

Ruth Chapter 1

- When Benjamin Franklin was Ambassador to France he spoke to a group of intellectuals who continually scoffed at his belief in the Bible. He knew that they didn't really know what they were talking about, that they weren't familiar with the book that they were mocking so one day he told them that he'd come across a most intriguing love story that he'd like to read to them that night.
- He then proceeded to read to them a hand written copy of the book of Ruth. After he finished reading the 4 short chapters, his audience was ecstatic. That is the greatest love story we've ever heard," they exclaimed – it should be published at once.
- Franklin answered "it's already been published. It's in the Bible." And the scoffers were silenced.
- Like the book of Judges, we don't really know who wrote the book of Ruth, Jewish tradition gives credit to Samuel which doesn't seem so far fetched.

Key verse:

Ruth 2:12 “The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.”

- The book of Judges portrays a time of spiritual anarchy and moral decay when men were doing what was right in their own eyes; but God was still working behind the scenes preparing a family and pathway for the Messiah.
- Ruth is a good chronological fit; coming after the book of Judges it is kind of an introduction to the book of 1st Samuel and king David, the greatest king of Israel – which leads eventually to the Messiah.
- The three themes of this book are: redemption, revival, and restoration.
- The hero in this story is Boaz who is a picture of our kinsmen redeemer Jesus our goel. Jesus the “Son of Man”, fully God and fully man – our kinsmen redeemer.
- Boaz himself is a descendant of the Gentile harlot Rahab from Jericho.

V: 1 In the days of the judges – time stamp, in the midst of everything else going on in Israel during that time.

- Life wasn't easy, as we remember from the previous weeks, the nation was at a low point in their history, apostasy, civil war, national disgrace – everyone doing what was right in their own eyes.
- Often times famines were related to the judgment of God upon a people which wouldn't seem too far fetched during the times of the judges.

- **Bethlehem-Judah:** a geographical and a spiritual reference point. Bethlehem means literally “house of bread” – Jesus is the bread of life, He is the Word become flesh – Judah mean praise – When we partake in the Word of life, when God’s word is fleshed out in us we’ll find ourselves in the place of praise!
- The story starts at Bethlehem, in the “house of bread” – many years later our kinsmen / goel, Jesus, the bread of life would be born here; but at present there is no bread at the “house of bread” due to the famine, which is due to their disobedience.

Deuteronomy 28: 1-14, 15-68 Blessing of obedience, curse of disobedience.

- **Moab** is both a geographical and a spiritual reference point as well. Moab is not so unlike Egypt, the place of the flesh, a very dark place – it’s not where they’re supposed to be. Distant from the land of promise, and the promises of God.
- It would have been better for Elimelech to have trusted the Lord for his provision in Bethlehem than to have left.
- What made this decision wrong? He was walking by sight and not by faith.

2 Corinthians 5:7 “For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

- How do we walk by faith? By claiming the promises of God and obeying the Word of God, in spite of what we see, no matter how we feel, or what we “think” may happen.
 - It means committing ourselves to the Lord and relying wholly upon Him to meet our needs.
 - When we live by faith – that brings glory to God and it’s a witness to a lost world, and it strengthens our faith.
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- When troubles or trials come into our lives we have three basic choices to make:
 1. We can endure them.
 2. We can escape them.
 3. We can enlist them.
 1. If we only endure trials, then they become our master, and we can become hard and bitter.
 2. If we try to escape them, then we will probably miss the purposes God wants to achieve in our lives.
 3. But if we learn to enlist our trials, they will become our servants instead of our masters and work for us;

James 1:2-4 ²“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

- And God will use these things for our good and for His glory.

Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

- Abram made the same mistake by going back to Egypt during a famine, Egypt is where he got into trouble, first by lying, second in bringing an Egyptian handmaid by the name of Hagar back with him.

Romans 1:17 “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith.”

- When we refuse to trust God, we are in essence saying that He is not trustworthy, and we’re calling Him a liar – because He said He would take care of us!
- Elimelech like everyone else is doing what is right in his own eyes.

Proverbs 14:12 “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

- We’ll see this proverb played out in the next few verses.
- As a husband and father we certainly want to provide for their wives and family, but not at the expense of losing the blessing of God.
- When Satan met Jesus in the wilderness, his first temptation was to suggest that Christ satisfy His hunger rather than please His Father.
- One of the Devil’s favorite lies is “You do have to live!” Our only life is in Christ Jesus!

Acts 17:28 “For in Him we live, and move, and have our being...”

David’s witness is worth considering as well:

Psalms 37:25 “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor His seed begging bread.”

V: 2 Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon, and Chilion, Ephrathites.

- As we’ve seen with many Bible names in the past, often times children are given names that relate to the circumstances of their birth – as Mahlon and Chilion will point out.

1. Elimelech: **My God is King.**
2. Naomi: Pleasant, my pleasantness, my delight.
3. Mahlon: Sick, sickly.
4. Chilion: Pining, Small or scrawny.

V: 3-5 **Consequence:** The name Elimelech means “My God is king” – but not so much of Elimelech’s life, he seemingly left God out of the equation and decision making process – moving to Moab, Israel’s enemy, contrary to God’s will.

- This leads to other bad decisions when his sons both marry Moabite women contrary to God’s will and Law.
1. Chilion marries Orpah: Fawn, Gazelle. **Ruth 4:10**
 2. Mahlon marries Ruth: Beauty.
- Jews were forbidden to marry Gentiles, especially those from Ammon and Moab.

Deuteronomy 7:1-11, 23:3-6

- Elimelech fled from Israel in disobedience to God’s word trying to escape death, but death found he and his sons – all three men die in Moab.

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- Once we move away from the house of bread - the Word of God, and the place of praise – God is no longer King and like Elimelech we also die.
- They are there for about 10 years when both of the sons die, leaving the 3 women to fend for themselves.
- The 2 boys died prior to having any children of their own.

V: 6-9 Naomi prepares to return to Israel.

1. Nothing is keeping her in Moab, her husband and sons are gone – now she’s making the decisions.
 2. Their initial reason for leaving is also gone, the Lord has blessed, the famine is past.
 3. Sadly because of where she’s at, she hears about the blessing as opposed to experiencing it first hand.
- Naomi encourages the girls to each return to their families and prays a loving blessing over them.

1. The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have been kind to me.
2. The Lord grant you rest in your (new) husbands home.
3. Then she kissed them, and they all wept.

V: 10-14 The girls indicate that they will not leave Naomi, but they will go with her back to Israel.

- Naomi again tells them to go home, she can't produce husbands for them.
 - Orpah returns home to her parents, but Ruth clings to Naomi.
1. **Genesis 38** Er the son of Judah took a wife by the name of Tamar. He was a wicked man and the Lord killed him before they had any children. Judah then told Onan, the next son in line to take Tamar to wife and raise up seed for his brother, but he wouldn't cooperate and God killed him too.
 2. Judah then told Tamar to wait a while for the next son until he was old enough – but when that time came Judah didn't give his son to her, after it became obvious that he wasn't going to she set a trap for him.
 3. She set aside her mourning garments and put on the clothing of a harlot and waited by the side of the road knowing that Judah would be by on the way to the sheep shearing.
 4. When he saw her and didn't recognize her he went in unto her, but he left his staff and ring as a surety or guarantee that he would keep his vow to send a goat to her in payment for her services.
 - This is where we get the custom of wedding rings, a guarantee for keeping our vows.
 5. After Judah leaves she packs up and goes home, Judah sends a friend back later with a goat but cant find the harlot. Sometime later Tamar is discovered to be pregnant out of wedlock and Judah declares that she should be put to death.
 6. Tamar tells Judah that the man who owns this ring is the one who made me pregnant – and Judah is caught. Recognizing his own ring he declares "You've been more honorable than I have been" knowing that he should have given his other younger son to Tamar to raise up descendants for his dead brother and didn't.
 - It is interesting how these stories will intersect at the end of this book.
 - This was later formalized into the Law in Deuteronomy Chapter 25.
 - Knowing that the widow, in this case Ruth could expect to marry the next son in order of birth – Naomi is saying this isn't going to happen, she's too old.

V: 15-17 Orpah didn't just go back to her home, she went back to her gods. Naomi encourages Ruth to do the same.

- Naomi wasn't just encouraging the girls to go home to their respective families, but to their pagan God's.
- Why would a God fearing Jewess do that?
 1. Either she didn't truly fear God, which may be consistent with her husbands behavior.
 2. Attempting to cover up the sinful marriages to the Moabite women.
- Ruth declares to Naomi – where you go I'll go, where you stay I'll stay, your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.
- Ruth continues to declare; where you die, I'll die – that's where I'll be buried – and that is the only thing that will separate us – sounds pretty committed.
- She's not just loyal to Naomi, she's being loyal to the True and Living God that she's come to know and love and doesn't want to go back to the old life.

V: 18 Naomi realizes that she can't convince Ruth to do otherwise so she stops trying to convince her.

V: 19-22 Naomi returns to her home town, to Bethlehem, she's recognized and received.

- Is this Naomi? Naomi says no, I'm not pleasant anymore, I'm bitter!
- I went out full – husband and sons, now I come home empty and bitter.
- Naomi is doing what a lot of people do in a time of grief, and that is she's blaming God. Blaming God for the death of her husband and her sons, the hand of God being against her.
- It is sad that we do blame God at times, especially when it come to the death of a loved one, we can become bitter against God, we blame God for these tragedies.
- We forget that death came by sin.

Romans 5:12 “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

- Death is not God's fault, that responsibility rests with mankind.
- For believers death is just the next step into eternity with Jesus!

V: 21 "... seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me.."

Psalm 9:10 "And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."

- Naomi had seemingly become bitter through her trials but Ruth had been through just about as much – but through her trials she had placed her faith in the true and living God. "... and thy God will be my God..."
- Trials will have that effect, we can either allow them to drive us away from God, or draw us closer to Him – it's our choice how we respond.
- They arrive at the time of the barley harvest, At the time of Passover, mid March or early April.
- John the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."