



### INTRODUCTION:

- Ruth and Esther are the only women in the Old Testament who have a book named after them.
- Ruth is the story of a Gentile who marries a Jew and becomes part of the lineage of the Messiah
- Esther is the story of a Jewess who marries a Gentile and is used by God to save the Jewish nation from destruction so that the Messiah could be born
- In the book of Ruth God is mentioned 25 times
- In the book of Esther, God is not mentioned once
- Yet both books are powerful stories about what God can do with a life that is committed to do His Will

### ***Ruth is also known as one of the greatest love stories written***

- The story is told of Benjamin Franklin's visit to France
- He spoke to a group of intellectuals who continually scoffed his belief in the Bible
- Convinced that these men knew nothing of the Bible Franklin said to them... I have come across a most intriguing love story and I would like to read it for you tonight
- He then proceeded to read a handwritten copy of the Book of Ruth
- After he finished the 4 short chapters – the group of intellectuals were blown away... that is the greatest love story ever heard.
- You must publish it at once!!!
- Franklin answered – it's already been published, it's in the Bible
- The scoffers were silenced

### ***The Book is divided into 4 short chapters***

- Chapter One takes place in the country of Moab
- Chapter Two takes place in the field of Boaz
- Chapter Three takes place on the threshing floor of Boaz
- Chapter Four take place at the city gate of Bethlehem

### ***The main character is Ruth***

- Her name means friendship
- She is the great grandmother of King David
- She is a picture of us – the Bride of Christ

### ***The hero of this drama is Boaz***



- His name means to strike in scorn
- This significant because he represents Jesus Christ – the goel or Kinsman Redeemer
- Genesis speaks about Jesus crushing the head of the serpent

### ***The Theme of Ruth is Redemption***

- We see in this short story how God rebuilds, restores and redeems hopeless situations
- But it also introduces us to the family of the ancestors of Jesus Christ who will redeem the whole world
- In Jewish Tradition, Ruth is the first in order of five books known as the Bamesh Megilloth – which included Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther
- Each book was read during the five key feasts
  - Song of Solomon during the The Feast of the Passover
  - Ruth during the Feast of Pentecost
  - Lamentations during the Feast of Tisha B'Av commemorating the destruction of the First and Second temple in Jerusalem
  - Ecclesiastes during the Feast of Tabernacles
  - Esther during the Feast of Purim commemorating the deliverance of the Jewish people from the Persian Empire
  - On a side note, Jonah was to be read during Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement

#### **Ruth 1:1–2 (NKJV)**

**1** Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. <sup>2</sup> The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion— Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there.

### ***The story of Ruth begins with Elimelech running from his problems***

- This story occurs during the time of the judges (scholars believe around the time of Gideon) and there is a famine in the land
- Life wasn't easy in Canaan because there was no king in Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes



- Elimelech leaves Bethlehem with his wife and moves to Moab to escape famine and national chaos
- It's like Clapton moving to America to avoid British taxation
- NOTE: FAMINE was in the town that was named – the House of Bread
- NOTE: God said the land would expel Israel if they worshipped idols – how does the land expel them? Through famine... just a thought
- The Moabites were descendents of Lot's incestuous union with his oldest daughter (Genesis 19:31-37)
- The Israelites encountered the Moabites when Israel was journeying towards the promised land
- Balak, the King of Moab, hired Balaam to curse the Israelites and Balaam instructs the Moabites to seduce them to worship false gods with women
- When the Israelites entered Canaan, they were oppressed by the Moabites until Ehud defeated them and drove them from Canaan
- It's probably just after this that Elimelech move from Bethlehem to Moab with his wife Naomi and his two sons
- His sons meet two Moabite women and marry them – Orpah and Ruth
- Jews were forbidden to marry Gentile women – especially from Ammon and Moab

Deuteronomy 23:3–6 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> “An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his *descendants* shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever, <sup>4</sup> because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. <sup>5</sup> Nevertheless the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. <sup>6</sup> You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever.

- Elimelech's decision to move to Moab placed his sons in a position to disobey the Lord
- Dads / Moms are there decisions you are making because it looks like a great opportunity for you or maybe you're running from a problem... but really the end result is you're setting your kids up to fail?



- The real problem wasn't the famine, it was the unbelief in Elimelech's heart... God won't take care of us, so I need to
- Oswald Chambers wrote – The majority of us begin with the bigger problems outside and we forget the one inside
- They live in Moab for 10 years and the end result is three women loose their husbands... Naomi, Ruth and Orpah – they are all widowed

Ruth 1:6 (NKJV)

<sup>6</sup> Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had visited His people by giving them bread.

- Naomi hears the famine in Canaan is over and wants to return home
- So she tells her daughter in laws... go back to your families
- Now... what is wrong with this picture?
- Why would a daughter of Abraham encourage two pagan women to worship false gods?
- Because they were living proof that she and her husband permitted their two sons to marry foreign women
- Naomi was trying to cover up her disobedience

Proverbs 28:13 (NKJV)

<sup>13</sup> He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy.

- When we try to hide our sins, it's proof that we really haven't faced them honestly and a person who hasn't dealt honestly with their sin will always shift blame to someone else

***In this case, Naomi blames God***

Ruth 1:13 (NKJV)

<sup>13</sup> No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!"

- That's a bitter heart – bitterness leads to blame
- Naomi blames herself – it grieves me and she blames God – the Lord is against me
- Naomi's bitterness affected Orpah and Ruth differently



- Orpah believed Naomi's bitterness... she decides to go back home to her idolatry, to her family where she could find a husband
- Ruth ignored Naomi's bitterness... she wants the God of Israel

Ruth 1:16–17 (NKJV)

<sup>16</sup> But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people *shall be* my people, And your God, my God. <sup>17</sup> Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If *anything but* death parts you and me."

***This is one of the greatest statements of conversion in scripture***

- First she expresses her love for Naomi
- Then her love for God
- Finally her willingness to forsake mother and father to cleave to Naomi and the God of her people
- Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem and the whole city is excited to see Naomi return
- We are told that it's the beginning of barley harvest
- This coincides with the Feast of Pentecost or First Fruits

Ruth 2:1–2 (NKJV)

**2** There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz. <sup>2</sup> So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after *him* in whose sight I may find favor."

And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

- More than changing our circumstances, God wants to change our hearts
- God's purpose is not to make us comfortable, but to make us conformable
- Naomi was bitter towards God, but Ruth was willing for God to work in her life... she was better and open to God's favor
- Bitterness closes you off from receiving God's favor
- Ruth was open and it opened her to receive God's favor

Leviticus 19:9 (NKJV)



<sup>9</sup> 'When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest.

- Naomi didn't want to glean the fields, she was bitter and her bitterness made her lazy
- Ruth asked permission to glean from the fields so they could eat
- The existence of this law was proof of God's concern for the poor and the stranger among His people
- The nation was instructed to care for the poor, the stranger and the widows

Deuteronomy 10:18 (NKJV)

<sup>18</sup> He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing.

- To live by faith means to take God at His Word and then act on it because faith without works is dead (James 2:20)
- Ruth was not only poor, but she was a widow and she believed that God loved her and would provide for her
- She set out to find a field that she could glean – which was a huge step of faith because she was not just a stranger, she was a Moabite
- This is where Boaz enters into the picture
- Boaz means "In Him Is Strength"

***Vs. 3: Ruth just "happens" to come to the field that Boaz owns***

- That is how God works – we call it luck, an accident – but it's God at work
- While Ruth is gleaning in the field, Boaz walks by and notices her
- He promises to protect Ruth and provide for her needs
- He had her walk with his female servants so she had first chance at the best of the gleanings
- Boaz told his servants to let her glean from wherever she wanted
- If she was hungry or thirsty she could refresh herself with his workers
- In fact, Boaz eats with her and personally hands her the food

***What a picture of grace***

- God becomes like a servant to show his love to a foreigner
- Ruth didn't know Boaz commanded his servants to be gracious to her



Ephesians 2:4–7 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup> But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

- In the same way that Boaz was gracious to Ruth, God’s graciousness far exceeds what we could ever earn or deserve
- Ruth returns home to Naomi and tells her all about Boaz

Ruth 2:20 (NKJV)

<sup>20</sup> Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “Blessed *be* he of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!” And Naomi said to her, “This man *is* a relation of ours, one of our close relatives.”

- Notice Naomi says – Blessed be the Lord... from bitterness to blessedness
- What happened?
- Her physical needs were met and her hope for the future was restored by God’s favor through Boaz
- We see a change in Naomi once she is released from her bitterness
- Her concern is no longer for herself and her grief but for Ruth and her future...

**(Vs. 1-4) Naomi explains to Ruth the law of the Kinsman Redeemer**

- It is found in Leviticus 25:47-55
- As a near relative, Boaz could redeem the family property that Elimelech had mortgaged when he took his family to Moab
- Naomi wasn’t wealthy enough to redeem it, but Boaz could buy it back and keep it in the family
- The wife of the deceased went with the property
- Therefore, the kinsman redeemer had to marry her and bring up children bearing the name of the deceased.
- They would inherit the property and the property would stay in the family.



- This was known as a Levirate marriage
- Naomi prepares Ruth to meet Boaz and Ruth does everything Naomi tells her to do
- Ruth submits herself to Boaz expecting Boaz to marry her
- But Boaz informs her that there is someone else who was a nearer relative or Kinsman Redeemer

Ruth 3:9–12 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> And he said, “Who *are* you?”

So she answered, “I *am* Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative.”

<sup>10</sup> Then he said, “Blessed *are* you of the LORD, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. <sup>11</sup> And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you *are* a virtuous woman. <sup>12</sup> Now it is true that I *am* a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.

- Ruth and Boaz have this midnight rendezvous and Boaz commits to redeeming the property and marrying Ruth if the other relative doesn't want to perform the duty for Ruth and her family.
- Ruth gets up before anyone notices and returns home, tells Naomi the whole thing and Naomi says...

Ruth 3:18 (NKJV)

<sup>18</sup> Then she said, “Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day.”

***One of the hardest things for us to do is to wait***

- I hate waiting in lines... it's one of the reasons I don't like going to Disneyland or Knotts Berry Farm when it's crowded
- I hate waiting for a table in a restaurant – especially with a reservation
- I hate it when a flight is delayed

***But Hebrews tells us...***

Hebrews 6:12 (NKJV)



<sup>12</sup> that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

- In other words – Sit still and let God work.
- Boaz was busy for Ruth and Naomi was confident that he wouldn't rest until he settled the matter.

Ruth 4:1–4 (NKJV)

**4** Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, "Come aside, friend, sit down here." So he came aside and sat down. <sup>2</sup> And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down. <sup>3</sup> Then he said to the close relative, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of land which *belonged* to our brother Elimelech. <sup>4</sup> And I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy *it* back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem *it*, redeem *it*; but if you will not redeem *it*, *then* tell me, that I may know; for *there is* no one but you to redeem *it*, and I *am* next after you.' "

And he said, "I will redeem *it*."

- Boaz goes to the gate in Bethlehem – it was like city hall
- The elders (governors) of the city conducted business at the city gate
- Boaz meets with the close relative of Naomi and explains the situation
- The close relative says – I will redeem the land
- You ever had a plan go in the wrong direction?
- I would be thinking BUMMER!!! What do I do now?
- So Boaz tells the relative – did I mention that Naomi's daughter in law Ruth was a Moabite and she's part of the deal?
- As soon as the close relative hears that he says... deal breaker
- If I buy the land then I have to marry a Moabite and that will mess up my inheritance – hey Boaz, you buy the land.

**(Vs. 8) The close relative takes off his shoe and hands it to Boaz**

- It is believed this symbolic act related to the divine commandment to walk on the land and take possession of it
- The kinsman handing the shoe was forfeiting his right to possess the land – these shoes walked on the land, now I give them to you
- Boaz says – right on!!!



- In the presence of the governing elders of Bethlehem, Boaz concludes the business deal and acquires the land and Ruth as his wife and they pronounce a blessing over Boaz...

Ruth 4:11–12 (NKJV)

<sup>11</sup> And all the people who *were* at the gate, and the elders, said, “*We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.*” <sup>12</sup> May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the LORD will give you from this young woman.”

- Here the city of Bethlehem rejoices in the marriage of Boaz and Ruth
- That is why we have public marriages, so the community can rejoice

**(Vs. 13) Ruth and Boaz conceive a son and names him Obed**

- Obed means “to serve”
- Out of Obed’s lineage would come Jesus who came to serve, not to be served
- Obed was also a blessing – baby’s are always a blessing...
- Obed blessed Ruth, but also Naomi

Ruth 4:15–17 (NKJV)

<sup>15</sup> And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him.” <sup>16</sup> Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him. <sup>17</sup> Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, “There is a son born to Naomi.” And they called his name Obed. He *is* the father of Jesse, the father of David.

**(Vs. 18) We see the genealogy of David – 10 generations.**

- According to Deuteronomy 23:2,3, no descendent of an illegitimate child could enter the tabernacle until 10 generations had passed
- Judah’s son, Pharaz, was illegitimate – the result of Judah’s union with Tamar in (Genesis 38)
- That is why we see 10 generations between the illegitimate son Pharaz and the rightful King David
- As we move into Samuel the stage points to the Son of David, our Greater than Boaz... Jesus Christ.