

RUTH

A PERSONAL VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY

By

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Ruth 1:1 ¶ Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

Ruth 1:2 And the name of the man *was* Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

Ruth 1:3 And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.

Ruth 1:4 And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one *was* Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.

Ruth 1:5 And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

This book opens identifying the timeframe of events as during the time the judges ruled—a time of basic lawlessness in the land of Israel.

Judges 17:6 "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

We know from the last chapter that Ruth was the great-grandmother of King David, so it must have been in the latter part of that era.

We are also told that there was a famine occurring in the land of Judah at that time. It was because of this famine that the father of this family decides to take his family to Moab to "sojourn." This indicates that he only intended to stay there temporarily and planned to return home once the famine was passed.

I remember being very blessed by Jon Courson's teaching on this book when I first heard it many years ago. He began the teaching by making observations from the definitions of the names, and I am going to do the same.

Elimelech = my God is king

Naomi = pleasant, beautiful, the lovable, my delight

Mahlon = sickly, infirmity

Chilion = the pining one, destruction

Bethlehem = house of bread

Moab = the desirable land and *Psalms 60:8 "Moab is my washpot...."*

So we basically have a man who acknowledges God as his king taking his beloved wife and sons from the house of bread in the Promised Land to a place that God calls His washpot. He did not take into consideration that we are not guaranteed tomorrow and that he might not live to take his family back home.

Proverbs 27:1 "Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

Obviously, he would have been better off to stay in Bethlehem and trust God to provide for them; however, Elimelech was looking through a man's eyes, and obviously felt that Moab was a place to be desired to provide for his family during the time of famine.

After Elimelech died, the two sons took Moabite wives by the name of Orpah and Ruth. This was in direct disobedience to God's will. Though Moab was outside the Promised Land, the principle of not marrying women who served foreign gods applied.

Deuteronomy 7:2–4 “And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.”

Naturally, Naomi stayed in Moab with her family. Ten years later, however, both her sons died, leaving their widowed mother and wives without protection or provision.

Ruth 1:6 ¶ Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.

Ruth 1:7 Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

Ruth 1:8 And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.

Ruth 1:9 The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.

About this time Naomi hears that “the Lord had visited His people” and the famine in Bethlehem was over. In her desperate situation, her heart yearned for home. As she set out on her journey, her two daughters-in-law accompanied her. Eventually, Naomi stopped and urged her daughters-in-law to return to their families. She acknowledged her appreciation for their loving kindness to their husbands and her and pronounced the LORD's blessing upon them in seeking to start new families. She kissed them and they all wept together at the thought of parting.

Ruth 1:10 And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

Ruth 1:11 And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

Ruth 1:12 Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons;

Ruth 1:13 Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me.

Both the girls declared that they were going with Naomi, but she reasoned with them that they were better off to return home. She had no more sons to give them and was too old to have any more children. Even if she could have sons, it wasn't practical to think they would wait for them to grow up. She ends by expressing her grief that "the LORD is gone out against me" and that they had suffered as a result.

I can understand Naomi on the one hand; she is the one left, so God must be mad at her. The truth is that Naomi was an obedient wife and followed her husband. She had obviously exemplified a good testimony before her daughters-in-law in light of the following verses; these girls loved their mother-in-law. She obviously recognized that God was sovereign in the lives of His people.

Ruth 1:14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.

Ruth 1:15 And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.

Ruth 1:16 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, *or* to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God:

Ruth 1:17 Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, *if ought* but death part thee and me.

Although very sorrowful, Orpah determined that Naomi was right and turned to go home to her people and her gods. Ruth, however, was determined to stay with Naomi. Her beautiful words of commitment to Naomi and Naomi's God show that she saw something in the character of her mother-in-law that she wanted for herself. (Oh, may others see that in me.) So, in spite of how Naomi felt, her life gave testimony that caused this pagan girl to be willing to forsake her own family and homeland and face any trial that might confront her in her determination to be faithful to Naomi and her God. She even declared a curse on herself before the LORD (not her pagan god) if she allowed anything other than death to separate her from Naomi.

Ruth 1:18 When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

Ruth 1:19 ¶ So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, *Is this* Naomi?

Ruth 1:20 And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

Ruth 1:21 I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why *then* call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

Ruth 1:22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

Naomi finally gave up trying to persuade Ruth to leave her when she realized how determined she was.

“So they two came to Bethlehem” – This in itself is a pretty amazing statement. This was a difficult and dangerous journey of about a week taken by two unprotected women. I personally believe God’s hand of protection was over them.

It caused a great stir when they arrived in Bethlehem, a fairly small town at that time. Evidently, Naomi had been well known and her troubles had greatly changed her appearance according to the reaction of the people. Naomi declared that she should now be called “Mara,” bitterness, since the Almighty had dealt very bitterly with her. She acknowledged that she had gone out full, feeling blessed and satisfied, but had returned home empty. Her conclusion was that God was displeased with her, though it seems obvious that she didn’t understand why.

We know from the biblical record that Naomi’s conclusion was wrong. As we so often do, she assumed her circumstances to give evidence of God’s pleasure or displeasure with her. She made the same mistake that Job’s friends made.

Point is made that it was the beginning of barley harvest when the women arrived in Bethlehem. This would probably have been sometime in the month of April.