marriage. Jewish tradition which allowed a Jewish man to do so though it was strongly discouraged and frowned upon because Moabites had a long stand history in the Bible of sexual promiscuity and idolatry. Clearly, Ruth made a huge sacrifice and took a big risk by following Naomi back to the land of Israel, knowing that there was little chance of her remarriage as a widow and foreigner from a despised people. But love for the Lord and for Naomi made the risk of rejection and living in poverty worth it. But the union of Ruth and Boaz cant be fully appreciated, or its messianic significance understood, without knowing the history of Moab. **The coming together of Ruth and Boaz is the reuniting of Abraham and Lot.**

In Genesis 12, God spoke to Abraham: “Get going out from your land” (vs1). Abraham took a great step of faith and left his homeland with Sarah and his nephew Lot. God promises Abraham that He would bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him (v. 3). God richly blessed Abraham, and all that his fingers touched prospered. Lot flourished because of God’s blessing of Abraham spilled over into his life. As long as Lot stayed close to Abraham and blessed him, he was blessed in fulfillment of God’s promises.

God kept His word. Abraham and Lot prospered to the point that the land could not sustain them both, so Abraham and Lot separated. Abraham ascended and dwelled in the Promised Land. Lot decided to live in Sodom, which, before the Lord destroyed it, looked like “Adonai’s garden, like the land of Egypt” (Gen 13:10). When Lot separated from his uncle Abraham, he removed himself from the abundance of God’s provision.

Lot split from Abraham on his journey to Sodom and Gomorrah, and judgement ensued. In the destruction of Sodom, Lot lost everything. His daughters thought the world had ended and that they were the only ones left. They took matters into their own hands: they got their father intoxicated so they could become impregnated by him. Their sin gave birth to two nations: Ammon and Moab. Ruth descended from Moab, a name that literally means “from my father.” It’s astonishing to realize that by the time of the exodus, Moab had become Israel’s bitter enemy.

Lot and his family were only saved because of Abraham. Even their wealth came as a result of the Abrahamic blessing. But Lot’s decedents became like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah – immoral and inhospitable, refusing to help the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings. The king of Moab even hired Balaam to curse Israel and, when that didn’t work, hatched a plan to seduce the men of Israel into committing sexual immorality and idolatry with Moabite women.

Ruth’s commitment not to separate from Naomi and her God is seen as a repair or correction for Lot’s decision to separate from Abraham and live in Sodom. Her kindness to Naomi brought about God’s and Boaz’s favor, which resulted in Boaz’s marriage to her and the redemption of her deceased husband’s ancestral land so their family inheritance would not be lost. Ruth and Boaz’s marriage was a restoration of the relationship between Lot and Abraham. But why does this matter?

The reason that the story of the Gentile Ruth the Moabite and Hebrew Boaz from Judah is significant enough to be included in the Bible is that their relationship laid the foundation for the lineage of King David and ultimately the Messiah. There are four women cited in the genealogy of Jesus: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Why only these four women? They are

definitely not the most prominent or noteworthy. God chose these women because they were all Gentiles who played key roles in building the line of Judah and lineage of the Messiah through the house of David. In the same way that it took both Gentiles and Jews to birth the line of Jesus, it takes Gentiles and Jews to birth the Kingdom of God.

On *Shavuot* (Pentecost) Jews read the book of Ruth for two reasons: (1) the story of Ruth and Boaz took place at Pentecost, which is harvesttime: and (2) the book is read to honor King David's birthday, which according to Jewish tradition, was on Pentecost. In both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, one of major themes of Pentecost is **unity**. Neither the Torah at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:8) nor the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 are given until the people are unified in "one accord" (Acts 2:1), like one man with one heart. God's presence, power, and provision are always proportional to the unity of God's people.

When the Jew and Gentile unite in Jesus, we become an unstoppable force for salvation, transformation, and revival. This is seen in what is known as Jesus' Farewell or High Priestly Prayer: "I pray not on behalf of **these** only, but also for **those** who believe in Me through their message, that they all may be one.... That they may be perfected in **unity**, so that the world may know that You sent Me.... (John 17:20-23)

It is only when "these" (Jewish) and "those" (Gentile) unify as one that the body of the Messiah will be "perfected in unity" and the world will finally realize that God sent Jesus. Just like Boaz and Ruth did, joining in covenantal relationship. When the two come together, they help birth Kingdom revival, like Ruth and Boaz birthed Obed, the grandfather of David. When the fusion of Boaz and Ruth, Abraham and Lot, Jewish and Gentile occurs, we will witness God's power and presence in unprecedented ways.

God wants us to be like one man with one heart, not just praying "Your kingdom come" but living and modeling it "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).