

## NKJV Judges 21; 25, Ruth 1; 1-16

*"Ruth" is one of two biblical books named after a woman. The other is Esther. The book of Esther is the story of a Hebrew woman living in a Gentile land, while Ruth is the story of a Gentile woman living in the land of the Hebrews. And both stories are prophetic of the times in which we live. Esther foreshadows God's providential protection and preservation of Israel over the last two millenniums. Ruth on the other hand foreshadows God's plan for the Gentiles. Though Ruth is an outsider she receives the blessings God intended for the Hebrews by marrying into an Israeli family. We too have married into God's promises for the Jews. We've married a wealthy Hebrew prince named Jesus, fallen in love with Him. In Christ we have gained an inheritance with God's people.*

*Setting: The time period of the Judges. (1100 b.c.)*

**Judges 21; 25**-*In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

*Written against a particularly dark background; the time between Joshua's death/Judges 1; 1 & the coronation of Saul/1 Sam 10-an era of frightful social & religious chaos. The main leaders/judges were local military heroes whom Yahweh raised up primarily to rescue Israel from specific foreign threats in their own home areas. Their leadership was not national but local, not political but military. Most feel that Samuel may have recorded this book, according to Jewish tradition. Ultimately Ruth is quite simply a book about people who love God, in spite of their mistakes/God works in their lives as they seek to follow Him, God reveals Himself to be constantly faithful.*

### **Ruth 1**

**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**

**Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he, and his wife and his two sons.** Ruth is part of the Hebrew "*Megillah*" - a collection of 5 books that were read at the different Hebrew feasts. The book of Ruth was always read at the feast of Pentecost. Later, Pentecost becomes the birthday of the Church. How fitting! In numerous ways the story of Ruth parallels our relationship with Jesus.

**Question:** why did they get famines? I thought they went to a land flowing w/ milk & honey? They did. When would famines come? Often times as a corrective judgment of God. (**Deuteronomy 11:13-17**). Though in this case, the author was silent about its cause. Each man did what was right in their own eyes-famine-is there a connection? Bethlehem/house of bread/wheat, barley, olives, almonds, and grapes grew plentifully in the area. **Their response should have been to run to Him, not run from him!**

The house of bread was now the house w/o bread! There is a high cost to backsliding. It seems that Elimelech sinned in bringing his family down to enemy country. When in severe despair, flight seems the only way out.

It's better to be hungry in the will of God, than to have a full stomach & be out of His will!

**Where are the Moabites from?** They are descendants of Lot. After the judgment of Sodom/Gomorrah, remember that Lot's wife looked back/turned into a pillar of salt. His daughters are under the notion that they are the only ones left to propagate/get Lot drunk/as the result of an incestuous relationship/the daughters give birth to what would become the Ammonites/Moabites. Moab goes onto be Israel's enemy throughout history.

They worshiped *Chemosh the destroyer, subduer, or fish-god*. Remember that it is famine that has sent them into this foreign country. Remember that it was the taxation/census of Caesar that sent Joseph & Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem to fulfill God's Word. **God is using famine in a large scale to accomplish His will.** In your lives, God will use many things to motivate you, to move you to the right place.

**2 The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there.** "Mahlon" means "sickness", and "Chilion" means "wasting". Both boys may've had physical problems from birth, and complications ended up leading to early exits. Both sons die and leave behind a grieving mom, and two young widows. So far, the story teaches us that the safest place to be is in the center of God's will.

**3 Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons.** Elimelech had the right name "*my God is King*", but for all practical purposes he seems to have denied His Kingship over his life. And he soon paid for it: 1<sup>st</sup> the **Move** to Moab, then the **Marriages** in Moab, then the **Misery** in Moab, how sad! Let's be reminded though there is still a big difference between a **backslider** & an **apostate**. A backslider rationalizes his wrong moves & find excuses for them (basing his move on the famine) An apostate renounces the faith he once professed to hold. **Peter** was a backslider; **Judas** was an apostate.

**4 Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years.** Now they took wives of the women of Moab: **Mahlon and Chilion grew, and took wives among the Moabite**

women, named Orpah and Ruth. Again, this was not in obedience to God; God commanded the Israelites to not marry among the pagan nations surrounding them. (Deut 7: 3-4)

**5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so, the woman survived her two sons and her husband.** To be a childless widow was to be among the lowest, most disadvantaged classes in the ancient world. There was no one to support you, and you had to live on the generosity of strangers. It is hard to say that this was the direct hand of God's judgment against them. It is sometimes difficult to discern why tragic things happen. What is certain is that the change of scenery didn't make things better.

We sometimes think we can move away from our problems, but find we just bring them with us.

Naomi Returns with Ruth

**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 that the LORD had visited His people by giving them bread.** *Wow, go figure...the "house of bread" has bread! Invite others to come to Jesus. Because the Bread of life has bread! Invite others to come to His Word. Because the Daily Bread...is bread! Invite others to come to Church. Because the House of Bread...has bread!*

**7 Therefore she went out from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.** *From distant Moab, Naomi heard that God was doing good things back in Israel. She wanted to be part of the good things that God was doing. Our life with God should make others want to come back to the LORD just by looking at our life. Our walk*

with the LORD should be something that makes others say, "I want some of that also!"

**8** And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house. The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. By all common sense, this was the wise thing to do. Orpah and Ruth had stronger family ties in Moab than they did with Naomi, so it made sense for them to stay in Moab instead of going to a new land - Israel - with Naomi.

**9** The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." So, she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. With these words Naomi freely blessed them. She prayed that they would remarry (each in the house of her husband).

**10** And they said to her, "Surely we will return with you to your people." **11** But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Are there still sons in my womb: According to the laws of ancient Israel, a levirate marriage is literally a "marriage with a brother-in-law." The word *levirate*, which has nothing to do with the tribe of Levi, comes from the Latin word *levir*, "a husband's brother." In ancient times, if a man died without a child, it was common for the man's unmarried brother to marry the widow in order to provide an heir for the deceased. A widow would marry a brother-in-law, and the first son produced in that union was considered the legal descendant of her dead husband. We see a couple of examples in the Bible of levirate marriage. The first is the story of Tamar and Onan in **Genesis 38**. Naomi here says that she has no other sons to give either Orpah or Ruth.

**12** Turn back, my daughters, go—for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, **13** would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain

**yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!”**

The hand of the LORD has gone out against me: Despite this feeling, Naomi is going back to the land of Israel - and going back to her God. Though she felt that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me, she did not grow bitter against God. She returned to Him in repentance, knowing that the answer is drawing *closer to* Him, not going *further from* Him. What Naomi could not see is that the hand of the LORD would go out *for* her shortly! There is never reason for us to despair if we believe the hand of the LORD has gone out against me. **If we return to Him, His hand will go out for us again!** Naomi had no idea - not the slightest - of how greatly God was going to bless her in a short time.

**14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.**

**Both set out with her (7). Both had an affection for Naomi (8). Both declared “surely, we will return with you to your people**

**15 And she said, “Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.”** Her statement shows just how far Naomi has drifted from God. She’s more concerned with Ruth’s relationship with a future husband than their relationship with God. She’s encouraging her to return to her idolatrous roots.

But the hour of test came: Naomi set before them the trials & costs! It is one thing to love the ways of the Lord when all is fair, & quite another to cleave to them under all discouragements & difficulties.

Charles Spurgeon " *The kiss of outward profession is very cheap & easy, but the practical cleaving to the Lord, which must show itself in holy decision for truth & holiness, is not so small a matter.*" Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Lk.9:23

**Q: How is our heart for God?**

Is it fixed on Jesus? Have we counted the cost? Are we solemnly ready to suffer all worldly loss for the master's sake? Orpah is not heard of again! She seeps back into her pagan culture, her people, her gods. Slipping off the pages of Scripture, history, eternity! But Ruth lives on in history, in Scripture, in heaven. For grace has placed her in the noble line in which sprang up Israel's greatest King, David, & ultimately the King of Kings.

**16 But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you. For wherever you go, I will go. And wherever you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. 17 Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If anything, but death parts you and me."**

Ruth had come to trust in the God of Israel & so she refused to go back. What a model of faith & trust in God. Ruth made the hard choice, but the right choice! Kiss or cling the choice is yours! Are you dating God or are you married to him/committed? Are you a kisser or clinger to Christ?

Prayer for all the females of the church