

**Finding Your Story in HIStory:**  
**Light for the Dark Days**  
**The Book of Ruth**

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**Introduction:** We are attempting in this series of messages to give an idea of the story of God. Here is a story that begins in creation. Creation gives indication that God created us for relationship. But, as we have learned, our sin has broken that relationship. We do not fully understand what God is doing in history until we see that God pursues us to restore that relationship. So, we have been considering the major mile posts that show us that history.

Today, I'm going to ask you to do something really unusual. I want you to turn in your Bibles to the Book of Ruth, but we are not going to read a text until the very end. But, so you are ready for the time when we get to the end, go ahead and open your Bibles to Ruth now.

I do want to tell you the story of Ruth. Before I do, I need to catch you up just a bit so that you will understand the context of Ruth.

Here is the final sentence of the book of Judges, the book before Ruth.

*In those days there was no king in Israel, everyone did whatever he wanted. (Judges 21:25)*

Joshua 12-21 describes the land that each tribe gained as their inheritance. Joshua 22-24 contains the final sermons of Joshua. These sermons give reminders to Israel of how they are supposed to live in the land. The book of Judges summarizes life in the Promised Land under the rule of judges.

Listen to how someone described this period. "Following the conquest of Canaan, Israel plunges into a 350 year period of national deterioration. A monotonous and deadly pattern develops: The people fall into sin, God disciplines them with foreign oppression, the people cry out in repentance, God raises up a deliverer, peace is restored. The cycle of sin repeats itself a total of seven times in the book. But God, ever faithful to his covenant people, extends his grace again and again by sending such leaders as Deborah, Gideon, and Samson." (Editor's Comment in *Daily Walk Bible*—Page 280)

There are a couple of reasons for this cycle of sin and deterioration.

1. Just as God predicted, Israel served the pagan gods. They never completely rid the land of the pagan gods as God had commanded. (See following verses: Judges 1:19, 28-30; 2:1-3; 3:5-7 for example.)
2. They failed to teach their children about the ways of God. A whole generation rose up that did not know God or the works of God. (See Judges 2:10.)

We probably ought to note just a couple of things that the Book of Judges teaches us.

- If you only deal with the consequences of sin and never deal with the cause (root) of sin, you will always deal with the cycle of sin.
- The cycle of sin is progressively worse.

The book of Judges and 1 Samuel is separated by Ruth, which gives an account of a “bright spot” for Israel in the days of the judges (Ruth 1:1). Ruth points to the theological truth that God is still sovereign and in control, even in the darkest days of rebellion and sin.

God is always at work. **He is working behind the scenes of our lives to bring about His purposes.** Ruth’s story gives evidence that God is at work in all areas of our lives.

**Ruth’s Story: So, what is Ruth’s story!** Well, ladies, I didn’t necessarily plan this on the Sunday before Valentine’s Day, but Ruth’s story in part is a love story.

A Family Meets Tragedy: The Bible tells us that at some point in this time of the judges, there was a famine in the land of Promise. (Ruth 1:1). Living in Bethlehem (a town that means by the way, the house of bread), there was a man and his wife by the name of Elimelech and Naomi. They had two sons—Mahlon and Chilion. This family went to the land of Moab, outside of the land of Promise, back across the Jordan River and on the other side of the Dead Sea. Not long after being there, Elimelech died. The sons married women from the land of Moab—one named Orpah and one named Ruth. Not long after that and before any children were born, Mahlon and Chilion died.

Naomi decided that it would be best to leave the land of Moab. She had heard that the famine had ended, so she prepared to go back to Bethlehem. After starting on the journey, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Look, you go back home. You don’t have to come with me. I don’t have any more sons to offer you.” Orpah did return, but Ruth responds with a beautiful rebuttal to her mother-in-law’s kind offer:

<sup>16</sup> But Ruth replied:

Do not persuade me to leave you  
or go back and not follow you.  
For wherever you go, I will go,  
and wherever you live, I will live;  
your people will be my people,  
and your God will be my God.

<sup>17</sup> Where you die, I will die,  
and there I will be buried.  
May Yahweh punish me,  
and do so severely,  
if anything but death separates you and me.

And, that’s how Naomi and Ruth arrived back in Bethlehem.

## God Provides

We also learn in the text that Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem right at the time of the barley harvest. Needing to provide for the two of them, Ruth goes off to a field to gather grain. Her plan is to go behind the hired harvesters and pick up what they leave behind. It so happens that she chooses the field of a man named Boaz, who just so happens to be a relative on her deceased father-in-law's side. Having already heard of Ruth's loyalty to her mother-in-law, Boaz sees to it that no one bothers her and that she picks up plenty of grain.

## A Kinsman-Redeemer

When Ruth returns home that night, Naomi is amazed at the amount of food she has been to collect. She wants to know how this happened. Ruth tells her about Boaz. Naomi says, "Boaz! He is a close relative. In fact, he is one of our family's kinsman-redeemers." Now, we don't know what that term means, but in this ancient setting, a kinsman-redeemer was of great importance. According to the law that Moses had received from God, a kinsman-redeemer could be called on to do any or all of three things.

1. To redeem property and/or relatives—In Israel, all property was a family possession. If property had to be sold, the kinsman-redeemer was called on to buy back the property for the family.
2. To provide an heir through marriage—If a man died without an heir, it was the brother's duty to marry the widow for the purposes of providing an heir.
3. To avenge the unlawful death of a family member.<sup>1</sup>

This is where the love story evolves. Boaz fulfills this role as the kinsman-redeemer both out of obligation, but also out of desire. The story of Ruth ends with the announcement of their marriage and the announcement of the birth of their son—Obed.

## **So What? What does Ruth's story teach us about our own story?**

***God uses the tragic events of our lives to bring triumphant events.***

Ruth begins as a story of tragedy—famine (1:1) and death of all of the husbands (1:2, 5). But even in this tragedy God is bringing triumph. Without the death of the men (1) Naomi would have never known of Ruth's great devotion, (2) the women might not have returned to Bethlehem {and notice that they return at the beginning of the barley harvest (1:22)}, and (3) the stage could not have been set for the ultimate plan that God has for Ruth.

- So, we must resist the temptation to become bitter. Consider verse 20. Everyone is excited, but Naomi. She believes that the hand of God has gone against her. (1:3)
- So, we must trust that God is always working.  
God's sovereignty is sometimes subtle—probably more often subtle. God doesn't always appear in a burning bush as He did to Moses. God does not always speak with a loud voice. God is actually at work when we do not even realize He is at work.

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<sup>1</sup> Adam. T. Barr, *Exploring the Story: A Reference Companion*, Zondervan Press, 56.

**God uses the ordinary events of our lives to bring extraordinary events.**

God worked through the ordinary event of going to glean in the field. (2:2) {It just so happens} that she chooses the field of Boaz, who is a relative and can serve as her kinsman-redeemer. God is at work!

So What?

*God, in His sovereignty, works through the mundane as well as the miraculous, just according to what we need.*

We better pay attention to all that God is doing. Everything I do is important and should include God. God uses ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary purposes.

**God uses the tragic, triumphant, ordinary, and extraordinary events of our lives to bring us first to salvation and then to complete surrender.**

Everything God is doing, He is doing to bring us to salvation. All of these events in the story of Ruth point directly to Jesus, as the line of David is established in the genealogical record at the end of the book.

Now the text—Ruth 4:18-22!

<sup>18</sup> Now this is the genealogy of Perez:

Perez fathered Hezron.

<sup>19</sup> Hezron fathered Ram,  
who fathered Amminadab.

<sup>20</sup> Amminadab fathered Nahshon,  
who fathered Salmon.

<sup>21</sup> Salmon fathered Boaz,  
who fathered Obed.

<sup>22</sup> And Obed fathered Jesse,  
who fathered David.

This whole story about Ruth is to get to Ruth 4:18. We worry about so much. God is interested in two things really—our salvation and our sanctification—our continued growth in Him.