

Remnant Life Church
June 3, 2021
Ruth
Pt 1
“A Perfect Short Story”
Ruth 1:1-7

Having come through the story of Esther

- My hope is you have gained a better understanding of, not only what the story was about, and its uniqueness, but the power of God’s presence
- Let’s move now into the only other book of the Bible named for a woman
- the book of Ruth

This book, like Esther, is also very different in comparison to the rest of the Bible
Even the placement of the book is unique

- The first 5 books of the OT are collectively known as the Pentateuch
 - Pente for the number 5
 - These books were written primarily by Moses with others
- The next segment of books are the books of history
 - Specifically, the history of the nation of Israel
 - From the story of Joshua taking the Israelites into Caanan, through the birth of the monarchy and first kings and then ending with the story of Esther and God saving His people from extinction
- The first two books of this segment, Joshua and Judges, are filled with the military accounts of battles, skirmishes, victories, and defeats
 - There are the stories of the walls of Jericho coming down, the defeat and victory at Ai, the division of the land among the 12 tribes, and Joshua’s death
 - It then moves into the time of the Judges
 - A generally regarded dark time in the nation’s history
 - The oppression by the Cushites and the people’s deliverance
 - The Midianites and Gideon’s leadership
 - The oppression of the Philistines and Samson’s rise to prominence
 - And then the war between the tribes
- In the midst of all this chaos, we then run headlong into the story of...Ruth
- And if that is not strange enough, she is not even a Hebrew woman; she is a Moabite

READ – Ruth 1:1-7

The OT book of Ruth has been called one of the most beautiful and perfect short stories ever written

- The date and setting of the story are not given precisely, but it would fit within the time of the Judges – around 1000 or so BC
- The authorship has never been confirmed, but Jewish tradition places it as a strong possibility of being Samuel
- It was most likely written during the reign of David as one of the purposes of the book was to point out that Ruth was related to or in the lineage of King David

- The literary layout of the book is what is known as a mirror structure
 - What that means is later elements in the story parallel and resolve earlier ones
 - It begins with an introduction of two of the three primary participants with an explanation as to the circumstances driving the story
 - There are then 6 dialogs that make up the bulk of the account
 - All 6 involve Ruth
 - 4 of them are between her and Naomi and the other 2 between Ruth and Boaz
 - There are only 4 chapters in the book, with chapter 4 resolving much of the conflict in the first chapter- hence the mirror

One of the things that makes the book so unique is how much it parallels the story of Esther

- The primary way of that is the providential care and activity of God
- While God is mentioned in this book, it is His guidance and present hand that is so noteworthy
- Without that knowledge, it would appear that there were a great deal of things going on that were purely of great coincidence

Let's look at a couple of those:

- It begins in the first chapter with a famine, brought on by a drought (1:1-2)
- There are then the deaths of the three men, married to the 3 women who begin the story (1:3-5)
 - The men are:
 - Elimelech – the husband of Naomi
 - He was a distant relative of Boaz
 - Likely they were from the same clan, both traced to the tribe of Judah
 - Kilion – son of Elimelech and Naomi
 - The husband of Orpah
 - Mahlon – also the son of Elimelech and Naomi
 - The husband of Ruth (4:10)
- Elimelech, Naomi, Kilion, and Mahlon are all from Bethlehem in Judah
 - The woman the two sons married were from the Moabite people
 - When the three men died, over a span of about 10 years, it placed the three women in a very precarious position
 - Without a husband, they would have a very hard time making a living in order to survive.

Because of that, while the famine is still ongoing, Naomi makes plans to return to her home in Canaan, where God was providing for His people

- But along the way, she quickly realizes the difficulties her two daughters-in-law are going to face
- Strangers in a foreign land and widows meaning that, when combining those two factors together, they would have little to no hope of remarrying
 - Add to this the fact that the Moabite people and Israelites had a long history of hostility and violence between them

- Moab was the product of an incestuous relationship between Lot and his oldest daughter following the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (**Gen 19:37-38**)
- So these were not only the enemies of the Israelites, but they were also a people from a sinful union
- Naomi quickly releases them from their obligation to travel with her in order to send them back to their homeland, where they would have a much better chance of remarrying, having children, and obtaining their security
- Now neither want to leave, and while Orpah eventually relents, Ruth refuses and presents, as her pledge of loyalty words that have been spoken at countless weddings...

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. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.”*

When they arrived in Canaan in the land of Judah, we immediately begin to see the Hand of God moving

- Next time we will begin examining the 3 main characters of this story by looking at Naomi
- She was obviously a very good woman, so much so that her daughters-in-law, even though foreigners to one another, did not want to leave her.