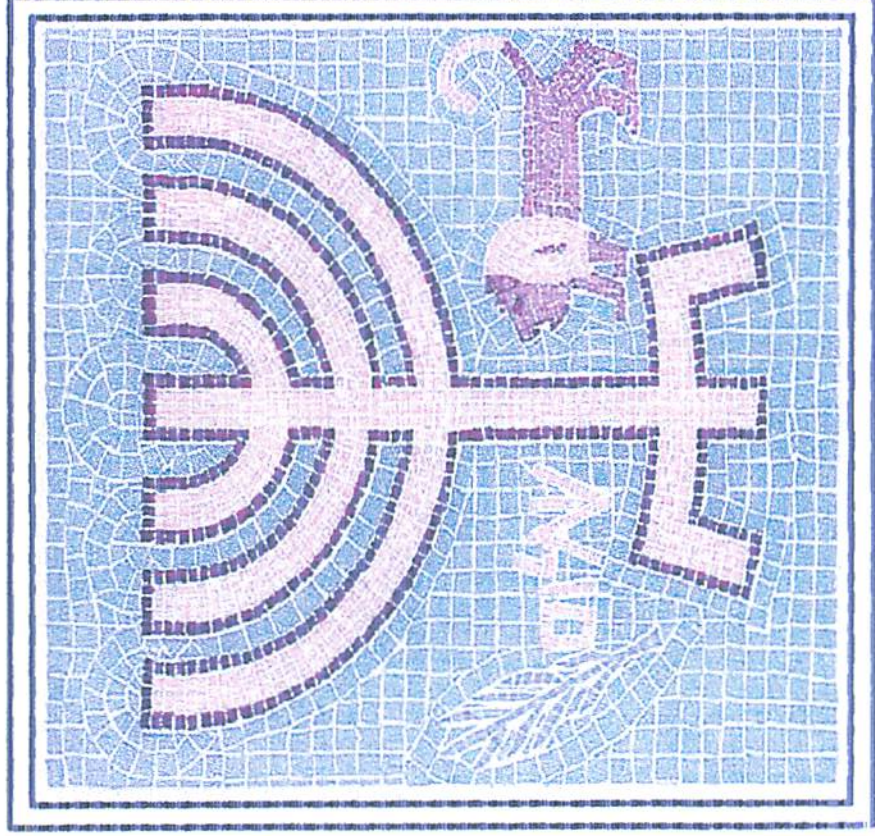


Studies in the Book of

REVELATION



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AN EARLY VISIT TO BETHLEHEM

INTRODUCTION

A. Have you ever been confronted with what seemed a totally impossible situation

A place in life where there are no answers at all

Where a past decision has wrecked such havoc upon life that the only course of action seems to be:

1. Acceptance of the despair

2. Living with the agony

B. The first chapter of Ruth presents that kind of situation

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

1. A hopeless situation - chapter 1

2. The Appearance of Hope - chapters 2 and 3

3. The Matter Settled - chapter 4

The book of Ruth presents a very specific situation in which God shows his willingness to be gracious.

When you read the book, you may react in one of two ways

1. It has nothing to do with me. It happened long ago and far away with circumstances totally different from anything in my experience.

OR

2. You might realize that all our situations are quite specific and unique,

and if God can work graciously in one unique situation, he can work in our unique situations.

I. HOPELESSNESS

- A. Elimelech had left Bethlehem in a time of famine with his family
- B. The time was the during the priesthood of Eli (1154 - 1114 B.C.) according to Josephus
- C. The family seems to have been devout
 - 1. The influence on Ruth would seem to indicate a pure and simple faith in Israel's God
 - 2. The names mean:
 - a. Elimelech = My God is King
 - b. Naomi = The Pleasant
 - c. Malon = Jubilant
 - d. Chilion (Kil - i - un) The Crowned
- D. There is neither time nor purpose in wondering why these Chosen People left the Chosen Land
 - 1. What is clear is that they found no blessing in Moab
 - a. Elimelech died there
 - b. Malon and Kil-i-un took Moabite wives and also died there
 - 2. Naomi was left alone, with two young daughters-in-law Orpha and Ruth
 - 3. The famine abated in Bethlehem and they started home
- E. There are two reactions recorded to these tragic circumstances
 - 1. Naomi - bitterness

1:20-21

Do not call me Naomi (pleasant), call me Mara (bitter), for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the Lord has afflicted me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?

2. Ruth - faith

1:15 - 16

Entreat me not to leave you, or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and

where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.

3. We should also note Orpha's reaction (a 3rd if your counting) though Orpha drops out of the story here
 - a. Her response is retreat.
 - b. She turns away from the true and only God

F. The situation is accurately - and even somewhat humorously - summed up by Naomi

1. Israel has a law that protects the inheritance of each of her sons, two laws in fact
 - a. **The Law of Levirate marriage - Deut. 25**
A childless widow is to become the bride of her deceased husband's brother, so that a descendent may be born to preserve her first husband's
Name and Estate
 - b. **The Law of the "Goel" or Redeemer - Lev. 25**
If - by reason of poverty - a man loses his property (his estate), his nearest kinsman ("goel") must redeem it -
so that each estate shall be preserved, and each inheritance protected
2. But --- as Naomi rightly observes:
This situation is hopeless

She tells the girls to go back to their own families,
because,

1:11 - Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? For I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night, and should bear sons ---Would you be willing to wait already? (a loose translation)

3. Naomi's point is well taken
There is no inheritance for them in Israel

G. Ruth sees it differently

1. The happiness of home and family,
the contentment of a posterity,
is nowhere in the picture
2. She will be a stranger in Israel
possibly a despised stranger
3. The hope amidst this hopelessness is
Israel's God
She sees no answers
no rainbows
only God
4. Somehow - She claims her descendant's promise -
over a 1000 years before he is born:

**Seek first God's Kingdom and his righteousness - and
all these things shall be yours as well.**

II. THE APPEARANCE OF HOPE

- A. It is early Spring when Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem
And, being the poorest of the poor - Ruth goes to the barley field
belonging to a relative of Elimelech to glean.

This was her right as a widow and a stranger - **Deut. 24:19**

- B. When she comes home that evening she had three pecks of
thrashed barley
Naomi may have been bitter, but she was not stupid
She had enough Yenta in her to read the signs
Someone had noticed Ruth
- C. Her advice had been poor up to this point
1. **Bitter people give poor advice. Write it in your Bible and in your
mind.**
 2. But, she began to see hope, and her advice got better,
much better.
- DON'T CHANGE FIELDS!!!**
3. So, Ruth gleaned in the field of Boaz for over 2 months

D. At the end of that time Naomi was convinced that Boaz wanted to marry Ruth

1. Bethlehem was a small town
2. Boaz was the headman
3. Secrets were hard to keep

E. However, under the Leverate Law Boaz was not obligated

1. He was a near kinsman (Goel), but not a brother-in-law
2. The initiative had to fall to Ruth
She had to say to him she was willing to have him perform for her the function of the **Kinsman Redeemer**
3. Naomi knew the time was right
She advised Ruth to visit Boaz in the evening and make the message clear
4. Ruth did so -
 - a. notice - there is nothing improper here
The customs are different than ours, but the invitation of Ruth is in legal terms
 - b. Even though "Yenta" Naomi had manipulated a lovely mid-summer evening setting

"Spread your skirt over your maidservant for you are next of kin (Goel - Kinsman Redeemer)"

5. Boaz got the message
He sent her home laden with gifts, and with a promise (3:13)

I will do the part of the next of kin for you

III. THE MATTER SETTLED

- A. There was a problem (technical and legal)
But Naomi was certain Boaz would work it out

Wait my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today.

B. Chapter 4 tells us how Boaz did just that

1. And the little town of Bethlehem, which Ruth had every reason to believe would reject her, rejoiced in **God's goodness and in Ruth's blessing.**

Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said - "We are witnesses. May the Lord make this woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built the house of Israel."

- a. Her great grandson was David, King of Israel
- b. Her greater son was Jesus
King of Kings and Lord of Lords

CONCLUSION

Do you have a problem that seems hopeless?

You may have to accept the consequences of you sin -
and repent of bitterness

You will certainly have to trust God

You will have to reject the advice of the bitter
and follow the advice of the wise

You will have to wait and learn how God will settle the
matter. But, he will settle it,

If you will trust the helper of the hopeless.

SLIDING BACK AND COMING HOME

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

A. In Ruth we recognize a theme we also encounter in the book of Joshua, namely

The Chosen Land is the place of blessing for the Chosen People

1. Not because of some magic in the soil
2. But, because it was the place God had chosen
It was the place of obedience

B. In the thinking of Paul (and the Holy Spirit)

This relationship to a land is translated into
A relationship with the Messiah

Illustration - 10 times in the first three chapters of Ephesians the phrase "in Messiah" is used

(one quote from 1:4) "God chose us in the Messiah before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."

C. We are told at the beginning of this little book that

Eli-melech (God is King) chose to take his family out of the Chosen Land

1. No great point is made of it
2. The author assumes you understand what that means
3. The very next movement in the plot line of the story is
verse 3

"Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died..."

So, we begin with point number one...

I. LEAVING THE LAND

A. One of the most important lessons I learned from the Bill Gothard seminars on Basic Youth Conflicts was that Spiritual Leadership is not so much a matter of **Where you are, but Where you choose to go.**

1. many times men default on their divinely assigned role as Spiritual Leaders in their families because, "My wife is so far ahead of me spiritually."
2. There are a great many things wrong with this perception
3. In order to keep it simple, let us just say, God asks husbands and fathers to be spiritual leaders of their homes.

He asks men to start where they are, and choose to serve the Lord

4. This is what Joshua did -
24:15 - "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."
5. It is what Elimelech refused to do -
He took his family out of the chosen land into a pagan society

B. A second observation on Elimelech's leaving the land is that he had a good reason to do it (or thought he had)

1. There was a famine in the land of Judah
2. This reason is closely connected with his primary role
He was to be his family's spiritual leader &
His family's physical provider
3. In his frustration of not being able to provide for his family as he wanted

He became confused about priorities

4. Jesus quotes Moses (Deut. 8:3) to the Devil and pinpoints this mistake

"Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

5. Elimelech did not lose his job.

He gave it up,

Because he didn't understand what it was.

(Mt. 6:33) "Seek first the reign of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you as well."

C. Spiritual leadership was Elimelech's **JOB**

1. To keep his family in the land
2. To teach them by example and instruction the law of God
3. To exert the necessary discipline in love so that they serve the Lord

4. He gave up that job
5. He took his family into disobedience

D. Every life is different, but the rule, the principle is the same

1. Every time you step out of obedience, you leave the place of blessing
2. The Chosen Land is not so much a type of heaven in scripture as it is a type of the place of blessing
It is the place where you should be living in fellowship with God.
3. Leaving it is to leave the place where God promises to be with you

This brings us to our next major point

II. LIVING WITH LEANNESS

A. I don't know whether the family ate well in Moab

It really is not important

B. What the Bible does say is that:

1. Elimelech died
2. His boys married pagans
3. Then his boys died

(All this in two verses)

C. We need to be careful not to paint a picture of this family with no bright colors at all

1. Something of their faith was carried into Moab
 - a. Something touched the mind and heart of Ruth
 - b. There was a
 - (1) Memory of faith
 - (2) The effect of past obedience which lingered long enough to touch Ruth the Moabitess
2. Isn't it interesting
 - a. They left "the house of bread" - Bethlehem because of a famine
 - b. They went to Moab a tribe born out of incest (Moab = from father)

and they starved to death

3. Naomi means "pleasant" and she came home "Mara" (bitter)

She left full and came home empty

D. God will not bless his people when they choose to live outside his will

1. We are not speaking here of incidentals or different rates of spiritual development

We are talking about knowing what God wants and choosing not to do it

2. When you do that -
You put yourself outside the Chosen Land
Outside the Messiah
Outside fellowship with Jesus
3. Not necessarily outside of salvation
God keeps his promises
4. But, outside any promise of blessing

E. Let us use an extreme illustration, so you get the point

It is like a Christian who is also a homosexual praying "Lord, protect me from AIDS

1. God will hear that prayer, because he hears everything
2. But, he is not likely to answer it

F. What do you understand about your
TIME - TALENT - MONEY?

1. What do you choose to do about it?

(This last point needs to be short. There is only one way to recover from the loss and lessons of backsliding.)

III. RECOVERING LOSS

A. Return to Bethlehem

Return to the place you left

Go back - Start again

B. Don't stand in Moab and tell the Lord you are sorry, and now

"Lord, please bless me."

C. Take what you have left, and it may not be much

And start obeying

D. Repent = turn around and walk the other way

Next time we will look at what happens when you do that.

GETTING GROWING AGAIN

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

- A. In our last study we noticed that Eli-Melech took his family out of the place of obedience and blessing
As a result, they entered into a time of spiritual leanness and family sorrow
- B. Naomi finally decided to return
 1. There is no question that Eli-Melech was responsible for the spiritual life of his family
 2. How much of that responsibility was shared by Naomi
We simply do not know
 3. What we do know is that Naomi shared the spiritual decline of the family

We see Naomi in Chapter 1 in

I. THE GALL OF BITTERNESS

- A. Illustration - Peter says to Simon the Sorcerer who tries to buy the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:23)

"I see you are in a gall of bitterness and a bondage of unrighteousness."

A spiritual poison runs through the system of
Simon and Naomi

A poison created from within

- B. Naomi is angry with God (1:20 & 21)

Don't call me "Pleasant." Call me "Bitter," because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty...The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me." God is blamed four times.

C. She blames God publicly - The opposite of worship
No word that this all happened because the family was in Moab - outside the place of obedience and blessing

D. Not only is she angry with God
She gives terrible advice

1. She prays the Lord's blessing on Orpha and Ruth, but, she sends them back to their pagan culture and their pagan gods

2. Have you ever noticed that people with unresolved guilt

(guilt that has never been dealt with - confessed - repented of and healed)

seek the company of others with the same kind of guilt?

a. Why? Because they count on not getting the advice they do not want to hear

b. Sinners with unresolved guilt are always anxious to give advice

Their advice can always be translated:

WHAT I'M DOING IS O.K. - SO YOU CAN DO IT TOO.

c. Rather than being accused of 'meddling,' let me use Paul's list from Rom. 1:27ff

"perversion, wickedness, evil, greed, depravity, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossip, slander, hating God, insolence, arrogance, boastfulness, (it goes on)"

They that do these things - "not only continue to do these very things, but also approve those who practice them."

3. In Naomi's case

a. She had left the Promised Land and gone to Moab

- b. She is now returning, because the Lord has not
blest her outside the place of obedience
- c. But, she recommends her daughter-in-laws
return to Moab

THIS IS TERRIBLE ADVICE

- 4. Keep this principle in mind the next time you read
First Timothy and Paul's recommendations for
Church leaders
- E. In the grace of God, Ruth sees through Naomi's bitterness
 - 1. She understands that if Naomi's prayer - that the
Lord bless her - is to be answered, she must be
be where the Lord can bless her:
 - With God**
 - With God's People**
 - In God's Chosen Land**

II. THE FIRST SHOOTS OF NEW GROWTH

- A. Naomi's first advice, back home in Bethlehem, is in response
to Ruth's request for permission to glean (2:2)
 - "Go ahead, my daughter."**
 - 1. The law of gleaning is found in three places
 - a. Lev. 19:9 and 23:22 - **"Leave them for the poor and
the alien"**
 - b. Deut. 24:19 **"Leave it for the alien, the
fatherless, and the widow."**
 - 2. All of this must have been humiliating for Naomi
But, we begin to see acceptance and repentance
 - 3. (Proverbs 3:24) -
**"God resists the proud - but gives grace to the
humble."**

Quoted by James (4:6) and Peter (I Pet. 5:5)

B. Naomi's second recorded advice shows that she is again recognizing spiritual character in others

1. After being told of Ruth's first encounter with Boaz, she counsels:

"It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls, because, in someone else's field you might be harmed."

- a. Notice that the emphasis is:
 - (1) Not on the loot
 - (2) But, on the loving concern of this man
- b. Boaz means "strength"
It could even be understood as "warrior"
- c. But, Naomi is now able to recognize another kind of strength
That of **character and concern**

C. The rest of the story is charming

but, we need to keep in mind this last insight of Naomi

1. She advises Ruth to go to the fields which are being harvested -----
after everyone is bedded down for the night,
and lie at the feet of Boaz
(We mentioned in the first sermon of this series that this involves an ancient custom of covering a woman with a blanket as a sign of protection and a pledge of marriage.)
2. This advice is premised on a clear understanding and trust
in the character of Boaz
3. Naomi was right
Boaz was a good man
4. Incidentally - Young People
 - a. In judging the character of the people you want to date, or spend time with -

- all other factors being equal -
 - Men usually know more about men &
 - Women usually know more about women
- b. Ruth had no father to ask about Boaz
- c. She leaned on the counsel of her Mother-in-law
- d. And - Naomi had grown spiritually enough to give good counsel

III. NAOMI'S FINAL RECORDED ADVICE TO RUTH WAS SIMPLY

WAIT - LET BOAZ DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

A. It was the best advice she ever gave

And, I am sure, the hardest advice Ruth ever had to take

B. We will look at it in more detail next week as we examine the role of

THE KINSMAN REDEEMER

THE KINSMAN REDEEMER

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

A. We finished last time with Naomi giving her last and best advice to Ruth - 3:18

"Wait, my daughter, until you find what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today."

B. Boaz is the Kinsman-Redeemer
and as such provides us a picture of God's own work of redemption

1. We could trace the use of the Hebrew word GOEL - translated "kinsman/redeemer through the Scriptures
let me give only one illustration - Job 19:25

"I know that [Goel'i] my redeemer lives and in the end he will stand upon the earth. After my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.

2. The root with its cognate forms is found approximately 80 times in the Hebrew Scriptures
 3. GOEL is not the only word meaning redeem in the Hebrew
There is also the word PADHA
Both word mean to release by the payment of a price
 4. The difference is that GOEL emphasizes the role of the kinsman in the paying of the price
- C. There are at least three things we see in this story about the redeemer
1. Only Boaz loves the bride
 2. Only Boaz can pay the price
 3. Only Boaz places the bride in the covenant

I. ONLY BOAZ LOVES THE BRIDE

- A. The word **GOEL** is used in Scripture to refer to "the avenger of blood" in a capital crime
1. In these cases the kinsman is appointed executioner of the guilty party
 - a. For instance in Numbers 35:12 Cities of Refuge are appointed:

"They will be places of refuge from the avenger (GOEL**), so that the person accused of murder may not die before he stands trial before the assembly."**

2. Here, "the price" is the life of the guilty party.
And the one who provides the price is the near kinsman

Appointed by law as executioner

- B. The case of Elimelech's loss
and Ruth's and Naomi's misfortune is not this extreme
1. But, there is a Near Kinsman willing to pay the price
i.e. * To redeem the property
* To put things right
* To put the lost property back in the family
 2. This would satisfy justice
 - a. But it would be no blessing to Ruth
 - b. And, it would be little comfort to Naomi
- C. God almost did this once
1. The earth he created had been corrupted by men's sin
 2. God decided to fix it Genesis 6:6

"I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth.."

3. If God had done that without taking account of Noah and his family
God would have redeemed the earth

D. The Near Kinsman said to Boaz:

I'll buy back the property for the family

1. Boaz asked:
 - a. What about Ruth?
 - b. What about raising up children in the name of our

dead brother?

2. The answer was:

I don't want Ruth!

Property? O.K. Ruth? No!

E. God too will redeem the property,
but, not without the people!

Listen to Revelation 5:9 - 10 - **The song of the redeemed**

"You (the redeemer) are worthy to take the scroll

And to open its seals

Because you were slain.

And with your blood purchased men for God,

**from every tribe and language and people and
nation.**

You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,

And they will reign on the earth."

ONLY BOAZ LOVED RUTH!!!!!!

II. ONLY BOAZ CAN PAY THE PRICE

A. Ruth deeply desired to

1. Be with Naomi,
To be with God's people,
To be in God's land

2. But, there was no way that either Naomi or Ruth could
pay the price of Redemption

B. It was, of course, true that Ruth was "**full of good works.**"

But, good works was not enough.

C. We must always approach God's grace **in poverty.**

Jesus said it: (Matt. 5:3) "**Blessed are the poor in spirit
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**"

Paul said it: (Rom. 3:23) "**All have sinned and fall short of the glory of
God.**"

James and Peter said it: (Jms. 4:6) "**God opposes the proud, but gives
grace to the humble.**"

John said it: (1 Jn. 1:8) **"If we claim we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."**

D. Redemption is an economic concept

1. Jesus taught us to pray, **"Forgive us our debts..."**

2. So long as we are accumulating debts,

So long as we are sinners,

We cannot raise the moral capital needed for redemption

I Peter 1:18ff - "For you know that it was not with perishable things, such as silver or gold, that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from you forefathers, but with the precious blood of Messiah, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead, and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God."

E. Naomi says to Ruth:

"Wait, my daughter until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.

Hear the Redeemer say from the cross, **"It is finished."**

And finally -----

III. ONLY BOAZ PLACES THE BRIDE INTO THE COVENANT

A. As Ruth becomes a part of the covenant people by marriage to

Boaz, so

We are the Great Redeemers bride.

Eph. 5:25 - 27 "Messiah loved the Church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."

- B. Ruth became the
Great Grandmother of King David of Israel
- C. She was placed in the covenant
- D. Her life was blessed
- E. God's purpose was carried out through her posterity
- F. Because:
 - She knocked
 - She asked
 - She sought
 - The grace of God.
 - And then waited for the Kinsman Redeemer to do what he alone could do

What about you, today?