

January 28, 2024
Exceptional Devotion ~ Ruth
Old Testament Saints Series

Text: The Book of Ruth

Overview: Dramatic account of a family during the time of the Judges (Judges 21:25) in Israeli history.
You should remember that this was described as a time when *everyone did what was right in his own eyes*, but as we will see there were some who still looked to God.

A famine struck Judah, driving a family to Moab, another agricultural region unaffected by the drought.
Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and two sons, Mahlon & Chilion.

Moab ~ 50 miles from Bethlehem on the east side of the Dead Sea.
Getting there would have taken about a week, traversing over 100 miles.

- Moab was the son of Lot by an incestuous union with his oldest daughter (Genesis 19:31-38).
- The Jews were not prohibited from association or marriage to the Moabites, but because Moab did not aid Israel when it was released from Egypt, He greatly prohibited their participation in worship at the tabernacle (Deuteronomy 7:1-4, 23:3-6).

It appears that shortly after they arrived Elimelech died.
The two sons then were married to two Moabite women: Orpah (Chilion) and Ruth (Mahlon) and dwelt there for almost ten years before the sons both died.

As a widow and foreigner, Naomi chose to return to Bethlehem.
A life of poverty with no male family members to care for her.

Returning to Bethlehem (where the famine had ended and prosperity had returned) she would be reunited with family and could hopefully survive.

It appears that Orpah and Ruth would at first stay with Naomi.

- Discouraged her daughters-in-law from accompanying her – thought they could remarry if they stayed in their homeland. (*Return to your mother's house.*)

- Alluded to the levirate law, requiring brothers to step in and marry the widow and father a child in their deceased brother's place. Deuteronomy 25:5-10

Orpah remained in Moab, but Ruth insisted and committed herself to Naomi.

The two arrived back in Bethlehem, Naomi bitterly changed by her misfortune – she believed God had afflicted her but she did not blaspheme Him.

Ruth was committed to caring for herself and Naomi – she headed to the barley fields to glean grain with other poor women of the region.

She soon found herself in the fields of Boaz, whom she had no knowledge of.

Boaz – a man of great wealth (2:1); a man of standing.
Respected, one possessing fine qualities, a fine employer.

Ruth was the recipient of much kindness from Boaz.

- He welcomed her to stay in his fields the entire harvest.
- Israel's welfare program (Leviticus 19:9; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19). Food for the widow, orphan, and stranger.
- He assured her safety among the men in the fields.
 - Food and drink were available to her.
 - He made sure her work would be profitable and would more than meet Naomi's and her needs.

Boaz had received a report on who she was and what she had done for Naomi, a relative of his through Elimelech.

Ruth continued to glean in Boaz's fields for several more weeks.

At the end of this time, Naomi instructed Ruth to seek redemption from Boaz. In chapter 3 in our reading, we found Boaz willing to take Ruth as his wife if a closer relative he was aware of refused to do it.

Seems levirate law had expanded in common law practice to allow for close relatives to play the part of redeemer if no brother was available (tied to redeeming land – Leviticus 25:25-28).

Boaz wasted no time, found the closer relative, presented the situation to him before the elders.

This closer relative at first was interested in Naomi's land but rejected the offer when he found that marriage to Ruth was expected.

His rejection of the offer was sealed with the passing of the sandal, and Boaz took Ruth as his wife.

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I. Solemn Pledge ~ Devotion. **Ruth 1:16-18**

- Presence.
- Acceptance of a new culture.
- Belief in Israel's God.
- Longevity – only death would part them.

A strong bond between mother and daughter-in-law is apparent throughout the short account.

- Faith played an apparent role – see **Ruth 2:20a**.
- The firstborn would be Naomi's long-desired heir.

II. Sovereign Provision ~ Diligence and Obedience. **Ruth 2:2-3, 7**

- Humility. (Asked permission to glean in Boaz's fields.) **v. 10**
- Devotion to Naomi. (Leaving homeland, caring for her needs – **v. 11**.)

III. Societal Plan ~ Trust. **Ruth 3:3-5**

- Ruth was instructed to ask Boaz to be her kinsman-redeemer, to marry her and father an heir for her deceased husband and mother-in-law Naomi.
- There was some risk going to the threshing floor to make such a request.
- Although Boaz indicated his willingness, she had to patiently wait for the process to be completed.

So What? We end the account with the elders' blessing on Ruth and Boaz and the blessing of their firstborn son.

Read **Ruth 4:11-17**.

We have seen God's sovereign hand throughout this book.

- He brought Ruth back to Bethlehem where her grandson, David, would be born. This is the prophesied location of the promised Messiah (Micah 5:2) who would be a descendant of King David.
- God led Ruth to the fields of Boaz, the second closest relative of Naomi.

We can also see God's mercy and grace in this account.

- We see Boaz is a descendant of Perez who along with his brother Zerah were a result of a sinful one-night stand of Judah.
- The genealogy found in Ruth says that Salmon was Boaz's father, and the Matthew genealogy tells that Salmon was married to Rahab. Many scholars believe this to be the prostitute of Jericho.
- Ruth was from Moabite descent – not highly regarded by the Jews – yet God saw fit to use each of these in the line of the Messiah.

We should also see a foretelling of God's salvation for mankind.

- In Ruth we see one who had no part in the kingdom of God – lost, without hope in this world.
- We see her take great risk, putting faith in Naomi's God, and trusting her life to Boaz – a picture of our salvation.
- Boaz became Ruth's kinsman-redeemer, paying the price for Naomi's inheritance and receiving Ruth as his wife. Jesus became our Redeemer by coming to earth and giving His life on the cross for us.

Questions to Ponder Through the Week
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1. When a person receives Jesus for salvation, we say he has made Him Savior and Lord of his life. He is now to be devoted to Jesus. What does this devotion look like? Are there distinctive marks to this kind of commitment?
2. Marriage is probably the relationship where most people give and receive the highest level of devotion. Describe elements of this devotion. How might it be like the devotion Ruth and Naomi shared? What happens if a spouse doesn't sense a high level of devotion in the marital relationship?
3. List the hardships that befell Naomi and Ruth. In what ways might we see God's provision in their lives? What part did they play in God's provision? What do you do heighten your awareness of God's provision in your life?

4. We experience a society living by its established rules in chapter 4 of Ruth. Boaz made sure that he followed protocols to ensure that Ruth and Naomi would be properly cared for. How important is it for God's people to follow the laws of the community and country they live in today? Do we have unspoken rules within our society that we should also pay attention to?

5. Read the book of Ruth one more time, preferably in one setting. List three things that stand out to you most from this account. Which character speaks to you the most ~ Naomi, Ruth, Boaz, God, or someone else? Why?

Sermon Topic for February 4:

Out of His Great Love

Overview of 1 John

You should be at least a couple of chapters into 1 John in your Bible reading. As I often suggest, take time to read the entire letter in one setting by next Sunday. What words are repeated often in your translation? Did you find some repeating themes? Do we know who John was writing to?