

# INTRODUCTION TO RUTH

## A Family of Tragedy

Lesson for Sunday, November 13, 2022

### LESSON INTRO:

- What do you know about Ruth? *Ask the class what they know about the book of Ruth and let them share. Don't correct anything that is wrong...just allow them to share.*
- Encourage the class to read through Ruth several times in the coming weeks to become familiar with the short book. It is an easy book to read and it is an interesting book because it is a love story!
- Today, our goal is to introduce the book, the central characters and the terrible tragedies that impacted their family.
- Read Ruth 1:1-5.

### OUTLINE:

1. Meet the Family
  - a. Verse 1 introduces us to a family and gives us some information on their family history:
    - i. They lived in Bethlehem-Judah. (Sound familiar? This is where Jesus would be born.)
    - ii. Bethlehem: This is the city they were from. The name of the city means – “house of bread.”
    - iii. Judah: This is a reference to their tribe within the people of Israel. This was an important tribe because the Messiah would come from this line. Judah means “praise.”
    - iv. More family information is in verse 2. They were Ephrathites. This would be their clan or family. Their name meant “fruitful.”
  - b. Use the board to draw a family chart with these names and who they were:
    - i. The head of the home and father was Elimelech.
    - ii. The mother was Naomi. She is a main person in this book. In fact, the story of the book of Ruth is told through Naomi's perspective.
    - iii. They had 2 sons, Mahlon and Chilion.
    - iv. Mahon married Ruth and Chilion married Orpah.
  - c. Important information: Ruth and Chilion were not Jews. They were Moabite women. The Moabites were always in opposition to the Jewish people.
    - i. They came from the line of Lot when he committed incest with his daughter.
    - ii. The Moabites were people who worshipped the false god, Chemosh. They were known for their sacrifice of children.
    - iii. God had instructed the Israelites not to marry a Moabite man (Deuteronomy 23:4).
2. Naomi: The Female Job
  - a. Most are familiar with the Book of Job. He was a man who had everything taken from him in a short time as he was tested by the Devil to turn his back on God.
  - b. Naomi could be described as a female Job. Consider all that she had to endure during her life:
  - c. Verse 1: She lived through a famine that forced her family to move from their homeland.

- i. It is difficult for us to imagine being threatened by a famine.
    - ii. Their family was living in the time of the Judges. This was a dark time in Israel's history. One of God's judgments on His people was famines.
    - iii. Famine drove them from their home into what they must have considered to be enemy territory.
  - d. They lived there for some time as outsiders. They were not natural born citizens.
    - i. They would have faced language barriers, cultural issues, homesickness.
    - ii. Remember that they did not have email or cellphones to call home. They were isolated and alone in a foreign country.
  - e. Verse 3: Her husband died. The Bible doesn't tell us the exact time he died, but now she faced the world as a widow and single parent.
    - i. In that culture, having sons was very important. Finding their wives usually was partly a financial arrangement. This would have been almost impossible for a widow – especially in a foreign land.
    - ii. For a Jewish mother, having her two sons marry Moabite women would have not been what they wanted.
  - f. Verse 4: The boys married and ten years passed, and neither wife ever had a child.
    - i. This was a catastrophe for a family in those times.
    - ii. The survival of their family depended on the birth of at least one male child to carry on the family name.
  - g. Verse 5: Now the unthinkable happens – both of Naomi's sons die! This was the worst possible scenario for a widow.
    - i. There was now no hope for their family name to continue.
    - ii. Without a male in the home, she had no source of income.
    - iii. She was now alone in a male dominated world, where men would often prey on helpless women.
  - h. Can you imagine what Naomi must have felt? Her life was one unexpected tragedy after another. This is the setting for the Book of Ruth.
3. God is in control.
  - a. One of the themes of Ruth is that God is always in control.
  - b. As tragic as the story begins, it has a wonderful ending. Read Matthew 1:5. Whose name do we see?
  - c. Ruth – a Moabite woman – is included in the line that produced the Messiah! What seemed like tragedy upon tragedy for Naomi was actually the road that delivered the Savior of the world!

#### APPLICATION:

- What have you experienced that has made you question if God is really in control?
- Is it OK for a Christian to ask these difficult questions?
- Is there something in your life today that you need to submit to God? Do you need to remember that God is still in control?

TO DO: Read Ruth 1 several times this coming week.