

Amazing Babies: Obed (Ruth)

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This is a story about 2 women. You'll find them in your Bibles.

Ruth... and the story is named after her.

And, Naomi, the main character. This is a story about Naomi and her God. It is arranged for us as a drama.

Act 1 Disaster

When does this take place?

"In the days when the Judges governed" = Judges 3:1-14... Judges 21:25

And, Naomi is from Bethlehem. What do you know about Bethlehem? That is the hometown of David.

It turns out that this is a very important story in the Bible.

But, "There was a famine in the land" = so they had to move.

1:1-2 There she is in Moab with her husband and two sons. How will she do?

1:1-5 Disaster descends upon Naomi.

In those days, in that culture, it would be difficult to imagine a greater tragedy for an old woman.

No husband, no sons, in a strange land.

1:6-18 Naomi goes home.

Of course she does. she has no future in Moab and there is food again in Bethlehem.

And, I think she really wants the best for her daughters-in-law. vs. 8-13

They have no future with her. Do you see the logic? Orpah does. Ruth does not.

Naomi tries to get Ruth to leave her as well. vs. 15 But, for some reason, Ruth refuses.

Not only this, but Ruth binds herself to Naomi with an oath. It is a binding wholehearted promise.

"Where you go, I will go." = Ruth is going to follow Naomi wherever she goes.

"Where you lodge, I will lodge" = She will live with Naomi, care for her.

"Your people shall be my people." = Ruth makes herself family, turning her back on her own kin.

"Your God, my God" = Ruth gives up her Gods for the God of Naomi.

"Where you die, I will die." = Not even death will separate them.

For all that, Naomi seems hardly appreciative. vs. 18 "she said no more to her."

1:19-22 Naomi arrives in Bethlehem.

And, the women in her village see her for the first time in over ten years..

vs. 19 "Is this Naomi?" = Why would they ask this? The name "Naomi" means pleasant.

vs. 20 "...call me Mara..." = bitter. She is feeling sorry for herself.

In this story, Naomi is all of us. She does what most of us would do in her situation.

When catastrophe strikes, we think that it is about us. We think that what is really going on is only our misery.

But, we are going to discover that that is the wrong way of looking at our situation.

As much as we can relate to her and understand how she feels, Naomi is wrong.

"the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me." = this is what she thinks, but she is wrong. She is feeling sorry for herself.

But, we are going to find out that God is doing something marvelous that Naomi cannot see

Because her eyes are not on God, but on herself. She sees her misery, only.

vs. 21 "I went out full..." = not exactly, she was in danger of starving. vs. 1

But, she means that she had people to fill up her life.

"but the Lord has brought me back empty" = This is what she really thinks... but the irony is stunning.

She says this while Ruth is standing right next to her. vs. 22

You might wonder what Ruth is thinking... but she has committed herself and she is undeterred.

God has given Naomi Ruth, and He could not have given her any better... as we shall see.

"I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty." = Her belief could not be farther from the truth.

Act 2 Blessing

2:1-2 Things are not as bad as they seem.

There are some clues that all is not horribly gloomy.

1:22 It is the beginning of barley harvest. There's going to be a lot of food.

2:1 Naomi has a wealthy relative... that she is obviously not thinking about.

2:2 Naomi has Ruth, who is not about to sit still and feel sorry for herself and Naomi.

"after one in who's sight I may find favor" = maybe someone will like me and be kind. Hope.

2:3-17 Naomi has Ruth.

Ruth cares about Naomi. Ruth has character, is persistent. Ruth has God's blessing.

God has Boaz.

vs. 3 "She happened to come to the field belonging to Boaz" = God is up to something.

Notice how Boaz runs his operation. vs. 4

And, Boaz asks about her. vs. 5

Boaz sees things in Ruth that Naomi ought to have seen, but was too blinded by her grief and self-pity.

Ruth is courageous and persistent. vs. 6-7

Boaz has compassion.

He goes out of his way to accommodate her. vs. 8-9

Ruth is humble. vs. 10 Ruth cares about Naomi. Boaz sees in her a kindred, compassionate heart. vs. 11

Boaz blesses her. vs. 12

Boaz goes way beyond any reasonable expectation of kindness. vs. 14-18

Ruth is allowed to glean from the bundles. = rather than picking up the leftovers.

2:18-23 Naomi has hope.

vs. 22 "It is good..." = the first sign that Naomi might be recognizing that all is not bad.

"my daughter" = recognition of Naomi's relationship to her.

She is beginning to think, "Maybe God is not against me after all." This is a turning point.

Act 3 A Redeemer

What would you do if you were Naomi?

3:1-5 Naomi makes plans.

The turnaround is amazing: From "I am empty" to "It is good my daughter" to plans for Ruth.

What is she asking Ruth to do?

vs. 2 Naomi now knows just who Boaz is. Apparently she is wasting no time.

vs. 3-4 Ruth is supposed to make herself pretty.

She is supposed to be sneaky. She is supposed to be bold. She is going to lie at his feet under his blanket!

What do you think is the intention?

What happens??

3:6-15 Ruth goes to the threshing floor.

She does it. And later Boaz awakes. vs. 8 "bent forward" = jerked awake!

vs. 9 "Who are you?" = He is frightened. And rightly so.

He is an honorable man and there is a strange woman in his bed.

What is Ruth asking him to do in vs. 9? She is asking him to marry her!

vs. 9 "kinsman-redeemer" = a close relative who has the right or responsibility to marry or adopt a person.

This means a possible savior... a deliverer.

Any reasonable person would say, "That will never work." It does. God is in it. Boaz sees it instantly.

She is throwing herself at Boaz... the way we need to throw ourselves at Jesus Christ, our deliverer.

Boaz is a picture of Christ in this story, and Naomi and Ruth are pictures of us.

We need Jesus, as they needed Boaz. And we bring nothing really to offer but poverty and sin.

vss. 10-11 What does Boaz do?

He blesses her. He compliments her. She becomes in his eyes more valuable than she sees herself.

He praises her "kindness" = not going after young men. Wow. What a guy. He didn't have to see it that way.

He reassures her. Why does he say, "do not fear?" She is afraid, and rightly so.

vss. 12-13 He completes the plan, protecting her from public scorn. He provides for her.

3:16-18 Ruth goes to Naomi. Naomi trusts Boaz. It is now obvious what kind of man he is.

Act 4 Redemption

4:1-12 Redemption takes place at the city gate. This is where all public legal transactions took place.

There are witnesses, elders of the city. There is tradition.

vss. 3-4 Boaz makes the deal happen. No longer is Naomi's plight to go on indefinitely.

vss. 5-6 Boaz is strategic.

"Ruth the Moabitess... widow... to raise up the name of the deceased." = apparently Ruth has little to offer.

And, so, the other man does not want her or the land. It puts his children at risk.

vss. 7-12 So Boaz adopts Naomi, Ruth and all that is theirs. He frees them from poverty and misery.

He makes them family and gives them a future.

Redemption... For Naomi... For Ruth

Is this not like what Jesus does for us?

In our misery, helplessness, hopelessness He rescues us, purchases us and makes us his family.

Boaz is a picture of what Jesus does... His kindness and compassion, His strategic commitment and promise given to us.

It does make sense for you and I in our helpless state to throw ourselves at Him,

but only because He is so loving and kind and faithful.

4:13-19 Boaz redeems Naomi.

"A son has been born to Naomi!" God blesses Naomi with significance, a heritage, a place in His plans.

And, what a place!

Naomi becomes the great-great grandmother of King David and a key person in the line of the Messiah

And so, God picks out and redeems you and I, unlikely people to be part of the surprising plan of God.

He gives Himself for us, pays for us, and makes us part of His family.

And, in the darkest moments He is working His greatest wonders... for His glory and our good.