

# Ruth

## The Kinsman Redeemer



I have to say, Judges just had a terrible effect on me; personally and pastorally. That seventh book of the Bible is a bummer. I'm sorry, but God understands how I feel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes because there was no king in Israel. How it came to pass, we are not sure; but there was a generation of people living in the land of promise who did not know the Lord or the work that He had done for Israel. The book of Judges was about idolatry, it was about immorality, it was about lust. It was about war, it was about cruelty, and it was about spiritual darkness. When that book ended, we quickly realized that what people were thinking was right in their own eyes, God actually said it was evil in His eyes. When we closed that book, we realized that Israel needed a king. So if Israel needed a king, then there must be a king on the way. And that was the hope of Israel.

This will be our eighth stop as we continue along Route 66. Has anyone wondered why this book of Ruth is so short? It is just four chapters. From a literary stand point, literary critics say this book is perfect. I actually know of schools who used the book of Ruth, not for theology, but perhaps as the greatest literary work of all time. Now that should not surprise you, because behind the author of Ruth, of course is the Holy Spirit of God. Isn't it kind of neat when the Holy Spirit does something that actually stands up to the critics of our day from a literary stand point? But I want to share with you why I believe the book of Ruth is so short. I personally believe that the book of Ruth is actually an appendix to the book of Judges. You

are reading a work, and then they tell you to refer to the appendix at the back of the book, and that appendix adds great clarity to what is being written. Agreed? Have you ever wanted to stop reading the book right then and go to the back of the book and read the appendix? I have. I wish I had known this when we studied Judges. If I had known this, I would not have been as depressed when I preached to you. I would not have lost three days trying to recover from the book of Judges; it absolutely broke my heart. As I began to study the book of Ruth, all of a sudden I began to realize this isn't a new story. Did you figure that out? It is a continuation of an old story. The more I researched that and the more I began to dig out some of my Jewish writings that I love, I discovered that the Jews actually put the book of Ruth with Judges and called it the third appendix to the book. Do you know how it looked like the book of Judges stopped with the story of Samson, and then you had those two other stories at the end of Judges? I shared with you how that those two stories actually shed light on what life was like back in Israel when everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes because they did not have a king. But what they were doing in their own eyes was evil in the sight of the Lord. The Jewish Rabbis actually believed that those two stories are appendixes that talked about the deep darkness of living in the land of promise when a generation did not know the Lord and had crowned their own self king and was doing what was right in their own eyes.

Now, the book of Ruth is about three things:

- 1. The Remnant**
- 2. The Rest**
- 3. The Redeeming**

## **The Remnant**

If you believe in the doctrine of grace, if you come from a background of reformed theology, you realize there is always a remnant left on the planet. You see this as you study the Bible. In the midst of utter spiritual darkness, there is always the shining of a light. In the day of Judges, here is how it was supposed to work; the nations around Israel were supposed to be dark

and Israel was supposed to be a light. But in Ruth, we find that in the day of Judges, it was dark in Israel...yet, there would be a light. Talk about blowing your mind! Where Israel was supposed to live among the Gentiles and be a light, there was a Gentile living in Israel who was a light. Is that grace or is that grace? That is why there is a remnant! So that every moment in every generation on the planet, where there is utter darkness, where there is idolatry, there will be someone worshipping the true God. Where there is immorality, there will be someone who will be faithful. Where there is a culture of lust, there will be someone who knows love. Where there is a culture of war, someone will know peace. Where there is culture of cruelty, someone will be kind. Where there is a culture of darkness, I promise you, there will also be a spiritual light. Her name was Ruth, and she was a Moabite! If you are from the far side of the tracks and you feel like there is no hope for you, this story ought to get your motor running! It shows us what God can do with somebody who has faith in Him, the one true God.

Now, when studying for Ruth, I had to let go of what I already knew to be true of this book, because I have read it so much. I mean, a lot of us can paraphrase it, chapter by chapter. The majority of the book is conversation; it is dialogue between different characters. So you are not just reading a narrative of history; you are reading the actual dialogue of the people in the history. That is really cool, but right in the beginning the writer tells us that it is the time when the judges were judging. Now you already know my experience from Judges, so I'm transferring that over into what I have already learned. So I start to read Ruth and I think, *oh no, I have misjudged this book*. Do you realize that during the days of the Judges in the midst of that total darkness, there starts to shine a light? But if you read this in the context, it starts out with a famine. Now, you know that when God called Israel to be His people, He told them that if you live by the law, I'll bless you. If you don't obey the law, I'm going to punish you, I'm going to curse you. God said, Israel, if you obey me, it's going to rain on your crops, there is going to be plenty of food, your wives are going to bear children; it is going to be glorious in the Promised Land. But if you mess up...Now all of a sudden, I get it! There is the famine in the land of promise because the children of Israel are disobedient. They are

not keeping God's law, and everybody is doing what is right in their own eyes. So there is this famine, and the famine hits in Bethlehem, and Bethlehem is called the 'house of bread.' That is what the name means. In other words, Bethlehem was the bread basket of Palestine.

Have you ever noticed that in our nation, when there is a drought in Western Kentucky, it doesn't really affect anything? I mean it affects the farmer, but it doesn't affect us. We still go to the grocery store and still buy our food. Our food is still the same price. But when they announce a famine in the central plains of our country; when it hits Iowa and South Dakota, Northern Illinois, Northern Indiana, it affects the whole nation.

So when there is a famine in Bethlehem, the house of bread, it is bad. But what should be happening is that the famine ought to lead Israel to repent. But Elimelech did what was right in his own eyes. He decided that it would be better to live outside the Promised Land than to live in the Promised Land. So he moved his wife and his two children to Moab. So Elimelech is going to move outside the land of promise, where God promised them rest.

Do you remember Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah? He lost his wife because she turned into a pillar of salt. He flees with his daughters and they trick him. He fathers sons from his daughters. The oldest daughter gives birth to a son and they call his name Moab. That was the establishment of the Moabites.

## **The Rest**

The name, Elimelech, means 'God is my king.' Whoa! We have a man living in a land that doesn't have a king, but his parents have named him a name that means God is his king. And this man, named, *God is my king*, does what is right in his own eyes and goes outside the land to find food. He takes his wife, Naomi, with him, and her name means 'pleasant one.' What a blessing for a man who is married to a Naomi; the pleasant one. Now, get this picture: Here is this happily married family, *God is my king* married to the *Pleasant one*, and they give birth to two kids. Are you ready for this? The name of the first kid was Mahlon, meaning 'sickness,' and the second was Kilion, meaning 'vanishing.' *God is my king* and the *Pleasant one* gave

birth to two children who evidently had physical infirmities, because who would name their son *Sickness*? They find themselves in Moab, and then guess what *God is my king* does? This blows my mind...he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. You see, God said you are not to marry your children to foreigners, and what does *God is my king* do? He marries his son to Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. The next thing you know, *God is my king* is dead and *Sickness* and *Vanishing* are dead. So Naomi finds herself in Moab with no provisions, no protection, and no prosperity. It's the story of the book of Judges all over again; everyone doing what was right in their own eyes! And then Naomi looked around and realized there was no hope for her daughters or for her, so she told her daughters to go back home and serve their gods.

*Pleasant one* has turned bitter now. Isn't it amazing how sometimes we view our life through our circumstances instead of viewing our circumstances through our life? Poor, poor, pitiful me! She is getting bitter, and she tells her daughters to go back to your own land and find a husband, because what I desire for you rest. I would like all of the wives and your ladies to look at Ruth 1:9. Ruth's desires for her daughters-in-law was for them to find rest in the household of her husband. Wow...this is beautiful! I don't know if you all have picked up on this or not, but ever since we started this series, we just kind of started talking about rest. I'd never seen, but it is all over the Bible. In Exodus 33:14, God told Israel that if you will follow Me, I'm going to lead you into the Promised Land, and it is going to be a land of rest. In Deuteronomy 12:8-12, Moses told the children of Israel that if you disobey God, you will not find rest in the land. In Joshua 1:13-15, the two and a half tribes on the other side of the Jordan are promised rest after they help the other tribes attain their rest. At the end of the book of Joshua, the Bible says that the children of Israel had rest because their enemies couldn't withstand them. What God wants His children to live in is what is called rest. The Hebrew word for **rest** that is used here in this verse, means 'peace and happiness.' What God desired for the children of Israel, what Naomi desired for her daughters-in-law, was peace and happiness; rest.

Sometimes my wife looks at me and says, "I'm so glad that is on you and not me." And here I am with this big decision, this big weight on me, and here my wife is, doing what she does with a big old grin on her face, totally happy! There is not an ounce of that on her. That is rest. That is what God desires for every lady in their relationship with their husband. He desires for you to live under his provision, for you to live under his protection; that your posterity leads to peace and happiness. Ultimately, as a lady, you find that in your husband, under Christ. Do you husbands hear me? You should not create a load on your wife, you should relieve her of her load, so that she can find what God ultimately wants for her. It is never found in a place, it is always found in a person.

There is nothing wrong with the place. The land in Canaan was a good place. The problem with Canaan was the people living in the land; before, and after, the Exodus. Israel has now become 'Canaanized.' But listen, Naomi has no hope. You have to understand why she has no hope. We don't understand this, but in the Biblical world, if a Jewish man had a son who died before his wife had given birth to a son, (someone to carry on his name) the next brother stepped up and married his sister-in-law. The first son that he had was going to be his brother's seed line. Now that freaks us out, amen? So if this was in our culture, if you were marrying in a family of five or six brothers and you wanted to marry the oldest brother, you better make sure you like the second, third and fourth too, just in case he died!

But here is the problem; both sons are dead. Naomi is old and she said to her daughters-in-law, if I did get married and could have a child, which I can't, but if I could, would you wait till our sons grew up? Do you see why she is bitter? Her name and her husband's name is now wiped off the face of the planet. Without a husband, she doesn't have provisions, she doesn't have protection and there is no posterity for her at all! Life is basically over! So Orpah says bye, and Ruth says, not a chance, I am staying with you until I die. Your people are going to be my people, and your God is going to be my God. So she clings to her, and now they head back to Bethlehem.

## The Redeeming

When they get to Bethlehem, everybody is looking and they talk...*Is that you Naomi? Nope, it is Mara. What? You look like Naomi. I am not Naomi, I am Mara. I went out pleasant; full.* Man, is she not saying, we stepped outside the revealed will of God? *We thought it was bad here, so we left this land to go to Moab, but when we got to Moab, we lost everything we've got and now I'm coming back; changed. I am bitter. I am angry. I have failed, no, God hath failed me!* (Now, Ruth knows the Law, and speaks) *I'll tell you what. It's barley harvest, and when they are gleaning, they are supposed to leave some for the poor and we are very poor. Why don't I just go glean in the fields?* Guys, do you have any clue how bad it could be to be a woman gleaning in a field where men are bringing in the harvest? We saw what happened to the concubine. You remember the concubine was from Bethlehem, but all of this happened in Gibeon. Now stick with me, because this is going to get really good. She is met, not with cruelty, but with kindness. And then, she goes back home and tells her mother-in-law she has gleaned in Boaz' field, but she had no clue who Boaz was. He is a close relative; a kinsman redeemer, and he has treated her really, really good. The reason was because he heard how she stuck with her mother-in-law. Now you daughters-in-law, it does matter how you treat your mother-in-law. When you don't think anyone is noticing, other people do notice! And because of how Ruth treated Naomi, Boaz is now kind to her and he gives her extra grain. He even tells the guys that she is such a hard worker, they are to leave extra so that she doesn't have to work as hard. When she asked why he was doing this, he told her she was so blessed because she had brought herself under the wings of the Lord. Meaning, you are taking refuge in God as your God. In other words, he realized that she was lady who was Moabite, but for her own personal salvation, for her own personal trust, she is not trusting in *Chemosh*, the god of the Moabites; she is trusting in Yahweh, the God of Israel. When she goes home and tells Naomi, Naomi, again, says, honey, (wives and mothers look at this) do you understand that all I want for you is rest? So then they devise a plan for her to propose to Boaz.

It is okay for women to ask men. I mean when you find Mr. Right, go for it ladies. You say, "Where did you get that?" Well, let me just tell you what happened. Naomi told Ruth to go down to the threshing floor and wait until Boaz went to sleep, after he has eaten, and drunk, and he is really merry, meaning he is really feeling good. You have to remember, everybody slept on the threshing floor. So there are couples and there are children. This is just like a public celebration, because it is barley harvest. She is supposed to sneak in there after everybody has gone to sleep, and while he is laying down, she is to slip in there, uncover his feet, lie at his feet, hoping he will wake up. Sure enough, he wakes up. He said, who are you? It is dark so he can't see her, and she says, I am Ruth. Then she said, would you cover me with your wings? That phrase *cover me with your wings*, means, 'would you raise the corner of your garment and put it over me and let me be under it just for a moment.' It is a picture of proposal. She is asking Boaz if he will marry her! I don't have a brother-in-law, but what I need is a brother in love with me. I don't want something motivated by law; I want something motivated by grace! Ladies, can you imagine this lady, being a Moabite, literally throwing herself at Boaz? That is what she did, and Boaz paid her the utmost compliment. *Honey, I'm flattered. You could have went after young men, but you did not.* (Which means that he is probably older than her.) *I would love to redeem you, but there is one closer to me. Let me find out if he will, if he will, you must marry him. If he will not, I will.* Can you imagine her heart as she goes back home and tells the story to Naomi, hoping that the one closest wants to, so she can marry him? Sure enough, in chapter 4, we have that incident where he goes to the gate, contacts the closest kinsman redeemer, and he says, I want to redeem. Now see, this is not talking about Levirate marriage. This is talking about how each family had a kinsman redeemer, who could redeem property or could redeem persons. So under the law, if you got yourself in a pickle, lost everything that you had, one of your closest redeemers could redeem you; buy back for you what you lost yourself. Is that glorious? That was a provision of the Law. And Boaz is a kinsman redeemer, so when he talks to the nearest of kin, the nearest of kin says, hey, I would love to have what belongs to Naomi and I am going to buy it. Then Boaz says, oh, yes, by the way, you do know that if you buy it, you also have to

marry Ruth, the Moabite... *Whoa! I'd love to have the land, but I don't want her.* Now, we really don't know why he didn't want her. Possibly, he was already married, but he figured out; if I buy this, take her on, I will not have enough inheritance left. In other words, it is going to cost him everything he had to buy the land and take her; *I am going to pass.* When he passes, Boaz steps up and says, I want the land and I want Ruth, the Moabite, to be my wife. The people in the city rise up and they praise him. They want his house to be established, and for her to be like Leah and Rachael. Remember all the kids they had, amen? That is what got this whole thing started! And then they make another statement, "*May your house be as strong as the house of Perez.*" Then the Bible gives the genealogy. Guess who eventually came out of the union of Ruth and Boaz? King David. Do you get it?

## **Israel Gets a King**

Let me tell you why this is an appendix to the book of Judges. The book of Ruth was not written by Ruth. It was written by somebody else during the reign of King David when he was the ruler over Judah, but not Israel, for seven and a half years. Why is that important? Because Israel wanted a king; they needed a king, but they didn't wait for God. They wanted their own king, and they chose Saul. Saul was from the city of Gibeah; he was a Benjamite. In the book of Judges, the men of Gibeah were worthless fellows. They were so bad that the other eleven tribes almost wiped that tribe off the face of the planet. When Israel got ready to choose a king, they wanted a king named Saul, who was a Benjamite, from the town of Gibeah! He is now dead and all of Israel is following his son, Ishbosheth, because they think Saul and his family are the rightful descendants of the throne. But there is another man in the south named David and he is sitting on the throne and the people of Judah are following him, because he is from the tribe of Judah. Remember, Jacob said that the ruler will come from Judah. So Israel should have never looked for a king in Benjamin; they should have looked for a king in Judah. Guess what town he is from? He is from Bethlehem, wow...

And so we've got this genealogy at the end of the book to tell us that the king that Israel needs is not Saul, but it is David. But he doesn't his

genealogy there, he starts his genealogy back with Perez. There has always been a chapter in the Bible that puzzles me; Genesis chapter 38. I have always wondered why this chapter is in the Bible. It is talking about Joseph and all that he did, and all of a sudden, we switch to Judah! The reason that chapter is in there is because it tells us who the Ruler is coming from; where the Redeemer is coming from. The Redeemer is supposed to come from Judah. Judah had sons, and his firstborn son, Er, married Tamar. He was evil in the sight of God, and God put him to death before they had any children. So Judah told the next son to marry and raise up a child in his brother's name. But he refused to bear a child in his brother's name, and God put him to death also. So Judah said, honey, you are to live as a widow in your father's house and remain childless until his youngest son grew up. You see, Judah was afraid his youngest would die too, so after his wife died, Judah was going to go (this has got to be G rated) to a woman of questionable morals. But Tamar tricked Judah. She disguised herself like one of those ladies and slept with her father-in-law so that she could have a son. She had twins.

## **Redemptive Marker**

Tamar is in the genealogy of Jesus, wow. Guess who else is in the genealogy of Jesus? Rahab! Guess who else is in the genealogy of Jesus? Ruth, a Moabite! What is this trying to tell us? We serve a God of grace. Not just Jews, but all humans need a Kinsman Redeemer! So there redemptive marker in this book is Ruth 4:18-22; it is the genealogy. The book of Ruth is trying to be the appendix to tell us that while everything is bad in Israel during the time of Judges and it was totally dark, there was a light in that darkness. God was getting ready to establish the coming King and we would know who He is; he is David.

- **Kinsman Redeemer**

There were four things a kinsman redeemer had to be:

- 1. He had to be a close relative to redeem.**
- 2. He had to be willing to redeem.**
- 3. He had to be able to redeem.**
- 4. He had to be free to redeem.**

After David, came a Kinsmen Redeemer for all mankind, and He is Jesus. Generally, He was human; in particular, He was Jewish. Hebrews 2, John 1, and Philippians 2 teach that He was just like us. He had to be just like us because our Redeemer, in order to redeem us, had to be a kinsman. He had to be a close relative, so He took on human flesh just like us. A kinsman redeemer had to be willing to redeem. You could be a close relative and not be willing. You could be willing, but you also had to be able. And then, you had to be free.

If you take the characteristics of a kinsman redeemer; they had to be a close relative, they had to be willing to redeem, they must be able to redeem, they must be free to redeem; you will see that Jesus Christ meets the criteria. He didn't just come to save the Jews; He came to save you. You say, but I am a Moabite! Then just do this: Just throw yourself at His foot and ask Him to cover you with the corner of the robe of His righteousness, and see what He does for you. All of a sudden, you have provisions. All of a sudden, you have protection. And all of a sudden you have posterity. I am not going to promise you that God would give you physical children, but I will tell you what God will give you. He will give you spiritual children. You realize many of us were spiritually barren, but now we are fruitful. Because of Jesus Christ redeeming us from sin, changing us from self-centered to God centered, we have poured our lives into hundreds. And when we are gone, there will be an influence that will be passed on, because those you have led to Christ, those you have discipled, will continue to lead and continue to disciple.

Ruth never knew what she did and some of us don't know what we are doing. But generations later, we will recognize your spiritual influence, because God wanted you to have rest. Do you have rest? You should, because of your Redeemer, you are the remnant. No matter how bad it gets, there is always going to be a light. The darker it gets, the brighter that light shines. Let's live faithfully in a dark generation that does not know the Lord, because He has provided a kinsman redeemer and we can have peace and happiness.