

SPANISH WELLS GOSPEL CHAPEL

January, 2006

Tom V. Taylor

STUDIES IN THE MEGILLOTH

I. Some Introductory Notes:

I can only hope the title does not scare anyone. The term "Megilloth" is the Hebrew designation for five books in the Old Testament: Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther. These books are grouped in the third section of the Old Testament...a section called "the writings". They are all very important in the life of Israel but they are often overlooked in our studies--especially Lamentations and Ecclesiastes. Ruth and Esther are better known and the Song of Solomon gets a good deal of attention in an allegorical sense. All have strong messages for us as well as for times past and my intention is to treat them in this series of talks. In the morning messages I will talk about the books and the teachings that are informative and helpful. In the evenings I will tie the books into the New Testament teachings along the same line. How well this may be done....well, we will wait and see but that is the intention as I work with the subjects.

Approaching a study such as this, one must remember that the Old Testament is foundational to the New. It's prophetic character is easily recognized and its didactic nature is seen in the teaching of the Lord Jesus and the Apostles. The term "old" does not mean inferior, it simply means it has been in practical usage longer. We probably all know that but.....

The thirty nine books of the Old Testament are divided into three sections: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The Prophets are divided into "Former" and "Latter" prophets and the Writings are given three divisions: Poetry, Rolls (Megilloth) and Histories. They were mostly written in Hebrew....there are some brief Aramaic sections in the writings and some Aramaic phraseology in other places (if you wish to know more about that, ask me!) Hebrew is a beautiful language and moves with its own rhythmic style. Hebrew poetry is different from our poetic expressions but the feeling, emotion, zeal, and ideology is not much different. Hebrew poetry does not rhyme but it sings with a melodic concept that is only appreciated when read aloud. It moves the heart and allows a maximum of expressions of the best known emotions of mankind. You can see that I enjoy it. Some forms are grim but most are uplifting and--although it is dangerous to offer this--if you think I am exaggerating....come and hear my memorized recitation of Psalm 23, in Hebrew. Poetry is found in all parts of the Old Testament as well as the poetic books in the Writings. We will not study it, however, we will concentrate on the books.

I think you must know the cliches that are used to define the relationships such as "the New is the Old concealed, the Old is in the New revealed" so I will not press on this emphasis. No part of the Bible should be overlooked, hence this study.

Studies in the Sacred Rolls, page 2.

II. The Books in Particular

A. The Book of Ruth...reading at Pentecost

Ruth is a study in redemption by a kinsman-redeemer whereby one is freed from an impossible debt and placed in a state of health.

1. Technical data:

a. An Outline

b. Historic Background.....when the Judges ruled

(1) the times 1:1

(2) the family 1:2-5

(3) the plot and the plan 1:6-22

c. The redemption laws or principles

(1) Leviticus 25:25 ff

--property: 25:25-34

--persons: 35-46

(2) Deuteronomy 25:5-10

The sanctity of life and property is very keen in the life of Israel and the law of God. Every provision is made to secure both for the benefit of the nation and posterity. Redemption is the great theme of the Bible and finds solid illustrative power in these Old Testament accounts.

d. The kinsman redeemer: 2:1-23.....Boaz, but.....

2. The Steps in Redemption

a. The condition of loss, ch 1-2

b. Identification of the kinsman 2:1, 20; 3:1

(But see "one of our next kinsmen")

c. Ruth's lucky move

Studies in the Sacred Rolls, page 3

- d. The advice 3:2-5
- e. The discovery 3:10-13
- f. At the gate 4:1
- g. The challenge: 4:3-5
- h. An obstacle removed: 4:6-8
- i. The purchase: 4:9-17
- j. The lineage: 4:18-22
- k. And a small but interesting point: Deuteronomy 23:2-3

3. Redemption in the New Testament

a. Scriptures:

- (1) 1 Peter 1:18-25
- (2) Galatians 3:13, 4:4-5
- (3) Romans 5

b. Summary:

- (1) We were lost
- (2) Christ became our kinsman
- (3) He paid our debt
- (4) We, believing on Him, are accepted by God
- (5) Our redemption is complete..no debt is unsatisfied.
We are now the Sons of God

4. Conclusion: The Book of Ruth provides a dramatic presentation of the redemptive process and demonstrates the plan of God in such a way that the most simple of us can understand it, believe it, and enjoy it...now and forever. It brings a witnessing responsibility that is both a blessing and a dramatic challenge.

Studies in the Sacred Rolls, Page 4

B. The Book of the Song of Solomon....reading at Passover (8th day)

The Song of Solomon is a study in the nature and reality of love both human and divine with applicatioin at all levels of life.

1. Technical matters:

- a. Outline
- b. Authorship
- c. Literary identification
- d. Interpretation:
 - (1) Allegorical: Christ and the Church; Jehovah and Israel
 - (2) Literal: Relationships man and wife
- e. Special problems:
 - (1) the name of God
 - (2) the pictures of intimacy
 - (3) the historical setting and identificaitons

2. The love picture

- a. The lesson: Love is determined or demonstrated by adoration, appreciation and ministration in both verbal and physical ways
- b. In our study we define the persons as well as possible"
 - (1) 1:2----1:8----1:13----1:15
 - (2) 2:7
 - (3) 6:1----5:9----6:10
- c. We study and assign the discourses:by phraseology, address and content

Studies in the Sacred Rolls: page 5

d. We discover the content settles in three areas:"

(1) Admiration: 4:1-7, 8; 5:10-16

(2) Unity of ideal: 4:16; 2:16; 6:3; 7:10

(3) Conflict resolution 5:1-8

3. Lessons in practice:

a. Be appreciative

b. Be decorously demonstrative

c. Concentrate on what is healthy and builds

d. Put no time limits nor constraints on the relationship
God has given---other than what He has prescribed.

4. The Message in the New Testament

a. Scriptures:

(1) John 3

(2) John 13

(3) 1 John

b. New Testament assignments:

(1) Ephesians 5

(2) Colossians 3

(3) 1 Peter 3

c. The exemplary relationships

(1) In the Gospels: the home of Mary and Martha

(2) In the Book of Acts: that of Priscilla and Aquilla

(3) In the Epistles: Romans 16 and Philemon

d. Summary:

The relationships of love are bound in these four concepts: honor, unity, service and commitment. These are shown to us in the Song and demonstrated in the practicality of the New Testament

5. Conclusion: If we take the truths God has given and apply them in the power of the Word and the Spirit...many conflicts would not occur at all and those that do occur would have a resolution in truth and love. Our testimonies would be brighter and the reality of God's love would show more clearly.

C. The Book of Ecclesiastes: reading at the Feast of Tabernacles

This book is the summary of the conclusions of the wisest man who ever lived (apart from the Lord, Himself) as he studied life in all its spheres and concluded that nothing is worthwhile if God is not "in it". The only thing that really counts in the ultimate is our relationship with God.

1. Technical matters:

- a. Outline...not easy
- b. Authorship
- c. Terminology: "vanity" "vexation of spirit", "labor" "travail" etc.
- d. Philosophical viewpoint--biblically oriented
- e. Viewpoint of commentators

2. The overall picture..in a very simplified statement:

The person who can have everything, do everything, prosper in everything...is miserable if God is not with him and in what the person does. Without God all is vanity and vexation of spirit and what might appear to be good for a brief time...turns out to be a disappointment. This conclusion is the result of a deep and continued study in the experiment of living.

Studies in the Sacred Rolls: page 7

3. The methods of study and teaching: (The chapter suggestions for our study are suggestive for starting points....practically any one of the teaching methods can be found in every or an chapter)
 - a. Observation (chapter 1)
 - b. Analogies (chapters 6 and 11)
 - c. Experimentation (chapter 2)
 - d. interrogation (chapter 12)
 - e. conclusive decisions (chapters 8, 12)
4. The major areas of concern:
 - a. Possessions (chapter 2)
 - b. Reputation (chapter 1)
 - c. Experience (chapter 8)
 - d. Longevity (chapters 6, 12)
5. Observation: Wanting and having more is no guarantee you will have enough! Therefore some competent advice is given in this manner:
 - a. Use your time well (chapter 3)
 - b. Be generous with others (chapter 11)
 - c. Follow truth (chapter 12)
 - d. Persevere and commit to Providence (chapters 8 and 11_
6. In the New Testament:
 - a. Scriptures:
 - (1) Matthew 6:24-34, Luke 12:13-15

Studies in the Sacred Rolls: page 8

(2) James 3:1

(3) 1 Timothy 6:6-10

(4) Hebrews 13:5-8

(5) Luke 18:18-27

b. Exemplary representations

(1) Barnabas

(2) Philemon

c. Particular instructions that make life meaningful

(1) John 21...."follow me"

(2) Matthew 11 "Come to me"

d. Summary:

Keep your attention on the Lord, not on your things.
And, of course, that needs some explanation.....

7. Conclusion: Fear the Lord and keep His commandments....this in various expanded concepts, becomes the guide to satisfactory living and enjoying the blessings the Lord gives. In our present terminology: Believe on Him and do what He says!

D. The Book of Lamentations: reading at the Feast of Ab (mid July)

The book records the sorrow of Jeremiah as he weeps over the fall of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem by the pagan forces who have been appointed by God to bring a judgment on His people for their sins and manifold rejections of Him. The punishment is just but the reality of it is very hard.

1. Technical matters:

a. Outline

- b. The unique arrangement of the book...count the verses and see how it is put together

Studies in the Sacred Rolls: page 9

- c. the "rhythm"
- 2. The great lesson: A culture pays a high price for tolerance of deliberate disobedience to the will of God.
- 3. The viewpoint of Jeremiah:
 - a. God is righteous in His anger (1:18)..He is right in what He does.
 - b. The ferocity of His judgment is deserved in the light of the spiritual apathy of the people in general and the leaders in particular (2:14)
 - c. But His mercies are still real to those who trust (3:22-26)
 - d. Therefore the punishment is a challenge to all of us (4:12ff)
 - e. Our prayer must be that God will turn us to Him (5:21) and we recognize that the turning may involve some pain.
- 4. Summary: Sorrow that brings relief is good for us if we accept the discipline of the Lord but....no one can afford to play with God.
- 5. The New Testament Age....
 - a. The desire of God for righteous living is seen in the case of Ananias (Acts) and the Corinthian problem (1 Cor. 5) You will see judgmental acts of this character at the inception of every biblical period and it should warn us about the seriousness of God's desires.
 - b. God consistently challenges His people to holiness (1 Peter 1:16 ff; Romans 12:1, etc)
 - c. He warns how a little leaven may spoil the whole loaf (1 Corinthians 5)
 - d. He demonstrates His desire for the conformity of the church (Revelation 1-3)
 - e. He reminds us that the consequences of disobedience are