

# Ruth - Chapter 1

## Theme: Ruth Deciding

### v. 1 - Background

- Famine in the land during the time between Judges 3 & 4 (v. 4 - a 10-yr timespan)
- This is the 4<sup>th</sup> of 13 famines in the scriptures: 1) Gen. 12:10, 2) Gen. 26:1, 3) Gen. 41:54-57, 4) Ruth 1:1, 5) 2 Sam. 21:1, 6) 1 Kings 18:2, 7) 2 Kings 6:25, 8) 2 Kings 8:1, 9) 2 Kings 25:3, 10) Amos 8:11, 11) Acts 11:27-30, 12) Rev. 6:6-8, & 13) Rev. 18:8.
- The main famine that we should be concerned about **right now** is: Amos 8:11-12
- True test? What a man will do when he gets hungry and cannot get food. - Job 2:1-6
- A famine (trouble) will show you what your true spiritual condition is; it can be a **chastening** from God or it can be a **testing** from God...but it is always from God!
- Tragedy in your life will either make you **better** or **bitter**!
- Human nature is "survival of the fittest"! Only love and obedience to God's word will ever change human nature. - Job 1:21-22, 13:15; 23:12
- Do we love God enough to do right whenever it costs us personally? - Gal. 5:16
- Believers still have 2 natures: the old Adamic nature and the new man in Christ. - Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10 (Getting saved **does not** eradicate the flesh. - Rom. 7:14-25)
- Believers are called to crucify the desires of the old man and put on the new man and follow Christ. - Gal. 5:24-25; Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5; 1 Cor. 15:31; Luke 9:23-24
- Beth - "house" lehem - "bread" Judah - "praising God" - Mic. 5:2; John 6:32-35, 48

### v. 2 - Identification of the places and the people involved

- Ephrathites - another name for Bethlehemjudah, place of Jesus' birth. - Gen 35:19
- Elimelech → "God is his King" but he wasn't living like he was trusting in God, so he sojourned to "God's washpot" which was Moab. - Psalms 60:8, 108:9
- The Moabites were idolaters. - 1 Kings 11:33 (Prophecy against Moab: Jer. 48)
- The Moabites (and the Ammonites) are the product of the sinful incestuous relationships between Lot and his two daughters. - Gen. 19:30-38
- Elimelech commits a huge sin but God worked it together for good. Elimelech, **without** consulting God, goes to God's enemies Moab (Judges 3:12-30) to get food and survive the famine instead of praying and trusting in the Lord.
- **Lesson:** Don't run to the world and its solutions when you have a problem, and when you discover you have erred (sinned), repent, go back, and make it right!
- Elimelech's intent was to sojourn temporarily in Moab (Prov. 27:1), but he ended up shortening his life and dying there in Moab, undoubtedly a consequence (Gal. 6:7) of his bad decision. - Ps. 102:23; Prov. 9:10-11; Prov. 10:27; Eccl. 7:17
- Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you intended to stay, and cost you more than you can afford to pay!
- Elimelech's wife is named Naomi (sweet/pleasant) and they had 2 sons: Mahlon (the elder brother "sickly") and Chilion (the younger brother "wasting away").

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- Bad decisions affect your whole family. - Romans 14:7
- v. 3 - Elimelech dies and untimely & premature death and Naomi becomes a widow.
- Naomi should have gone back to Bethlehem right after her husband died, but she stayed 10 more years (v. 4), obviously out of the will of God.
  - God allows or sends bad things (evil, problems) to us (e.g. famine, drought, floods, tornados, earthquakes, wild fires, volcanoes, storms, winds, hurricanes, health, financial, relationship problems, and other individual troubles). They are:
    1. Simply the consequences of our sin. - Gal. 6:7
    2. For the purpose of correcting something that is wrong with our character.
    3. To accomplish some other divine purpose of God. - Lam. 3:37-39; Job 2:10  
Amos 3:3-6, 4:6-13; Isa. 45:5-7; James 1:13-16
  - Of course God is sinless and cannot ever do wrong. - Gen. 18:25; Ps. 96:10, 13, Ps. 145:17; Ps. 98:9; Heb. 4;15; 1 Peter 2:21-22
- v. 4 - Naomi's two sons took them wives from the women of Moab: 1) Chilion marries Orpah (an idol worshipper - 1:15) and 2) Mahlon marries Ruth - 4:10. This violates Deut. 7:1-4; Ex. 34:14-16, and 1 Kings 11:1-9 and represents Christians who marry an unsaved person (or have other unequal yokes). - 2 Cor. 6:14, 17
- v. 5 - Next, Naomi's two sons, Mahlon and Chilion both die and leave Naomi without any family, except for her two daughters in law, Orpah and Ruth.
- v. 6 - Naomi finally goes back home, but only after she heard there was food there.
- Arose - A type of the resurrection.
  - Prov. 25:25 - As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.
  - God had been dealing with Naomi to go back to Bethlehemjudah, but she is unmoved even after 1) the death of her husband, 2) the death of her two sons, and 3) her two sons marrying foreign (Gentile) women, (going against God's laws).
  - Like Naomi, many believers today are only motivated by their flesh and belly, i.e. physical reasons. - Rom. 16:17-18; Phil. 3:17-19
  - God can use both *spiritual* and *carnal* motives to get us into His will.
  - God also uses chastening to get our attention. - Deut. 8:1-5; Gal. 6:7; Heb. 12:5-11; Ps. 94:12; Ps. 89:30-32
  - "bread" represents Jesus Christ. - John 6:32-35
- v. 7 - Naomi starts out toward home, her two daughters in law also start out with her.

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v. 8 - Partway, Naomi tells her two daughters in law to return to their own house.

- Naomi wishes the LORD'S kindness upon them, and acknowledges the kindness they had shown to her in the losses of her husband and two sons.

v. 9 - Naomi wished them well with deep emotion and desires that the Lord will grant each of them rest (get married) in the house of their (new) husband. - Rom. 12:15

- Marriage is supposed to be a place of contentment, blessing, and rest; but it only is **if** the Lord is on the throne of **both** spouses in the marriage. - Matt. 11:28-30

v. 10 - Both daughters in law state they will return to Bethlehem with Naomi, but only one of them (Ruth) really means it.

- Orpah says what is convenient at the moment, like **many** people do today.
- This also teaches us that you can make your mind up to do something, and then **not follow through** on it, i.e. hell is paved with good intentions!
- Orpah represents the **fleshly** man and Ruth represents the **spiritual** man.
- We need Christians who will count the cost. - Matt. 10:34-39 ; Mark 10:28-31; Luke 9:57-62; Luke 14:25-33 (cf.v. 26 "hate" with Gen 29:30-31); John 12:25-26
- Christ came to not to bring peace, but a sword (division). - Matt. 10:34-39
- Christ **MUST** come **FIRST**, above family. A wise man once said, "There are some things in this life that are more important than family harmony!"
- Your supreme affection (what/whom you love the most) will eventually guide you and determine all your decisions.
- Are we willing to finish our course with joy and faithfulness? - Acts 20:24

vv. 11-13 - Naomi, undoubtedly bitter at God, depressed, and discouraged over the deaths of her husband and 2 sons, tries to talk both Orpah and Ruth into returning to their own country.

- It is really easy to get bitter during tragedies and problems, be careful!!
- Naomi is referring to what is known as the law of the kinsman redeemer. It was a law where a land inheritance was to be passed down from father to son to keep the land God gave the Jews in their own family. - Deut. 25:5-9
- Naomi has no more sons to give these 2 women and cannot produce any more sons due to her age, so she wants them to return to their home country.
- Notice at the end of v. 13 Naomi **blames God** for her predicament and has a pity party for herself...a wrong attitude.
- Naomi is a picture of Israel in apostasy in Judges 2:6-15. There are always terrible consequences for sin and rebellion! - Deut. 28:63-68; Prov. 19:18
- God can do no wrong! - Gen. 18:25; Job 34:10-12; Ps. 96:10, 13; 98:9; 119:75; 145:17; Hos. 14:9; Heb. 4:15; John 8:45-46; 1 Pet. 2:21-22

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### v. 14 - The parting of the ways

- Orpah cries selfishly because she will never see Naomi again, so she gives Naomi a hypocritical kiss goodbye (as in Judas kissing Jesus in Matt. 26:47-49), but Ruth cries because she doesn't want Naomi to send her away.
- Orpah wants what any normal woman wants, a husband, children, a home...but she wants it right now, and on her terms. Orpah thinks only of herself, just like the fleshly person she is. Orpah is worldly, an idolater, and selfish, considering nobody else. Orpah represents a lost person going their own way to hell.
- Ruth, on the other hand, represents a Christian woman who is willing set her personal preferences aside in order to wait on the right husband or is willing to live to be an old maid **without** a husband, if necessary. Ruth unselfishly thinks of Naomi's needs **first**, and exhibits the qualities of a **virtuous** (3x) woman. - 3:11
- Ruth had her priorities right and clave unto Naomi. Ruth's love for Naomi and Naomi's Jewish God was greater than her own personal agenda. - 1 Cor. 10:24
- PA - Being single is much better than a bad marriage; the Bible teaches you can better serve the Lord as a single person. - 1 Cor. 7:32-35
- "clave" - past tense of "cleave" - 2 Kings 18:1-8 (note v. 6) → To stick with through thick and thin. - FM→ "cleave"- Gen. 2:24; see also Deut. 10:20; 13:4

### v. 15 - Naomi again tries to convince Ruth to go back to Moab like Orpah did.

### vv. 16-17 - Ruth's response was to plead with Naomi to quit asking her to leave her.

- Ruth follows Naomi because she knows that Naomi has the **right God** that will provide for and lead both of them throughout the rest of their lives.
- Ruth is a picture of two things: 1) a lost person getting saved and 2) the new believer surrendering to live for, obey, and follow the Lord.
- Ruth makes it very convincing as she agrees to follow Naomi wherever she goes, to live wherever she chooses to live (the Promised Land of Israel rather than Moab), to give up her citizenship in Moab to become a Jew, make the true God of Israel her own God, and die and be buried wherever Naomi dies and is buried...till death do we part. This is an unconditional commitment.
- Sounds like the kind of commitment a man and woman should be willing to make in marriage. - Eph. 5:21-33;
- It's also the kind of commitment we need to make in serving the Lord and becoming His disciple (total commitment). - 1 Cor. 15:58
- This is full surrender, to leave family and even the comforts of home and country to go to a foreign land to serve the Lord. This is what God requires. - Luke 12:48b

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v. 18 - Naomi finally gets the message from Ruth and stops trying to talk Ruth out of it.

- This turns out to be the best decision they both ever made while on the sojourn.
- People nearly always do what they'd rather do, e.g. church, TV, sports, pleasure.
- "I can't come to church because the meat I have in the freezer is frozen."

v. 19 - Backslidden Naomi and Ruth both arrive back in Bethlehem and it stirred up the whole city. It was an emotional homecoming after being gone for 10 years.

- Is this really Naomi? She had probably aged much more than expected and the gossip likely spread like wildfire at how the 10 years of her sojourn had not been kind to her.

vv. 20-21 - Naomi's reply

- Call me **not** Naomi (sweet/pleasant), but Mara (bitterness-Ex. 15:23)
- While recognizing her circumstances are from God, Naomi again blames God for having dealt very bitterly with her, like v. 13b
- Naomi says she went out full, with a husband and two sons (albeit during a famine) and again is bitter at her circumstances of coming back empty, blaming the Almighty for having afflicted her (which was true).
- Naomi attributes her trouble to the Lord God FIVE TIMES. - vv. 13b, 20, 21(3X)
- God uses affliction for His purposes. - Ps. 119:50, 67, 71, 75

v. 22 - Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem in the beginning of the barley harvest, which would be late March to early May.

- They came back flat broke financially with no family, no job, and no food.
- And also no food stamps, EBT card, Medicare, Medicaid, or other governmental welfare or entitlement programs. - 2 Thess. 3:10
- We shall see that when a spiritual backslider returns, God always forgives, and provides food, both physical and spiritual! - 1 John 1:9; Prov. 28:13