

IMMERSE: KINGDOMS

Week 8 – What the Law Didn't Allow, God's Grace Allowed – Ruth 1

July 31, 2022

How do we know that the Messianic theme continues through the book of Judges?

Ruth 1:1-5 - Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. 2 The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there. 3 Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. 4 Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years. 5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.

The time of the Judges was when there was no king and everyone did what was right in his own eyes. That was the rule of the day! Ruth takes place in the book of Judges.

The setting of the book of Ruth is gloom! But God's love and grace shine brighter against the backdrop of darkness. The book of Ruth is four-chapters – the book of Ruth covers God's plan of redemption the world - for both Jew and Gentile through the kinsman redeemer. The Hebrew word for redemption is “ga-al.” It literally means to buy back; to buy out of the marketplace - those in bondage – those enslaved. Mankind is desperate. Mankind has a need to be redeemed. The entire book of Ruth delivers a Messianic theme! And, I'm suggesting that the subtitle for Ruth is “What the Law Didn't Allow, God's Grace Allows.”

We're told at the outset of Ruth that when the Judges ruled there was a famine in the land. The famine is “in the land” – apparently in all of Israel. No reason is given for the famine in the text. Scripture, however, tells us that famine is one of God's judgments (Eze. 14:21).

They left Bethlehem (house of bread), Judah (praise). And they “went to dwell/sojourn” elsewhere. In Hebrew, “dwell/sojourn” means to turn aside from the road intentionally.

They traveled to Moab outside the land of Israel, east of the Dead Sea approx. 50-60 miles from Bethlehem. God had given the Jewish people the land of promise. Why did this family turn their backs on God's promises and leave? Or, did they turn their backs on God? And, Moab was the enemy of Israel! Moab withheld bread and water from the children of Israel after they were delivered from Egypt (Deut. 23:4). God scattered the Jewish people among the nations (in exile) due to their disobedience. This family was now among the nations. Could we understand that they would then be considered in “exile” – away from the land of promise that God had given them? We do know that during the time of Judges, the nation of Israel veered from God. But, what of this family?

Did they realize that they had a God-given responsibility to the nations? Moab was a Gentile nation.

Ruth 1:2 provides us with the names of these family members. God has hidden away great truths in these names. Elimelech (“My God is King”) is married to Naomi

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(“pleasant”) and they have two sons, Mahlon (“sickly”) and Chilion (“pining away”). The names of this family remind us of the beginning pages in Genesis: God IS. HE is sovereign and He created. Satan presented a pleasant proposition (Gen. 3:6) to Eve. The result: sin...fallen mankind that is sickly and pining away.

The book of Ruth outlines the very beginning of Genesis for us: creation and the fall of man. Elimelech means "my God is king." The Bible begins with God -- "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). The Bible never argues the existence of God. He IS – period! Elimelech married a woman whose name was Naomi. Naomi means “pleasant.” In the Garden of Eden there was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Scripture tells us that it was “pleasant” (Gen. 2:9). When Satan came to Eve in the Garden of Eden, he offered her a pleasant proposition. She ate of the forbidden fruit and gave it to Adam and he ate (Gen. 3:6) and sin entered the world! “My God is king” married “pleasure. We might consider that, in the marriage of Elimelech to Naomi, we have a picture of the fall of man. The sons of Elimelech and Naomi were named Mahlon and Chilion. Mahlon means "sickly" and Chilion means "pining away." “Sickly” and “pining away” sound like the results of sin entering the world.

While the family lived in Moab, Elimelech died. No reason is given for his death. And the two boys took Gentile women as wives! Should a good Jewish boy marry a Gentile woman? And these Gentile women were Moabites! In Ezra 9:1 and I Kings 11:1-2, God tells the Jewish people not to make marriages with the Moabites as well as with other “ites”! But, what the law didn’t allow, God’s grace allowed. The Moabite women are Orpah whose name means “stubborn” or “stiff-necked,” and Ruth whose name means “friend.” “Sickly” and “pining away” die. Naomi, who is in exile in Moab, outside of the land of Israel, is left without husband and children. And Orpah and Ruth are left without husbands. In Deut. 28:62 God told the Jewish people that if they were disobedient they would be few in number. And, widows in that culture are desperate. They have a need!

M.R. DeHaan, (founder of the Radio Bible Class and co-editor of “Our Daily Bread”) in his book, “The Romance of Redemption,” summarizes the book of Ruth” in this way: “The experience of this Jewish family from Bethlehem is a picture of the entire history of the Jewish nation during the long years of her wandering outside the native land of Canaan. . . . It was a time when Israel was without a king. . . .” DeHaan is suggesting that the beginning of the book of Ruth is a picture of Israel in exile among the nations.

In the book of Ruth, we need to know that Naomi represents Israel and Ruth represents the Gentiles.

In the book of Ruth, in the midst of great need, God appears. . . .

Ruth 1:6 - Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had visited His people by giving them bread. Naomi had heard that the LORD/Jehovah had visited His people by giving them bread, and she made plans to return to Bethlehem. This verse is prophetic! It's looking ahead to Jesus Who came in the flesh to Bethlehem to visit His people. And this Jesus is the One Who said, "I am the bread of life"!

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Ruth 1:7 - *Therefore she went out from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.*

From the midst of exile, Naomi returns. "Return" is noted seven times in NKJV in the first chapter of Ruth and nine times in the NASV in the first chapter. When a word in the text is repeated, God is making a point! Israel who had been in exile is returning to the land that God has given Israel! After exile in Babylon, did Israel return to their land? YES!

Both Ruth and Orpah accompany their mother-in-law on her trek to Bethlehem. Ruth 1:8-9 - *And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go, return each to her mother's house. The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband.'* Rest speaks of marriage. Orpah and Ruth insist on returning with Naomi. But, Naomi wants Orpah and Ruth to return to Moab.

Ruth 1:11-13 - *Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?'* In this passage, Naomi is telling the girls that even if she had sons in her womb that very moment, Orpah and Ruth would have to wait many years for them to become their husbands. Naomi is referring to Levirate Marriage. "Levir" in Latin means "husband's brother" (Deut. 25:5-10). When a husband died and left no children, the husband's next of kin, his closest relative, was called upon to take his brother's widow and provide an heir, a child, in the deceased husband's name. ... *No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!* The word "against" in Hebrew carries the meaning of Naomi having received a direct/straightforward punch from God!

Ruth 1:14 - Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. Orpah kisses her mother-in-law and is out of the picture. She returns home and we never see Orpah mentioned in the Bible again! Ruth clings to Naomi. But Naomi's disregards Ruth's commitment...

Ruth 1:15 - *Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.* Naomi tells Ruth to go back to her gods? A Jewish woman is acknowledging many gods? But Ruth offers up a vow to Naomi....

Ruth 1:16-17 - *Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my*

people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me.

Ruth is vowing allegiance to the God of Israel AND to His people! She has come to faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And, she pledges loyalty to God's people – the Jews!

Ruth 1:18-19 – *When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her. Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem. And it happened, when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was excited because of them; and the women said, 'Is this Naomi?'*

It appears that not every Jewish person had left Bethlehem when the famine hit. Some remained.

Ruth 1:20-21 - *But she said to them, 'Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. Naomi wants to be called Mara which means*

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bitter. She's blaming it all on God! I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me.' "Almighty" in Hebrew is *Shaddai* which means to nurture, provide, satisfy!

Ruth 1:22a - *So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem as two destitute widows. In that culture, without someone coming alongside them, i.e. a kinsman-redeemer/close relative, they would not survive.*

In Ruth chapter 1 we see Israel in exile – separated from their land; perhaps separated from God. The majority die. The one who is left returns to the land in unbelief (read Eze. 37). A Gentile is accompanying her (Isa. 49:22). Scripture so clearly supports this prophetic picture that we see in Ruth:

Isa. 14:1 – *God will still choose Israel and will settle them in their land and the strangers will be joined to them.*

Ruth 1:22b - *Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.*

The barley harvest was the first harvest in Israel's growing season. Harvest always speaks to a time of abundance... a season of grace (Jer. 8:20) in Scripture. The barley harvest was called the Feast of First Fruits (Lev. 23:9-14) in Israel and it occurred during Passover week. Jesus was crucified on Passover and rose from the dead on the Feast of First Fruits – at the time of the barley harvest! Here is a foreshadowing in Scripture of Jesus' resurrection.

AND, whom do we meet in Ruth 2?

Boaz, the kinsman redeemer in Ruth who represents Jesus.