

## Ruth 1:1-13 - Thursday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013

- To say I've been looking forward to the book of Ruth would be a gross understatement, especially after we completed the book of Judges.
  - Actually, I'm of the belief the book of Judges ended as horrible as it did for good reason, which we'll see right out of the shoot in verse one.
  - This because, everyone did whatever seemed right in their own eyes, and as such they had sunk into the depths of unspeakable depravity.
- Enter the book of Ruth and the much-needed love and redemption that comes packaged with it, and it's not a moment to soon so to speak.
  - It's for this reason that woven into the fabric of this book is the most magnificent typology which points to our redemption in Jesus Christ.
  - More specifically, Boaz, as the kinsmen redeemer, is a picture of Jesus Christ as our redeemer, and Ruth pictures us as the bride of Christ.
- If the truth be known, the entire Old Testament points to the person of Jesus Christ and the finished work on the cross by Jesus Christ.
  - We saw this starting with the first five books of Moses, which are the books of the law, and now continuing with the historical books as well.
  - Whenever we begin a new book I always like to give you a synopsis of the how all 39 books are organized into four sections or categories.

**#1. The Pentateuch** - 5 books - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

**#2. Historical Books** - 12 books - Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First Samuel, Second Samuel, First Kings, Second Kings, First Chronicles, Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.

**#3. Poetic books** - 5 books - Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

**#4. Prophetic books** - 17 books –

- Major Prophets - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel
- Minor Prophets - Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a moment, as I think it would be good to share with you some interesting things about the book of Ruth.

- First, Ruth, as a Moabite, becomes the gentile bride of Boaz, as her kinsman redeemer, which again is why this book is rich with typology.
- So much so, that Ruth, as the gentile bride of Boaz, points to, and is a picture of the pre-tribulation rapture of the Bride of Jesus Christ.

- Here's how I get there, Ruth a type of the church follows Naomi a type of Israel, which is how she becomes joined to Boaz, a type of Christ.

- In other words, Boaz takes Ruth, who leaves all behind, and as such she does not go through the tribulation coming upon the entire land.
- By the way, this is true with Joseph as well when he also takes a gentile Bride before the seven-year famine coming upon the entire land.

- After Joseph took his gentile bride his brethren go into a 7-year famine, after Jesus takes His bride the Jew goes into the 7-year tribulation.

- After Israel's salvation in the seven-year famine, vis-à-vis Joseph, Israel was delivered out of Egypt, a type of the world, vis-à-vis Moses.
- Incidentally, Moses too had a Gentile bride, after his rejection by his brethren, and before they entered the great tribulation under Pharaoh.

- Another interesting thing about the book of Ruth is not only is it the shortest historical book, the narrative never identifies who the author is.

- Some scholars suggest it was written by Samuel and yet others believe it may have been authored by a woman, which could very well be.
- The reason being is that Ruth, as a Moabite Woman, is in the genealogy of Jesus Christ, which as a gentile and a woman was unthinkable.

Charles Spurgeon - "We have now reached the shortest of the historical books, which contains the sweet rustic story of Ruth. Her history is no doubt recorded in the Scriptures because she was one of the ancestors of our Lord Jesus. He Who came to save the Gentiles was pleased so to arrange the order of His genealogy, that a foreigner from a heathen land should be one of his predecessors."

- Lastly, the book of Ruth is ever so beautifully divided into what ends of being four distinct settings within the four short chapters of the book.
- 1<sup>st</sup> the country of Moab 1:1-18 2<sup>nd</sup> a field in Bethlehem 1:19-2:23 3<sup>rd</sup> a threshing floor in Bethlehem 3:1-18 4<sup>th</sup> the city of Bethlehem 4:1-22.
- Be that as it may, and suffice it to say, we are in for a real treat, and a profound blessing, as we study this most fascinating book of Ruth.

One commentator writes about Benjamin Franklin, when he was the Ambassador to France. As the story is told, he was speaking to a group of intellectuals who continually scoffed at his belief in the Bible. Unconvinced that these men were familiar with the book they mocked, Franklin said, "By the way, gentlemen, I have come across a most intriguing love story that I would like to read for you tonight. I think you'll find it interesting." He then proceeded to read a handwritten copy of the Book of Ruth. After he finished the four short chapters his audience was ecstatic. "That is the greatest love story we have ever heard," they exclaimed. "You must publish it at once." Franklin answered, "It has already been published. It's in the Bible." And the scoffers were silenced.

**Ruth 1:1** 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.

- It's interesting to note how that this took place during the days when the judges ruled, and at a time when there was a famine in the land.
- The reason I point this out is because it speaks to the truth that it's possible to live righteous in a world that's become unthinkably wicked.
- Noah is another example of this in that he too lived righteously in a world that had become so corrupt they would invent new ways of evil.

- This truth should be a source of tremendous encouragement, especially given that we are living in an evil day likened to the days of Noah.
- One of the reasons the book of Ruth stands out so much is because the light always shines the brightest when all around it's the darkest.
- Furthermore, God seems to always have a remnant to be the light in the midst of darkness as a vehicle from which redemption can come.

(2) 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.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is why Elimelech would leave Bethlehem (House of Bread), to go to Moab.
- There are those who believe this was a big mistake as evidenced by the next verses telling us that he and his two sons end up dying there.
- The argument is that had he not moved his family there in the first place, none of this would have ever happened, and he'd still be alive.

- While I understand the logic in that way of thinking, I do have considerable difficulty with it by virtue of what it implies about Who God is.
  - Let me explain, the biggest problem I have with this is that it equates the death of someone with the judgment of God on that someone.
  - I'm keenly aware that sometimes this in fact is the case, however, I would be hard pressed to ascribe it to this particular instance with them.
- Here's why, were he not to move there, the son wouldn't have married Ruth, and if he hadn't married Ruth, Ruth wouldn't have met Boaz.
  - Furthermore, if Ruth hadn't married Boaz, they wouldn't have had a son by the name of Obed, and if there's no Obed, there's no Jesse
  - If there's no Jesse, who would have been the grandson of Boaz and Ruth, then there's no David who would've been their great grandson.
- There are other reasons I don't think he was wrong going there, one of which is that there's nothing in the text indicating he disobeyed God.
  - Also, the sinful conduct of the children of Israel exceeded that of the pagan nations around them, so he wasn't moving to a more evil place.
  - He did everything he possibly could to stay in Bethlehem in order to feed his family in a famine. In other words, his motives were righteous.

(3) Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons.

- The reason I deemed it necessary to go into all the detail in the prior verses is because of the tragedy what we read here in this verse.
- By that I mean if we don't understand or misunderstand the why behind the what then everything that happens may be confusing and cruel.
- The bottom line is that God knows the end from the beginning and as such, everything is perfectly on schedule in spite of his tragic death.

Charles Spurgeon - "They had escaped the famine, but other troubles overtook them. In every land trial will be our lot. ...Alas poor soul! The darts of death wounded her terribly! Yet the Lord did not leave her alone in her widowhood; he prepared a loving heart to yield her sympathy."

- (4) Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years. (5) Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.
- It's important for us to understand how catastrophic this would have been for these widows who were living in that culture and in that day.
  - To be a widow meant that you were sentenced to a life of poverty by virtue of the fact that there was no husband who could provide for you.
  - The reason I point this out is because Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth, as widows, are now facing what would arguably be unthinkable peril.

(6) 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. (7) Therefore she went out from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.

- After ten tragic years, Naomi hearing the Lord had provided bread in Judah makes her way there with her two, daughter's-in-law in tow.
- To me, this speaks to how it is that often times, in order to get us to move from point A to point B, God has to allow adversity at point A.
- One has ever so aptly said that yes God will comfort the afflicted, but there may also be those times when He will afflict the comfortable.

(8) And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house. The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. (9) The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." So she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

- In all fairness to Naomi, you sort of can't really blame her for wanting them to go back to Moab in order to have a chance of a better life.
- While her intentions are right as evidenced by the show of affection and love, she's actually making a big mistake by telling them to do this.
- This because of what we read when we get to verse fifteen where we're told that Orpah goes back not only to her people, but to her gods.

- I think the lesson here becomes quite clear in that Naomi is more concerned with their physical and financial well being than their spiritual.
- I'm learning that making decisions solely on the basis of the financial implications with no regard for spiritual ramifications is to err greatly.
- Would to God that we would first seek God concerning those crossroads of decision in our lives that He might add everything else to us.

Matthew 6:24-34 NIV "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. (25) "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? (26) Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? (27) Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? (28) "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. (29) Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. (30) If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? (31) So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' (32) For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. (33) But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (34) Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

(10) And they said to her, "Surely we will return with you to your people." (11) But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? *Are* there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? (12) Turn back, my daughters, go—for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, *if* I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, (13) would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!"

- Once again, Naomi errs greatly when in her bereavement she tells her daughters-in-law that the hand of the Lord has gone out against her.
- Lest we be too hard on her, we'd do well to consider that we do the same thing. We interpret adversity and suffering as God's punishment.
- While there are those times when the heavy hand of the Lord's chastisement is upon us, I would suggest this is not the case with Naomi.

- The truth of the matter is that the Lord is not against her, nor is the Lord punishing her, rather, the Lord is directing her and protecting her.
- She just doesn't see it yet, and as such she'll be in for a wonderful and glorious blessing, yet future, if she will but trust in God's goodness.
- By the way, Naomi is in really good company, such that Jacob thought everything was against him during another famine in the entire land.

**Genesis 42:36 NKJV** And Jacob their father said to them, "You have bereaved me: Joseph is no *more*, Simeon is no *more*, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me."

- The take away from this is, when everything is seemingly going against us in our lives; it doesn't mean we're not in God's will for our lives.
- I think of David on the run to save his life, from Saul who tries to take his life, yet, he is right smack in the middle of God's will for his life.
- I think of Joseph who could have easily concluded he was not in God's will by virtue of how the adversity would contradict it, yet he was.