

Remnant Life Church

June 17, 2021

Ruth

Pt 2

“Naomi”

Ruth 1:8-18

From December 1776 to May 1785, Benjamin Franklin was the United State’s representative to France. During his time there, he occasionally attended the Infidels Club -- a group that spent most of its time searching for and reading literary masterpieces. On one occasion, Franklin read the book of Ruth to the club, but he changed the names in it so it would not be recognized as a book of the Bible. When he finished, the listeners were unanimous in their praise. They said it was one of the most beautiful short stories that they had ever heard and demanded that he tell them where he had run across such a remarkable work of literary art. He loved telling them that it came from the Bible!

While the primary focus of the story is Ruth, there is another woman who is almost as prominent – Naomi

- This was a woman who had a difficult early life
- She was born in Bethlehem
 - A member of the tribe of Ephraim called Ephrathites
 - Ephraim was the second son of Joseph born in Egypt (**Gen 41:50**)
 - The mother of the children was Asenath (**Gen 41:45**)
 - Given to Joseph by Pharaoh
 - She was the daughter of Potiphera (likely Potiphar)
 - The man who was once his slave was now his son-in-law
 - Mother-in-law issues! (attempted seduction)
 - These people settled in the area of the West Bank of the Jordan near Jerusalem

We read in the first verse of Ruth that there was a famine in the land

- Naomi, her husband Elimelech, their two sons Mahlon (“sickly”) and Kilion (“failing”) all left the region, literally, for greener pastures
- They settled in Moab, modern-day Jordan, which occupied the land on the eastern side of the Dead Sea
- These people were not allies of God’s people, but they were able to settle in the land
- The 2 sons married Moabite women (a violation of God’s law, by the way) – the first named Orpah and the second Ruth
- In the span of about 10 years, Naomi lost her husband and both her sons leaving her with her 2 daughters-in-law – meaning 3 women alone without men – a complicated, challenging and very difficult situation for them to be in that day and age

The deaths of the men of her family prompted Naomi to head back home to Bethlehem with her 2 Moabite daughters-in-law hoping to find relatives to take them in

We begin to see the character of this woman as they are traveling

- The Moabites had long been an aggressive adversary of the Israelites
- Naomi realizes this as they are traveling and expresses her concern to the two women

- It is certainly possible that she did this in order to protect herself since no one in her home area would have known the details of her life – but I choose to believe that it was out of goodness and love, not fear, that she did this
- It would be better for them to go back home, she tells them, find new husbands, and resume life in their own land and their own culture with their families (**Ruth 1:8-9**)
- We read that Orpah finally relents (**Ruth 1:14**), but Ruth refuses and promises to convert to whatever culture or religion that will keep her with Naomi (**Ruth 1:16-17**)

The next revelation of Naomi's heart is her care and concern for Ruth

- She shows concern for Ruth as she gleans in the fields behind the harvesters
- She then gives instructions for how to properly meet Boaz as he is the kinsman-redeemer

The Kinsman-Redeemer

- According to various laws of the Pentateuch (**Lev 25:23; 47-48**), the kinsman-redeemer was a male relative who had the privilege or responsibility to act on behalf of a relative who was in trouble, danger, or need.
- The greatest example of this is what Jesus did for each of us on the cross
 - He redeemed or paid the price to purchase us from the wages of sin
 - Boaz is the best human example
- The law also stated that it was to be the nearest living relative, which Boaz actually was not (more of that next week)

Naomi understood all of this, and we see this play out to the end of the story with Boaz marrying Ruth and, by extension, the care for Naomi is secured

- There are some strange things we read at the end of the account
- **Ruth 4:16-17** - *Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" And they named him Obed.*
 - Pushy?
 - Desperate?
 - Remember she has no blood relation to this child
 - Boaz was a relative of her husband
 - This was her daughter-in-law's child, not her son's
 - Care for the child – yes, but name him?!

But through all of this, we see, once again, God's hand and the crafting of an important path that will ultimately lead to Jesus

- Men of Israel were not to marry foreign women – Mahlon and Kilion did
- Moabite people did not live among the people of God – Ruth did
- The kinsman-redeemer could refuse to carry out his duty – the nearest kinsman-redeemer did refuse
- Boaz was not required to care for Ruth and the line of Elimelech – but he did

Through these events, Obed was born who became the father of Jesse, the father of David