

2017-04-01

Love stories with a twist #1

Hi all,

This series is about love stories in the Bible that are types and shadows of the Lord and the church, or they play a significant role in the history of Israel or even, Jesus, and I think you'll never look at these Bible stories quite the same way again. The last section of each week in this series will be entitled 'The Twist', so read on...

The girl that proposed

We are told in Ruth 1:1 the following story took place in the days when the judges ruled. The Judges ruled and are listed in the book of Judges, over the course of about 300 years after Joshua died but before King Saul ruled. Samuel was the last Judge and appointed Saul king. Notable Judges included Gideon, Samson and Deborah.

Moses had died and then Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land, conquering first Jericho, with the help of a prostitute named Rahab, who hid the Israeli spies and then lied about it to the Jericho authorities and was honored by God for doing so. For her kindness she requested she and her family be spared for she believed in the God of Israel. She let down a red rope through her window on the outside of the wall, and when the walls of Jericho came tumbling down, her house remained standing. All Joshua 6:25 tells us is that Rahab settled in Israel 'to this day' (the time of the writing of the book of Joshua).

It was in that time when Israel settled the land that the book of Ruth takes place. We are told in the opening verses that due to a famine in Israel a family had migrated to Moab, the area near Jericho. Over time the man died leaving his wife Naomi, a widow, and their sons got married to two Moabite women: Orpha and Ruth.

Over the course of about 10 years we are told, both men died, leaving now all 3 women widowed and destitute. Orpah decided to stay in her homeland, but Ruth insisted on going with Naomi back to Israel, uttering some of the most famous words in scripture: "Entreat me not to leave you, nor return from following you; for where you go I go; and where you lodge, I lodge. For your people shall be my people, and your God, my God." (1:16)

Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match, catch me a catch...

Chapter 2 opens with the statement Naomi had a distant relative, Boaz, who was very wealthy. The law in Israel was that if a brother or close relative died and left a widow, a relative of the dead man had the responsibility if he was looking to get married, to look first to his dead brother's wife, so that his brother's family could survive. If not a brother, then a distant relative - in other words, better to stay in the family than being forced to suddenly have no family network for her and her children.

Another law in Israel was for the harvesting of the grain fields to be done with rounded off corners, leaving the corners to be harvested by the poor as an offering to the Lord, for He promised if they would do that then He would bless the farmer and Israel for caring for others. That is exactly the situation Ruth and Naomi found themselves in, poor enough to have to glean from the corners of Boaz's field.

Yet a plan is afoot in Naomi's mind, for she instructs Ruth to only go to Boaz's field(s), and she tells her to walk up to him and let him know she will be gleaning. Boaz recognizes her as a relative and insists she stay with him and his fields...the plot thickens just as Naomi had hoped. In fact he appears to 'like' her, for he invites her to eat meals with him and his employees. (2:6-17)

The proposal and more

Chapter 3 opens up with instructions from Naomi to Ruth that are lost on we Gentile readers looking at this story some 3,200 years later. Naomi is giving Ruth instructions on how to propose to Boaz. She tells him to take a bath, put on clean clothes and look all pretty, hang around unseen for the evening, and when the harvest party is winding down and Boaz falls asleep, go in and she says: "...go in and uncover his feet, and lay yourself down, and he will tell you what next to do." (v4)

THAT my friends, is a wedding proposal. Today a Jewish wedding often places the bride and groom under a chupah, a tent, and with variations, the groom will often at some point put a veil over his wife as a symbol that they are one and she is under his covering. As I said, with 3200 years having passed there are variations, but we see that Ruth's taking Boaz's coat and covering herself and going to sleep under his robe at his feet was indeed taken as a proposal. We know this because...

Verse 7 says she did so, and v8 says, "At midnight the man turned over, and behold, a woman was lying at his feet, and he was afraid." LOL I would think so! When Ruth identified herself she was very bold to follow through with her proposal in v9: "I am Ruth, Now spread your skirt over me for you are my near family."

And the good news is, he accepted her proposal! Look at Ruth's boldness, look at her ingenuity!

The twist

We must ask ourselves why Boaz was so willing to marry a Moabite woman; why did he fall in love with her? Of all the women in Israel, why did Ruth's boldness that started with her going right up to him to inform him she would be gleaning his field, appeal to him? Had he seen that before in another Moabite woman perhaps? And some may wonder why the story of Ruth was even place in the Bible - there is no teaching, not instruction, just a love story.

The twist is revealed in the closing verses of the book of Ruth where it lists the genealogy of the family. In verses 21-22 we are told Boaz's dad's name was Salmon (Sal-mon), but it is only by looking at Matthew 1:5 at the list of the same family list that Matthew tells us not only that Salmon was Boaz's father, but his mother was none other than Rahab the former prostitute of Jericho. That's right - Boaz' mom was Rahab - a Moabite woman convert to the God of Israel, just like Ruth.

Now the love story become clear - Boaz's dad saw something in Rahab, this Moabite convert to the God of Israel, as his father had seen in Rahab his mother - the same love of God, the ingenuity, the boldness, and as his father disregarded her life as a prostitute as the old her for all things are new in God, so did Boaz do the same with Ruth. Wow, the stories that family could tell - I can hardly wait to meet them in heaven and hear the whole story straight from them.

The closing words of the book of Ruth continue with the family line: Boaz and Ruth had a son named Obed, who grew up and had a son named Jesse, who grew up and had a son named David - future King of Israel. That makes Ruth and Boaz David's great-grandma and grandpa, and makes Rahab his great-great grandma.

The story of Ruth begins with Rahab and is the story of redemption in Christ, and further confirmation that the decisions we make in the Lord now may have far reaching effects that will be seen only after we are gone. And we cannot forget that both women, Rahab and Ruth, are in the family line of Mary and Joseph - and therefore, Jesus.

Another love story next week, until then, blessings,
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2017-04-08

Love stories with a twist #2 – Jumping Bride

Hi all,

More than any other person in the Bible, Isaac provides a type and shadow of the Messiah. Before we can consider the love story to follow, I need to share some of these types and shadows.

Isaac - the promised son

There are many elements to the making of an ancient covenant. One of those is the exchanging of a person's most valuable possession. And we can say that whatever is bound or loosed on earth is bound or loosed in heaven for we determine the degree to which heaven's will is done in our lives. In

fact heaven may loose some things for us, such as salvation, but unless a person wants what has been loosed, it remains withheld.

So it was the son of promise, the son of a miracle conception, Isaac, became the son offered in sacrifice. In Genesis 22 it says 'the Lord did test Abraham', but the word 'test' here means 'prove'. In other words, Abraham and the Lord are the 2 making covenant, so it was up to Abraham to prove his intentions and offer his most prized possession - his son. If he did so, then heaven would be loosed to offer His own Son as a sacrifice. The Lord states so in Genesis 22:16-18, that because Abraham offered his son, all the families of the earth would be blessed...the implication of the gift of Jesus is clear.

Abraham was instructed to go to the mountains of Moriah to offer Isaac. A city would later be founded upon the mountains of Moriah, Jerusalem. And many have speculated the place of offering Isaac was the future Golgotha, though we don't know 100% for sure. What we do know is that Solomon's temple was built on one of those 'mountains of Moriah' (II Chronicles 3:1), so it is reasonable to believe the Jewish tradition that Solomon's temple was built on the spot Abraham offered Isaac.

In Judaism they teach the thicket where the ram was caught represented the sins of the people. You know the rest. Abraham told his son God would provide a lamb, but it was instead a ram that was caught, revealing Abraham was talking of the future Lamb of God, confirmed by Hebrews 11:17-19 which says Abraham saw his son/Son raised from the dead 'in a figure'. Abraham named the place 'Adonai Yireh' (Jehovah Jireh), which means 'In the Mount of the Lord it (salvation) will be seen'. And Jesus told the leaders in John 8:56; "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day. He saw it and was glad."

Types of Messiah

Isaac was the son of promise from a miracle conception. He was beloved of his father. He willingly laid down his life in obedience to his father. Isaac took a bride at age 40*, showing about 4,000 years from Adam that Messiah would come to earth to take out a bride for Himself. Isaac had children at age 60*, showing salvation to earth - children - would happen at the end of 6,000 years. *Genesis 25:20, 26

In Genesis 24 Abraham, who represents the Father God in this love story, sends his servant, Eliezer, who represents the Holy Spirit, to find a bride for Isaac, who represents Jesus. The bride, Rebekah, is the church.

Eliezer took 10 camels loaded with gifts for the bride. The number 10 is very common in the Bible, ranging from the 10 Commandments to the Parable of the 10 virgins, to 10 days between the resurrection and Pentecost - and perhaps that '10' fits best here. 10 camels loaded with gifts for the bride in anticipation of finding her, even as 10 days lapsed between Jesus' ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and all His gifts for us.

Eliezer, the Holy Spirit, goes out from the Father as the Son watches on from the Father's side, to find a bride for the Son - but Eliezer doesn't want a woman who would be a bride by coercion or with ulterior motives. She must WANT to be the bride of the son with pure motives. She was saving herself for him only. Waiting, waiting...

She had no idea the wealth of gifts on those 10 camels were for her. Yet she eagerly met Eliezer and gave him water - as we have a time with the Holy Spirit while He deals with our heart about salvation - will we, or won't we? When she eagerly got to know Eliezer communing over water, that mix of God's Spirit in our heart while we contemplate eternity and to what degree we might serve the Lord...

She did so while still not knowing what he had in store for her just as we do, we just trust. So it was she watered all the camels as well. As Eliezer, the Holy Spirit type, oversaw the well, the source of water from which she returned again and again and again, they communed there. He watching her, seeing her heart, seeing her love of serving others. And she no doubt conversing with him as she dipped (living) water from the well...back and forth...and he began to know she was the bride for the son.

She returned to the well again and again as Eliezer oversaw her actions not doing so for the gifts they bore, 10 being the number of completion, of anticipation between resurrection life and outpouring...but her heart was pure, just serving him because serving others is its own reward.

How interesting we find the son's name, Isaac, means 'laughter', and Rebekah means 'to tie or bind' - and while that can be taken in a negative light, the reality is she willingly bound herself to laughter- her husband - out of love as a joyous union, as we are bond-servants of the Lord. Our salvation is not in the letter of the law, but in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*. She was bound to the Son in joy and peace, a true love story. *Romans 14:17

Bond-servants are free people who have willingly bound themselves to the master. So it was Rebekah made the decision to become the bride though she had never seen the son/Son. In fact she received all the gifts of the 10 camels upon accepting the invitation, as a token of a future time of seeing the son, just as we are told in Ephesians 1:13-14 the Holy Spirit is the merely down payment, and less than that, the earnest money provided as a sample of what is to come.

Genesis 24:64 tells us Rebekah rode those camels (the Holy Spirit) back to the son, where the son/Son lived, meeting him not at his home, but seeing each other far off she jumped off her camel to run to him. Isaac was standing in a field when he first saw her, and it was there that she ran to him. In Jesus' parables in Mark 4 the earth and fields stands for a person's heart - it is where the pearl of great price was found, for instance. It is where the good seed of the Word of God is planted and grows strong. And it is there in her heart and his/His heart they meet in that field, and return to the Father's home, now home to the son/Son and his/His bride.

We first meet the Son in the field of our heart, but will one day be carried away by the Spirit to Him in that field He is working, in between His home and our earth home, and then as she was taken to his father's home, so too we shall after meeting Him in that 'field', be taken to the Father's home that has been prepared for us.

The question for us is this - are we as eager to see the Son as she was? The camels - the Holy Spirit - is the means by which we are carried to the Son, but she leapt off her camel in eagerness to see him. She understood the gifts were not the object of her affection, it was the son and she was solely focused on her love for him?Him.

We are to be like Rebekah, having voluntarily bound our hearts to the Son, realizing the gifts of the Spirit and all we have in Him are not toys nor objects of amusement therefore not the object of our attention, but just part of our lives. The Holy Spirit and all His manifestations are the means by which to know the Son more fully, to know that however wonderful the things of the Spirit are right now, they are merely earnest money payment for what is to come.

Truly as Ephesians 2:6-7 says, we are seated in Christ in the heavenly's so that in the ages to come (the Father) may continue to show forth the riches of His kindness towards us in His Son...in the ages to come...Be the bride.

New love story next week, until then, blessings,
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2017-04-15

Hi all,

When I tell you this love story is about events in the book of Esther you may think you know what it is about, but you'd be wrong. It isn't about the love the king has for his queen, nor the love of an uncle/cousin for his niece, nor of her love for her people. That's part of 'the twist'.

King Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Judah in successive raids, carrying off Daniel and his 3 friends, Ezekiel, and as we learn in Esther 2: 5-7, Mordecai and his cousin whom he had raised, Hadassah, whom we know as Esther. The Hebrew name Hadassah means 'Compassion', and is appropriate for this love story.

You know the book of Esther

The story takes place somewhere between 486BC and about 465BC. Queen Vashti was replaced by Esther, but she did not disclose she was Jewish. (2:10)

In 2:19-23 we are told Mordecai overhears a plot to assassinate King Xerxes, which he dutifully reports, but in all the activity his act of kindness to the king is forgotten.

Chapter 3 is all about the plot of Haman against the Jews, as he manipulates Xerxes to issue an order to have all the Jews killed on a certain day. In chapter 4 Mordecai goes to Esther for help for their people, urging her with the famous words in v14, "Who knows if you have been called into the kingdom (of Xerxes) for such a time as this?"

The set up

Chapter 5 is focused on Esther's banquets, the last one with Haman in attendance, and also Haman's erection of a gallows which he intends for Mordecai in particular. Chapter 6 is where the king cannot sleep and happens to open the records to the place where Mordecai had saved his life. He asks what was done to honor Mordecai, and was shocked to learn nothing had been done. The king corrects that oversight, making Haman lead the honored Mordecai through the streets of the city.

Haman's death

And of course chapter 7 is about the final banquet, the revelation Esther is Jewish and Haman's plot to kill the Jews. Xerxes was not an absolute monarch as Nebuchadnezzar had been, for the law of the Persians was that a king could not change a law he had made. Therefore Xerxes could not revoke his law to kill the Jews, but he issued an executive order that all Jews could defend themselves without facing any charges as it would be self-defense.

The Feast of Purim is celebrated to this day on 14 Adar, which is in the western calendar late winter or early spring, to celebrate the Jewish victory over their enemies.

Where is the love story?

Around 1400 BC, in Exodus 17:8-16, Amalek came out to fight against Israel when they had just left Egypt. The people of Amalek were distant cousins of Israel and should have helped them, but instead fought against them and incurred the wrath of God. The original Amalek was Esau's grandson. Genesis 36:12.

Most Christians remember the battle because it was there that God is called Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord my Banner, for when Moses' hand were held up Israel prevailed, and when he got tired and they dropped, Amalek started winning. Aaron and Hur assisted by holding Moses' hands up for the whole battle while he sat on a rock.

You can't miss the symbolism here

Moses, meaning 'drawn out', sat on the rock (Christ) while Aaron, meaning 'exalted' lifts one arm. Hur lifted the other arm and has different meanings depending on which root word is emphasized. Therefore it can mean 'whiteness/righteousness', and 'fire/heat' and 'freedom'.

The meaning is clear: While we are seated/resting on the Rock (Christ) we are drawn out of the world (Moses), exalted (Aaron) in victory over the enemy in righteousness and zealous fervor (Hur) If we lose our zeal and righteousness we won't be exalted in the Lord, and the enemy can triumph over us...back to the story.

The blotting out of Amalek

It is in Exodus 17:14 that God tells Moses to write it down in a book of remembrance, for He will blot out the people of Amalek from the earth. (They had ceased following God but had become idolaters and haters of God as demonstrated by their intense battle against Israel).

About 400 years later, about 1000 BC we have King Saul who in I Samuel 15:2-3 is told by God that He remembers what Amalek did to Israel when they had first entered the wilderness and He wanted them destroyed as He had promised Moses. King Saul goes to war and kills all as commanded, though in disobedience he keeps King Agag, who is the family head of the Agagites alive, as well as many livestock.

God is trying to keep His promise to Moses, but Saul disobeys and loses his kingdom to David. And while he does repent it is too late, and is told that famous line by Samuel in 15:22-23: "To obey is better than sacrifice...for rebellion is as witchcraft.." The reason rebellion is equal to witchcraft is that it manipulates people and events for personal benefit. That is what rebellion does - it manipulates people and events for one's personal benefit. From the kid who lies to his parents about where he went Friday night to the husband covering up his gambling addiction by telling his wife he didn't get paid the bonus he thought he would, those lies are witchcraft at their root.

King Agag does lose his life that day, though some of his family survives. How do we know this? Coming full circle we have the last of the Amalekites make their appearance in the book of Esther, and that person is non other than Haman the Agagite of Esther 3:1, direct descendant of King Agag that Saul kept alive.

Yes, Haman was an Agagite, the last of the Amalekites and exhibiting the same hatred for his cousins the Jews as did his forefathers in Exodus 17, some 900 years earlier.

The twist

Hadassah you'll recall means 'Compassion', and the book of Esther is not only about the events around Purim, but it is the record of God's compassion on Israel and His promises to them. The twist to this love story is that of the Father God and His love for us, His love for keeping His Word, His love for watching over us to perform all He has promised - even if we get to heaven before we see it come to pass on earth.

I remember a couple in a church where I was pastor years ago, who had amazing prophecies over them about going to the nations teaching people of the Lord. But then infidelity happened and they divorced. During a visitation I asked the Lord about them because His Word won't return to Him void. But how were they going to go to the nations since they were divorced. He said, "Some prophecies will be fulfilled in the next age." I told Him I needed chapter and verse on that and He said, "There are many prophecies in the Old Testament about the age to come, jumping completely over this time you call the church age, so why is it so hard for you to believe that prophecies given in this age would come to pass in the next?"

His love story to us is that it doesn't matter if He promises something and it takes 900 years for it to happen as it did with Moses, or if you have to wait for His millennial reign on the earth before it happens - but what He promised WILL happen, and we can rest in that.

Another love story with a twist next week, until then, blessings,
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2017-04-22

Love stories with a twist #4, The divorced couple

Hi all,

When a spouse commits adultery the emotional anguish of the innocent spouse is extremely intense. The love story in this installment is no different, and this one has a huge twist at the end. In this story one spouse has been unfaithful and the other goes back and forth saying in one breath they will love them and restore the relationship, and in the next that they will divorce them.

The divorce

Sadly, this marriage ended in divorce, though only after great effort from the husband to keep it together. In fact the husband even quietly paid for the wife's expenses in the midst of her unfaithfulness, so great was his love for her! And she even had the nerve to credit her lover with supplying everything, when he did nothing for her!

To understand this divorce we need to look at the Israeli divorce law, given by God to Moses in Deuteronomy 24:1-4: "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she loses his favor because he has found something indecent or unacceptable about her, and he writes her a

certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and after she leaves his house, she goes and becomes another man's wife, and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, then her former husband who first sent her away may not take her again as his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an outrage before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance."

As you can see, God is using a hypothetical situation to describe His intent in this law, describing 3 failed marriages without any continued guilt. The law only had 1 rule - If her/his third marriage failed or she/he became widowed she/he could not go back to spouse #1. That's it for the Israeli divorce law. This prevented (a woman) in this example who had been married let us say to Tom, then Dick, then Harry, say to herself Harry was a bad decision I think I'll go back to Tom - that prevented marriage with ulterior motives and kept a person from entering a marriage with a built in 'Plan B' in their mind. Understanding this law is a must for understanding this love story.

The couple...

The couple whose marriage ended in divorce is God and Israel, as described in heart-rending detail in the first three chapters of the book of Hosea. In fact, Hosea 2: 2 contains the only Biblical record of the ancient Israeli divorce decree: "She is not my wife nor am I her husband!" which made a divorce final. The Lord had first said it in 1: 9-10: "And the Lord said, 'Name him Lo-Ammi which means 'not my people', for you are not my people, nor am I your God."

The Lord was the husband who provided for unfaithful Israel's living though she gave the credit to Baal, as He states in 2:8: "She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold - which they used (to thank and honor) Baal."

Remembering the early part of their marriage

But His emotions swirl and clash like waves on the sea, for He says in 2:14-16: "Therefore I am now going to allure (woo) her (Israel); I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her...and she will respond as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. In that day, declares the Lord, You will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.'"

He divorced her, so by law she may now go and become another (god's) spouse - and that is exactly what Israel did, serving god after god over the centuries.

He is hurting - He keeps going back to different prophets about His divorce, this time to Jeremiah (He also said the same to Isaiah and Ezekiel)

"Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under the spreading tree and has committed adultery there (offerings to gods). I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it. I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery." Jeremiah 3:6-8

The twist: The Lord breaks His own law? Mercy triumphs over judgement

"If a man divorces his wife and she leaves him and marries another man, should he return to her again? Would not the land be completely defiled? But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers - would you now return to me? Only acknowledge your guilt - you have rebelled against the Lord your God, you have scattered your favors to foreign gods under every spreading tree, and have not obeyed me, declares the Lord. Return faithless people, declares the Lord, for I am your husband. I will choose you...and bring you to Zion." Jeremiah 3:1, 13-14

Paul's words of Romans 11:26-27 now take on a deeper meaning: "And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: **There will come out of Zion the Deliverer** and shall turn godlessness away from Jacob. This is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

Yes - the Lord invites Israel to be remarried to Him in violation of His own law. How do we explain this? Let me suggest a solution. The new birth. No one in the Old Testament was born again, which is a recreation of the human spirit by the Spirit of God. As II Corinthians 5:17 says, "If any man is in

Christ old things are passed away. Behold! All things have become new." Israel will be a new creation in Christ, the old is passed and forgotten, all things are new. He isn't violating His law after all!

But wait, there's more

In Hosea, in the midst of God's divorcing Israel and His statement of longing to woo her again, comes a prophecy that one day Israel will say to themselves: "Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but He will heal us; He has injured us (they did it to themselves) but He will bind up our wounds. After two days He will revive us; On the third day He will restore us that we may live in His presence..." Hosea 6:1-2

The phrase "After 2 days He will revive us, and on the 3rd day He will restore us that we may live in His presence" has long been understood to be prophetic of the fact Messiah came and was rejected by Israel, with now 2,000 years or 2 days having passed, and He will revive them at the end of that 2,000 year period. This explains the Messianic-Jewish movement around the world in our day, their revival happening AFTER the 2 days. On the 3rd (1,000 year) day Messiah will come and restore Israel who will forever live in His presence. There is so much more that could be said, but I leave it at this...more next week, until then, blessings,

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2017-04-29

Love stories with a twist #5, The offended relative

Hi all,

One of the things I've observed in my own life is this: Sometimes we make missteps, but we were walking in the right direction and that counts, so the Lord helps us walk on down that path a littler further. Of course by helping us further down that path He knows we will yet again make missteps...ah...He loves us!

That is certainly true of the family that is the subject of this installment of 'Love stories with a twist'. David and Bathsheba's love-filled marriage began as an affair driven by lust - lust to such a degree David had her husband killed to cover up their tryst. They went on to have 4 sons including the future King Solomon, who succeeded his father on the throne. As a family they were usually walking in the right direction, but most of their missteps were we could say as with us so often, self-inflicted wounds.

Of course one of those self-inflicted wounds was the way David and Bathsheba began. The next would be having her husband killed. Another would be the revolt of David's beloved son, Absalom. And that in a way brings us to this love story with a twist. Let me set the stage with our cast of characters:

David is King, Bathsheba is his wife, Absalom is the handsome young prince and step-son* to Bathsheba, Hushai is David's friend and a secret double agent, Ahithophel is David's main Counselor, and Joab is David's General. *II Samuel 3:3

Seeds of rebellion

When Solomon was born he entered a blended family*. But David had an older son named Absalom, who wanted to be king. His name means 'father of peace' though he was anything but. He stood at the gate of the city making judgements that purposely undermined his father, and David allowed it** in a brilliant display of poor fathering. We are also told of the bitterness he had towards his father for we are told he lived 2 whole years in Jerusalem but never saw his father's face^. *II Samuel *12:24-25, **15:1-6, ^14:28

Eventually most of the people backed Absalom who rebelled openly and drove his father from Jerusalem, meaning David found himself in the all too familiar position of running for his life from a (wrongful) king who was trying to kill him (the first being King Saul). The rebellion ended when handsome Absalom got his beautiful hair caught in a tree limb and his mule kept running, leaving him hanging, and General Joab ended the rebellion with his sword then and there.

But this love story isn't about David's love for his son Absalom, nor about Solomon and David and Bathsheba's love for him.

Have you ever been betrayed by a friend?

David's main source of counsel was Ahithophel, and it was said his counsel in those days was as if someone inquired at the mouth of God*. He was trusted, loved, and very wise. But there was an issue - he joined Absalom in his rebellion. *II Samuel 16:23

We are told David was driven from Jerusalem and walked up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he ascended, barefoot, his head covered, and all his friends followed him weeping as they went. Can you imagine the hurt, the betrayal of having his son turn against him to the extent he now sought the life of his father? II Samuel 15:30-31

When David learned of Ahithophel joining the rebellion he prayed that God would turn the counsel of Ahithophel to foolishness*, and God did. David's friend Hushai pretended to be on Absalom's side and let Ahithophel give his counsel first. Then Hushai gave Absalom counsel that was actually a set up, and as planned^ Absalom liked his plan over Ahithophel's, so that Ahithophel's counsel was rejected.** * II Samuel 15:31, **17:14, ^15:34

The power behind the rebellion

Ahithophel was a key player in the rebellion providing Absalom wise counsel in how to carry it out, and we must wonder why. What had David done to him that he would turn on his king like that?

The twist

For the reader the answer as to why Ahithophel turned with such treachery against King David is discovered at the end of the story, something which I imagine all the people at the time of the writing already knew, so it was made barely a footnote for later observant readers to piece together. Students of this story will recall that early on in the story II Samuel 11:3 tells us Bathsheba's father was Eliam (Ammiel in some translations).

It isn't until II Samuel 23:34 in the list of 'David's Mighty Men' that included Bathsheba's husband Uriah, that we are also told Eliam, Bathsheba's father, was also Ahithophel's son. That's correct - Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather, and his son Eliam fought alongside her husband Uriah, whom David had killed.

Lessons learned for us

This was about the love of a grandfather for his granddaughter, his love for her husband, his love for honor and right and wrong. I like to say that the conversation you don't want to have is the very conversation you need to have. It had to be that way with David and Ahithophel, yet there is no record of them having that conversation about how David became King and what he did to Bathsheba's family and the ranks of the 'Mighty Men'.

They worked side by side for years, all the while beneath Ahithophel's calm exterior and wise counsel was a cauldron of seething anger that became hatred for David. He must have felt David deserved to be driven from the throne, and he saw the egotistical Absalom as the means to arrange revenge.

Yet I must come full circle in this little story for I started out talking about how we make missteps, but because we are walking in the general direction we should go, God comes to our aide to move us a little further down that path. So it was with David, who although full of imperfections, still managed to write about 75 of the 150 Psalms in our Bible, raise Solomon, and have the Messiah known as the Son of David, for his rule and that of Solomon were seen as the 'golden years' of Israel.

Quite a testament not to the man, but to our Lord and His ability to weave His will in our lives more in spite of us than because of us. I hope this has been a blessing to you, another love story next week.

Until then, blessings,

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2017-05-06

Love stories with a twist #6, She saved his life

Hi all,

This love story has such a twist at the end that when most people first read the story in the Bible they think they read it wrong - Right after calling him at the burning bush God tried to kill Moses - and it seems so contradictory, so strange, that we tuck that passage into the file of the unexplained and read on.

Setting the stage

We are told in Acts 7:21-25: "When Moses was full forty years old it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel...seeing one of them suffer wrong he struck down the Egyptian, supposing his brethren would have understood that God by his hand would deliver them, but they understood not."

The Jewish historian Josephus tells us that Moses was a great Army General, so we understand Moses thought he would deliver Israel through civil war. Knowing he was the delivered 40 years before the burning bush experience, he killed 1 Egyptian and assumed they would follow him in a rebellion that would result in freedom. He had the divine revelation about his call, but not how it would happen. He tried to help God by figuring the rest out based on his education and military experience - kill 1 Egyptian, the people will rally around him and start a civil war - right? Wrong.

Revelation is here a little and there a little. God often gives us a small part, then lets us walk some things out, and then gives us the rest later. For instance in Genesis 15 He told Abraham he would have a son from his own body. But that is all He said. In Genesis 16 as Abraham and Sarah talk it out, they decide since she is barren, it must be through someone else, and so in desperation to see God's will done in their life as well as wanting a son, she tells him to get Hagar pregnant, which he does.

It isn't until the next chapter, 17, that the Lord again appears to Abraham and tells him Sarah will be the mother of the son...OH...where has that information been hiding Lord? Would have been nice to know back in chapter 15 as that would have saved me from getting Hagar pregnant...! So He gives us revelation in pieces. Our job is not to think 1 piece of the puzzle is the whole puzzle and then get ourselves into trouble as Abraham and Moses both did. We are in good company at least! :)

Unlike the movie and most Sunday school lessons

Another lesson is to realize that just because you have a revelation from God it doesn't mean He has given others that same revelation. It is first and foremost to you, one on one between you and the Lord. Many people like Moses commit the sin of presumption, thinking because they have a revelation from God surely everyone else must either a) have that same revelation or b) will believe you when you tell them what He has told or shown you. Wrong. It is your revelation, not theirs.

Moses was 40 when he received the revelation that he was the deliverer, but that sin of presumption cost him 40 years, one third of his life in the wilderness. It wasn't until 40 years later at age 80, that the Lord appeared to him to tell him how his call would come about. All that time he knew he was the delivered, but not the how.

Moses and Zipporah, and their son Gershom

In Exodus 2:16-22 we are told after leaving Egypt in faith yet mentally and emotionally confused and wondering what he did wrong, he came to a well where Jethro the Priest of Midair's daughters were watering their flocks. Some shepherds tried to take over for their own flocks, but Moses defended the daughters, which was told to Jethro. Moses soon married Zipporah, one of Jethro's daughters, and they had a son named Gershom, which means 'a traveler there'.

What he was told at the burning bush

That he had a son in Midian is important to this story - Gershom wasn't Israeli, but a Midianite. That means uncircumcised. At the burning bush Moses is told then and there about all the plagues that would happen*, even down to the detail of them eventually receiving from the Egyptians gold and silver if they would just leave them alone, and most importantly: The death of the first born. He knew the firstborn would die at the burning bush before he even returned to Egypt. *Exodus 3:14-22, 4:1-23

"And you will say to Pharaoh, 'Israel is my son, my first born and I say to you, Let my son go that he may serve me. And if you won't let him go I will slay your son, your firstborn.'" v23

The twist - Attempted execution

Right after these words in verse 23 about killing Egypt's firstborn it says this: "And it came to pass by the way in the inn, the Lord met him and tried to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and threw it at his feet and said, 'A bridegroom of blood you are now to me.' So He (the Lord) let him go. Then she said 'A bridegroom of blood you are because of the circumcision.'" Bridegroom of blood means brand new into the covenant.

It was the astuteness of Zipporah and her love for her son, her husband, and for what is right and wrong that she proved at this point she was more spiritually in tune with the Lord's call on their lives than was Moses. He had just been told the firstborn of Egypt would die and he understood circumcision was the sign of being in covenant with the Lord, yet Moses was a neglectful father in this regard. IF he had gone into Egypt the text infers Gershom would have died with the first born of Egypt.

Moses had been so busy with 'work' and focused on his life he didn't think through what it meant to his son. We place such emphasis on the Passover blood we forget that every Israeli male in Egypt was circumcised and that is the foundational truth of why they were not killed with Egypt's firstborn - the Passover blood is secondary.

From the Lord's perspective, once Moses knew the plan, he was immediately accountable. Once the Lord says it, it is done. It is 'real time'. This is consistent with the Mark 6: 51-52 comment that the disciples' hearts were so amazed Jesus had walked on the water because 'they considered not the miracle of the loaves'. If you recall that story Jesus had fed the 5,000, then sent them in a boat across the lake at sundown which they found to be hard going, and He came walking on the water to them between 3am and 6am.

When exactly were they to have 'considered the miracle of the loaves'? They had been working hard all night just to cross the lake - and yet God had that expectation on them to have considered what they had just seen. Same with Moses. When God says it or does a miracle in our lives we are to move that to highest priority and give ourselves to it to consider it, remember it, learn from it. How often does He do something for us and we just say 'thanks' if even that, and keep going.

We need to be as astute as Zipporah who recognized when God does or says something, it is done right then and there and we need to make that our top priority. We still must follow logic and do right in the natural, but as a priority, what He says jumps to the head of the line. Last of the series next week, until then, blessings,
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2017-05-13

Love stories with a twist #7, Not his

Hi all,

The infamous start of David and Bathsheba's relationship is well known, and you'll recall earlier in this series I shared the twist that David's closest advisor, Ahithophel, was Bathsheba's grandfather, and became co-conspirator against David with Absalom. Yet from this dysfunctional family came Solomon, and together with his father's reign, comprised the 'Golden Age' of Israel, from 1010 BC to 931BC - a long time ago. Today, another love story with a twist involving this family.

Why David and Solomon were unique

David was unique in that he walked in several New Testament realities while still deep in the Old Testament. He did things that so violated the guidelines of the day that others would never have thought of doing. Yet God honored him.

For instance, in I Samuel 21:1-6 David was very hungry and demanded to eat the 'Shewbread', which is bread put in the Holy Place reserved for the Priests, representing man living by every Word God speaks to him. Inside the veil was also a Menorah which represented the Holy Spirit and His manifestations/gifts, and the altar of incense which represents prayers coming before God. Yet David ate the holy bread - you and I could eat it for Christ is in us, but not so back then.

The biggest New Testament truth he walked in is recorded in II Samuel 6:12-19. David brought the Ark of the Covenant into the city and quite simply 'pitched a tent' and put it in it. That's right, he did not follow the guidelines given to Moses from the Father - no altar of sin offerings representing the cross, no laver for the priests to then wash with representing the washing of the Word. No first veil behind which should have been the shewbread, menorah, and incense. No inner veil hiding the Ark of the Covenant. None of that. He simply put the Ark of the Covenant in wide open view to everyone, covered by a tent and David danced and worshipped before the Lord.

You and I could walk up to or even handle the Ark of the Covenant because Christ lives in us - but not so back then - yet He walked in NT truth by just pitching a tent and walking right up to the Ark and danced before the Lord. Wow. One reason David walked in NT truth is because he actually knew the Lord - Christ. David wrote in Psalm 110:1: "The Lord (Father) said to my Lord (Christ), Be seated at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool..." In II Samuel 23:2-3 David acknowledged "...the Lord spoke by me; His Word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me..."

And in Acts 2:24-31 Peter tells us David "...saw the Lord before my face; at my right hand that I shall not be moved" and when writing Psalm 16 saying of Christ: "...and you won't leave my soul in hell, nor allow your Holy One to see corruption", he did so Peter said: "He seeing this before, spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that (the Father) would not leave Him in hell nor allow His body to see corruption." David saw by the Spirit the resurrection of his Lord more than 1000 years before it happened!

Solomon also saw the Lord

In I Kings 3: 1-15/II Chronicles 1:7-12 the Lord (Christ) appeared to Solomon in a dream during which He asked Solomon what he wanted. Solomon asked for wisdom and understanding, and the Lord gave it to him. Solomon saw the Lord a second time as well, in II Kings 9:2-9/II Chronicles 7:12-22. The second visitation from the Lord included a warning to him to walk with the Lord, and includes the often quoted verse; "If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray..."

Sadly, I Kings 11:6-9 tells us: "Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord as did David his father. And the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice." Because the Lord had appeared to him 2x more was expected of Solomon.

The twist

As we read Solomon's Proverbs, chapters 1-9, we find many instructions starting with 'My son listen to my words'. When reading these instructions the reader assumes Solomon is talking to his readers, or maybe to his own son, and while those things could be true, the deeper meaning is revealed in chapter 4 when Solomon switches to the first person, speaking of himself starting in v3: "Listen to the instruction of a father...for I was my father's son (David's son), tender and beloved in the sight of my mother (Bathsheba). He (David) taught me and said to me, Let your heart retain my words, keep my commandments and live; Get wisdom. Get understanding...wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom, and with all your getting, get understanding."

Is it any wonder when the Lord first appeared to Solomon that he asked for wisdom? It was his father, King David, who drilled that into Solomon, and so when the Lord appeared to him, he knew what to ask for. When we read the rest of Proverbs 4 through 9 we must realize Solomon is still quoting his father, which started in 4:4. Thus, when we read in 4:10, 20, 5:1, 6:1, 20, 7:1 all the way through chapter 9 'my son' we must understand he is still quoting David, and we are reading the one time private words of David (and Bathsheba) to their son...wow! Solomon quotes his father through chapter 9, and he quotes the Person of Wisdom Himself in chapter 8.

Again, 4:3-4 starts with Solomon quoting his father telling him to get wisdom saying, 'He said to me...' and the whole of Proverbs through chapter 9 is quoting David. It isn't until chapter 10:1 that Solomon ends the quoting of his father and starts his own words, saying "The Proverbs of Solomon, a wise son makes a glad father..." The twist is the father's love for his son, to invest time and energy and the pouring of his heart, and his mother's heart, into their son, Solomon.

I encourage you to read Proverbs 1 through 9 in an easy to read translation, and realize you are reading things David and Bathsheba said in private to their son, now quoted as part of the Proverbs of Solomon. That he would later fall away from the Lord for a time does not diminish what they poured into him, and is a great testimony for every parent and grandparent who puts the Word into their children, only to suffer heartbreak to see their beloved fall away from the closeness with the Lord they once had.

We take comfort in their eventual return to Him, for though Solomon's writings called Ecclesiastes seems full of despair for all is 'vanity', we realize he came back to the Lord after experiencing the world, for he says at the end of Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man, for God will bring everything we do into the light for judgement, every secret thing good or evil."

Solomon may never have gotten back to where he once was with the Lord, but he did get back...take courage in that for your own prodigal. New subject next week, until then, blessings,
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