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**Day 81 - March 22**

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## **Conquering a Land (1400 – 1100 BCE)**

### ***The Story of Ruth***

**Readings: *Ruth 1:1-4:22***

#### ***Reflections:***

- Here in the middle of the times of the judges when outsiders (Gentiles) are the enemy and the people of Israel have not a sweet clue about enemy love, and the whole period of time is to set up the great cry for a king, what does God do? He shows us through a humble, Gentile woman that she truly understands humility, covenant faithfulness, and that he blesses a great love story between a Gentile and a Jewish man of solid reputation. He even makes her a grandmother to King David who will be the best version of a King that Israel has and a descendant of the Messiah! What an incredible story of grace!
- Also, this story goes against every single common sense approach to life that Israel is experiencing. What has now been said over and over? Don't intermarry! Kill them all! Don't have anything to do with Gentiles! Don't be seduced into marrying them! So what does God do? He goes against every rule, even his own, to show that what really matters is in the heart. It is the heart, not the rules that he is concerned about. Isn't this amazing? It seems God delights in messing up everyone's preconceived ideas.
- Key passage on covenant faithfulness by Ruth: "Where you go, I will go and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me ever so severely if anything but death separates you and me." Notice the parallels between Ruth's expression of covenant faithfulness and what we find in Christ. Mark 8:34 states, "Then Jesus called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'" Romans 8:38-39 states, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Our loyalty to Christ is to the death. Our union is inseparable. In Ruth's context her loyalty to Naomi was the earthly expression of her loyalty to being

in the covenant community of Israel. It was this same humble, submitted heart that God saw and blessed.

- Ruth waiting at the threshing floor and uncovering the feet of Boaz is filled with sexual innuendo. The threshing floor was traditionally where the men would party at the end of the harvest and was a place known for sexual escapades. She was a Moabite known for their sexual practices. Uncovering his feet is noted by many scholars as being suggestive of a clear sexual advance. "Feet" was a euphemism in that culture for genitals (see note on Exodus 4:25). She was following the accepted custom of presenting herself to him and if he slept with her he would then be responsible for covenant obligations to her. He demonstrates his integrity by not taking advantage of the moment but choosing to ensure that no closer relative would wish to take Ruth as a wife.
- Boaz's godly and merciful character shines through as he ensures all of her needs are met and that she is kept safe and secure. Notice how he is even concerned about her being embarrassed. He is concerned for her emotional, relational, and physical needs. This reveals that he, like Ruth, is a person of covenant faithfulness to God as he is fulfilling all of the laws around being gracious to the alien, the poor, and the widow. He gets the heart that was behind the Law and he is living it.
- A beautiful love story unfolds where Boaz claims Ruth as his wife. He becomes her covering and she fully enters into covenant community. This foreshadows the Gentiles being brought into covenant community under Christ. Christ will be a descendent of Ruth and Boaz as Jew and Gentile are both brought into the new covenant of grace that declares that under Christ there is no male (Boaz) nor female (Ruth), Jew (Boaz) nor Gentile (Ruth) , no free (Boaz) nor slave (Ruth). Their relationship symbolizes and reveals the all inclusive grace and mercy of God that is all rooted in humility, grace and covenant faithfulness/faith. Incredible, isn't it?
- The words spoken of their son Obed seem well suited for their future descendent, "May he become famous in all of Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you...." What an awesome story of God's heart, grace and complete disregard for human preconceptions!