Bible Study Thirteen

October 6, 2021.

“The Book of Ruth.”

The Book of Ruth appears at the end or after the Historical Books of the Judges in the Old Testament. It is one of the shortest books in the bible and comes just before the Book of Samuel. It is a strange book to find in this section of the bible because we know that Samuel leads to the first kings of Israel. With kingship comes prophecies of a Messiah.

The story begins with one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Ephraim. Based in Bethlehem, a man of the tribe named Elimelech decides to leave Israel during a famine and travel to Moab the land of the Moabites seeking work. With him goes his wife Naomi and his two sons Kilion and Mahlon. In a relatively short time living in Moab, Elimelech dies leaving Naomi to continue to bring up her two sons.

The two sons marry Moabite girls, Orpah and Ruth, but after ten years the sons also die. Broken hearted Naomi, hearing that the famine has ended, decides to return home to Israel. Her two daughters-in-law go with her. The journey is long and across the desert. Naomi pleads with the girls to return to Moab and to all that they know and their families. Orpah bides her farewell and turns back to Moab, but Ruth clings to Naomi. Her love for her mother-in-law is so deep that she will not be separated.

“Where you will go, I will go, where you will stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, your God will be my God.”

They settle back in Bethlehem, but Naomi changes her name to Mara, because she believes God has set his hand against her. Now Naomi has a relative who is a rich landowner, and she tells Ruth to go and glean wheat in Boaz’ field. It is a common practice for the poor to be allowed to collect the remains that the harvesters have missed.

Into this farming scene comes Boaz riding on a horse. He notices Ruth and is kind to her encouraging his harvesters to deliberately leave grain for Ruth to pick up. Ruth is aware of Boaz and his kindness. She is forever grateful and humbled by Boaz and asks why he would bestow his grace upon her?

Boaz tells her that it is because of her kindness to his kinfolk Naomi and how she has left everything to care for her in Naomi’s old age. In turn Ruth is able to glean and bring much grain back to her mother-in-law and they talk sharing all they know of their good fortune.

Boaz and Ruth meet on the Threshing Floor where again he is kind to her, but it is Naomi who has planned this coming together. The scene is now set for what Naomi sees as God’s plan, not just for Ruth but also for Israel.

Boaz purchases Elimelech’s land that has been left to Naomi and he takes Ruth as his wife. In this action he redeems Naomi’s fortunes and becomes an ancestor to David the future king. Interesting story. What do you think it means? Why has it been included?