

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON SEVENTY-THREE: RUTH 4:14-15a

"And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age."

Boaz and Ruth were not the only ones blessed by the birth of their son. Naomi must have been ecstatic. Based on the Levirate Law, the baby was legally her grandson. He was heir to her husband's estate, and by law, the son of the son she had lost. Her husband's name and legacy would not be lost because: 1) God had provided a safeguard in His Law to preserve the heritage of His people; and, 2) a faithful Moabite girl fulfilled her duty under the Mosaic Law.

You can just see the rejoicing and celebrating in Bethlehem as you read the words of Scripture. The women of the town uplifted Naomi with their happy chatter. No doubt they admired the beauty of the infant and predicted great things for his future.

The women blessed the Lord for His gift of this new life. These simple women understood that God is the source of life. A concept too difficult for many educated so-called scientists. It is a blessing for us that we can recognize the hand of the Lord in a given situation. Have you seen His handiwork in your own life?

The women's praise to God was specific. He had provided a kinsman for Naomi. There is a difference of opinion among commentators on whether the kinsman referred to here is Boaz (the Kinsman-Redeemer) or the infant Obed (her kinsman via the Levirate Law). The Hebrew word "goel" is used in this verse. It means a near relation by blood. But, it can also mean "a redeemer," that is, one who buys something back. Under the Mosaic Law, the nearest kinsman's duty is to: 1) buy back (redeem) an individual who has been sold into slavery; 2) buy back land that has been sold out of the family; and, 3) marry a childless widow. Thus, the idea of kinsman and redeemer are blended into one (Kinsman-Redeemer).

It is true that Boaz did take the role of Kinsman-Redeemer for Naomi when he redeemed her husband's land. But is he the one described here as "the restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age?" It seems more likely to me (and some commentators) that the description refers to Obed, whose birth certainly "restored life" to a bitter old woman who believed God was against her. And it would be her grandson Obed who would care for her in her old age.

The women's blessing included a hope that the Kinsman would be famous in Israel. This is similar to the blessing pronounced on Boaz by the witnesses at the town gate (4:11). But that blessing limited Boaz's fame to Bethlehem. Here the women have expressed the hope that the kinsman would be famous in Israel. Obed was destined to become the grandfather of King David. Scripture doesn't give us any additional information on Obed's life, other than his son was Jesse, father of David. Did Obed live to see his grandson crowned King of Israel? I hope so. Perhaps he held David on his knee and told him stories of his mother Ruth and his grandmothers Naomi and Rahab of Jericho.

God is rightly credited with providing the happy ending to Naomi's story. And Naomi herself would assert this. She believed God was in control at every juncture of her life. Like Job, she accepted that He caused or allowed the good and the bad things in her life. Do you thank God for the good in your life? Do you accept the bad is from Him (at least, in the sense that He allowed it) and strive to respond as you believe He wants you to? Have you reached the point where you can thank Him even in the midst of your trial? I Thess. 5:18 tells us to thank Him in every situation, not for every situation.

"Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, Rejoice." Philippians 4:4