

Ruth

Companion

Ruth 1:16-17

December 10, 2016

Today

It's been said, "the New Testament is in the Old concealed and the Old Testament is in the New revealed".

- **Romans 15:4** - For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** - All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.:

Jewish tradition states that the Prophet Samuel wrote the Book of Ruth, but the text, itself, does not tell us who the author was.

This book is of great importance still to the Jewish community and is recited or sung every year during the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost):

- It pictures the marriage relationship between God and His people.
- Ruth is the first "believer by choice" in the Bible.

The events of this story occurred during the time of the Judges, which was a difficult time in Israel due to the people's cycle of disobedience – defeat – deliverance.

- **Judges 17:6** - In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.
- **Judges 18:1** - In those days Israel had no king.....
- **Judges 19:1** - In those days Israel had no king.....
- **Judges 21:25** - In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.

Elimelech (My God is King), his wife **Naomi** (Pleasantness) and their two frail sons, **Mahlon** (Sickness) and **Chilion** (Wasting), lived in Bethlehem and were of the clan Ephrathah from the tribe of Judah. Famine drove Elimelech and his family from Judah into Moab, where they remained for 10 years.

This is an interesting choice. Moab was an enemy of Israel.

A short history of Moab:

Moab was the son of Lot and his oldest daughter – Incest (Gen 19:37)

- **Numbers 23:7** Then Balaam uttered his oracle: "Balak brought me from Aram, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains. 'Come,' he said, 'curse Jacob for me; come, denounce Israel.'
- **Numbers 25:1-3** While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, ² who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. ³ So Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them.
- **Deuteronomy 23:3-6** No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation. ⁴ For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim to pronounce a curse on you. ⁵ However, the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam but turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. ⁶ Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them as long as you live.
- **Judges 3:12-14** Once again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and because they did this evil the LORD gave Eglon king of Moab power over Israel. ¹³ Getting the Ammonites and Amalekites to join him, Eglon came and attacked Israel, and they took possession of the City of Palms. ¹⁴ The Israelites were subject to Eglon king of Moab for eighteen years.
- **1 Chronicles 18:2** David also defeated the Moabites, and they became subject to him and brought tribute.
- **Isaiah 16:6-7** We have heard of Moab's pride-- her overweening pride and conceit, her pride and her insolence-- but her boasts are empty. ⁷ Therefore the Moabites wail, they wail together for Moab. Lament and grieve for the men of Kir Hareseth.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ISRAEL AND MOAB WAS NOT GOOD – THEY WERE ENEMIES.

- Shortly after moving to Moab Elimelech died.
- Mahlon married **Ruth** (Friend or Companion)
- Chilion married **Orpah** (Back of the Neck)
- Both Mahlon and Chilion died without producing children. Now all three ladies are widows – destitute and without hope (widows had no social standing and no economic means to survive).

Naomi was aware that she had no ability to care for the 3 of them and attempted to send them away insisting they return home to remarry. Orpah returned to her family, but Ruth chose to stay with Naomi, sealing her decision with an oath.

- **Ruth 1:16-17**Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.

Ruth's decision was far-reaching: she would have to leave her people and journey to a foreign land and perhaps of even more consequence, she would have to renounce her god and embrace Yahweh. She was a follower of God by choice – she put her faith in the God of Abraham voluntarily.

Naomi was welcomed home, but she insisted that her name was no longer **Naomi** (Pleasantness) but **Mara** (Bitterness) because she believed that the Lord had dealt harshly with her. She left Judah with a family but returned with no one.

Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest (late April/early May). This was perfect timing for two widows in need of food. Gleaning laws required landowners to leave corners of fields and all fallen grain for the poor.

- **Leviticus 19:9-10** - When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰ Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.

We learn of God's sovereignty – His awareness, His care – over life's details when Ruth “happened” to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz:

- **Ruth 2:8-9** - So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. ⁹ Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled."

When Ruth asked Boaz why he was showing such kindness to her, a foreigner – a Moabite, he responded that her reputation for kindness had preceded her and then he prayed a blessing over her:

- **Ruth 2:12** - May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

Ruth shared Boaz's kindness with Naomi. Naomi remembered that Boaz was a close relative and she explained to Ruth that **Boaz** (In Strength or Quickness) was a member of the Ephrathite clan and a relative of Elimelech. Therefore, he was a possible **go'el** (kinsman-redeemer).

- **Leviticus 25:25-26** - If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold.

Marriage was not mentioned as a responsibility of a *go'el*, but Ruth decided to combine the kinsmen/redeemer and levirate marriage laws.

- **Deuteronomy 25:5-6** - If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. ⁶ The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

Naomi waited until the end of harvest season to put her plan into action. Her plan a secret meeting between Ruth and Boaz involved great risks should Ruth be discovered, yet Ruth bravely followed through in every detail.

Ruth approached Boaz while he was sleeping and requested that he spread his blanket over her as he was a near kinsman. Ruth's request must be understood as a marriage request – Ruth was asking Boaz to put the *authority* of his house over her and to be her *go'el* for both the land of Elimelech and for herself as the widow of Mahlon so that Mahlon's name would not die.

Boaz was impressed by Ruth's dedication and willingness to set aside her own passions and desires in order to care for Naomi.

There is another kinsman who is a closer relation and therefore had the first right of refusal. In order for Boaz to step into the role the nearer kinsman would have to step aside.

When a widow requested the next of kin to perform the role of the *go'el*, he wasn't forced to do so – it was completely voluntary. There were three conditions to be met:

1. He had to be *qualified* as a kinsman (a blood relative)
2. He had to be *able* to perform
3. He had to be *willing*.

In the morning, Ruth was sent back to Naomi with a generous gift of barley and a promise to see to her request.

There were two issues at stake: the redeeming of the land for Naomi and the taking of Ruth as his wife. The other relative appears to be willing to redeem the land, but for some reason, he was unable or unwilling to perform his duties where Ruth was concerned, so he backs out of both.

Boaz willingly offered to be *go'el* for both and in the presence of witnesses at the gate, sealed their transaction by trading sandals. The witnesses at the gate then blessed the transaction.

Ruth later bore a son, named Obed, who carried on the family lines of both Boaz and Naomi. The name **Obed**, means (the one who works or serves), and suggests in this context that Obed served Naomi by ensuring her family's survival.

Genealogy from Perez to David

Perez » Hezron » Ram » Amminadab » Nahshon » Salmon » Boaz » Obed » Jesse » David

This genealogy furnishes the important link between Obed (Ruth's offspring) and David (the future royal line). But, God does more than just welcome Ruth into His family; he actually makes her a part of His personal family tree.

- **Matthew 1:1-16** A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham: ² Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³ Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was **Tamar**, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵ Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was **Rahab**, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was **Ruth**, Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been **Uriah's wife**, ⁷ Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, ⁸ Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, ⁹ Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, ¹⁰ Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, ¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. ¹² After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, ¹³ Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, ¹⁴ Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Eliud, ¹⁵ Eliud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of **Mary**, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

Take Away

God welcomes Gentile believers into the covenantal relationship He offers.

- **Hosea 2:23** I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one. 'I will say to those called 'Not my people, "You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'"
- **Isaiah 42:6** I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,
- **Isaiah 49:6** he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

Hesed (loyalty and faithfulness/loving-kindness/mercy – especially when you don't have to) is central to Jewish ethics and Jewish theology and is clearly reflected in the Book of Ruth and is an example of God's faithfulness/mercy toward us.

- Ruth first displays **hesed** by her commitment to Naomi. She stayed with Naomi when she didn't have to.
- Boaz was a man of integrity and was greatly respected by everyone. He was known for his kindness and as a boss knew how to treat his employees. He followed the law by making sure the poor were cared for.

God is actively involved in the lives of believers through divine providence. He moves in the everyday moments of life and utilizes situations and circumstances to help us achieve and complete our purposes in life.

- **Ellen White {CC 250.3}**: In the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as if dependent on the will and prowess of man; the shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will. . . .
- **Romans 8:28** And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Jesus is the supreme example of the kinsman-redeemer. Just as Boaz had the right of redemption and yet was under no obligation, so it was with Jesus - it was an act of love.

- **Ellen White {PP 64}**: The angels prostrated themselves at the feet of their Commander and offered to become a sacrifice for man. But an angel's life could not pay the debt; only He who created man had power to redeem him.
- **Ellen White {DA 22.4}**: This was a voluntary sacrifice. Jesus might have remained at the Father's side. He might have retained the glory of heaven, and the homage of the angels. But He chose to give back the scepter into the Father's hands, and to step down from the throne of the universe, that He might bring light to the benighted, and life to the perishing.
- **Hebrews 4:14-16** Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

The story of Ruth is a love story, but it also points to the greatest love story in all eternity - the story of God's love for us. Jesus said, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The simple message of the gospel is that if you've trusted in him, come into a relationship with him, you belong to his people, his family and you have a future and a hope.