

Ruth 1

Mercy in Moab

Only Bible Book Named for Gentile, 1 of 2 bks Named after Woman

SIMPLE Beautiful STORY, NARRATIVE of Redemptive History

God's KINDNESS for Covenant People in Hardship

See God's Hand > Not Miracles, Behind Scenes, Guiding Events

Ordinary people in Ordinary Circumstances > Our Extraordinary God

1. God with the Sojourners

Ruth > OT: ANCESTORS of Jesus X / In SAME FAMILY of FAITH

God of Abe, Isaac, & Jacob – OUR God revealed to us thru Jesus Christ

GOOD GOD – BUT His PEOPLE Not Living in GOOD TIMES

a. Right Talk v. 1 In the days when the judges ruled...

In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Judges 21.25

Judges = no king and chaos ruled - little social order in the land

strong imposed will upon the weak / Israel often invaded by nations

Ruth > Bright Moment in Dark Period of History of God's People

vs. 1,2 man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he & his wife and his 2 sons. The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah.

ELIMELEK = God is King, or My God is My King > @ Time of Judges!

No Question – Name is Great Slogan!! – Is that ALL? God Knows

Moab was the land of Israel's distant cousins, the Moabites.

You could SEE Mountains of MOAB from Bethlehem

TODAY – Land is known as Kingdom of JORDAN

Very BRIEF, CONDENSED Account of People & Their Lives

3 VERSES – 10 years of TORRENTIAL TRAGEDY – Famine, DEATH

vs. 2-5 They went into the country of Moab and remained there. But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, and both Mahlon and Chilion died >> Mahlon = "weakly" // Chilion = "sickly"

b. Wrong Turn

Moses: “bless your people Israel and the ground that you have given us, as you swore to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey.’... high above all nations that he has made”

Deuteronomy 26.14-19

v. 1 ...a famine in the land // FAMINE Terrifying > Slow Death!

IRONY – Bethlehem = House of BREAD > Famine, Empty HOUSE!

NO BREAD in HOUSE of Bread > Famine in LAND of Milk and Honey

Go to MOAB? WRONG! Forbidden to MIX with PAGANS

Nation BIRTHED in INCEST - Between Lot & Daughters in CAVE

Worshipped GOD CHEMOSH > known as Especially VILE GOD

NOT Matter of ETHNICITY or a SUPERIOR RACE

HOLINESS / SPIRITUALITY – God’s People devoted to God

Marriage is Highest Level of Human Devotion – Spouse serves IDOLS

Difficult Maintain White Hot Devotion to God / Then & Now

vs. 3,5 she was left with her two sons.... the woman was left without her two sons and her husband - QUICK AS THAT! 3 Men Dead! Pillars Collapse!

NAOMI is CHILDLESS WIDOW in Foreign LAND

Great SHAME in ISRAEL > END of your FAMILY LINE

10 Years! Think that just Wander from God for a LITTLE WHILE

2. God in Suffering

NAOMI become ONE of My HEROES – SPIRITUAL Mother to ME

Book could RIGHTLY be Called NAOMI – She is LEAD ACTRESS

a. Follower Jewish Wife 3000 yrs ago No Feminism, Few Rights

Doubt had Much VOICE in MOVE to Moab or MARRIAGE of Sons

NAME Naomi = “Pleasant” for Reason – Kind, Gentle, Supporter

Not sure if God was King for Elimelek > Clearly was Naomi’s KING

But she FEELS the FULL Weight of God’s HAND of DISCIPLINE...

v. 5 so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband

THE WOMAN – No Husband, Sons, Food, Hope, Future OR NAME

Naomi Under CURSE – Fruitless, Hopeless, Sword Pierced Heart
Sword Lunged in Heart – then Twisted – then Twisted Again!!

b. Faithful Heart Broken & Weary but still CALLS on the LORD
Even with TRIALS and TROUBLES – has Powerful TESTIMONY
v. 14 And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

CLUNG is SAME Word used by Moses in First Book of Bible

a man shall leave his father and his mother and *hold fast* to his wife, and they shall become one flesh
Genesis 2.24

Ruth CLUNG to Naomi // seen N. Cling Loyal to Foolish Husband

RUTH had LEARNED Godliness from NAOMI

c. Fortright v. 6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food

1st ref Yahweh: He's Baaack > House of Bread has Food AGAIN

v. 7 So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.

Naomi Puts on a Brave Face for her daughters in law

WALKS Away from Home – Not TOO Far – Creates Space to THINK

Make Daughters FEEL “This is IT” Leave Comfort MOAB / Home

Like Jesus who appeared on Road to Emmaus > Waits to be INVITED

vs. 8,9 But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go, return each of you to her mother’s house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!” Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

1st Words Spoken in STORY > God’s Words, KINDNESS, LOVE

CHESED = LOVE > Never stops, never breaks, never gives up

Naomi will BLESS them and FREE them > TEARS and TRUTH
Loud Weeping, Broken Hearts, Women Carried e/other thru Life & Death

Naomi FREES Girls – No Obligation – Go back to Mother’s House

You have shown Me KINDNESS – Now may God show You KINDNESS

vs. 10-14 And they said to her, “No, we will return with you to your people.” But Naomi said, “Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me.” Then they lifted up their voices and wept again.

MOSAIC – Levirate Law: I need to FIND you Husband, Impossible!

Be SENSIBLE – I will have No More Sons / You’ll have NO Husbands

Naomi NOT Lost her Faith in GOD > But has REALISTIC Faith

Daughters have NO Logical/Good REASONS to Stay with Naomi

No Kids > No Husband > No Family > No Future

Naomi knows God is Sovereign – Creator, Controls ALL of our Lives

v. 13 No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me.”

v. 20 for the Almighty - El Shaddai - has dealt very bitterly with me

Bible doesn’t say that a comforter came right in and cheered her up.

Bible doesn’t say that God told her to get over it and have a stiff upper lip.

Naomi is not condemned for her feelings.

Naomi is allowed to wallow in her grief.

God doesn’t promise some quick easy fix to our problems.

God not promise life will be easy > does promise he’ll never abandon us

God doesn’t say that we must be happy all the time

He DOES say that we must trust in him all the time.

Not All our Circumstances are Good – Sometimes LIFE STINKS!

Note then the kindness and the severity of God

Romans 11.22

Naomi attributes Misfortune to God’s Hand, but also...

v. 6 heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food

vs. 8, 9 May the LORD deal kindly with you...The LORD grant that you may find rest

Profound Understanding > Events are Direct Result of God’s Intervention

3. God of Surprises

a. Power of Conversion vs. 14,15 And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.”

KIND Advice from NAOMI > Go home my DAUGHTERS

ORPAH Name “back of the neck” last SAW as Walked AWAY

IF you Hurry you can CATCH your SISTER > Return Home & gods

Naomi PUSHED Daughters – Know they Not Welcome Israel

MOABITE Not allowed to JOIN the ASSEMBLY of God’s People

BAD Enough Elimelek go to MOAB – Even Worse Sons Marry Moabites

Days of BALAK & BALAM > Israel...the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab. These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.
Numbers 25.1-5

“No Moabite may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the LORD forever... You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever.
Deuteronomy 23.3,6

Ruth is as welcome in Bethlehem as a ham sandwich at a Bar Mitzvah. Don Carson

v. 19 So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, “Is this Naomi?”

Sure Townspeople gave her Stink Looks but NO Word of Welcome

Like WRONG Person – Fill in the Blank – Moving to KOHALA

Naomi Blunt Honesty like Jesus – GO BACK, I promise you Nothing!

NOT Sugar Coated Seeker Sweet and Light Message – Hard Core

God has Forgotten Me here – He MIGHT Forget YOU TOO!

Nothing Promised in this Life – Go BACK to your OWN GODS!

RUTH knew gods of Moab offer NOTHING Now and in Eternity

Better Chances to get Nothing BUT God of Israel – Get Him, get ALL!

YAHWEH + NOTHING = EVERYTHING

Point of Book > WHAT is God Doing in the Darkest of Times??

God takes Unwelcome, Unclean, Unholy Stranger > Makes her Daughter

Most Detailed Account Conversion in OT > Wonder of Saving Grace

Main Idea in Ch. CONVERSION > TURNING word used 11 times

Turn, Turn Back, Returning > Constant Punctuation > Melody Line

This Story is ALL ABOUT Turning, Returning, TURNING to God

Vs. 16,17 But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.”

Ruth – Looked at Circumstances and STAYED

Embraced Unknown – Naomi taught her True God is Behind all Things

Staying Not for Food, Husband, Family, Earthly Future – Eternal Issue

Going Back to MOAB is to go to HELL!

...you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 1.9,10

Naomi Only sees Dark, Hopeless, Future > Ruth Sees with FAITH

Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

Proverbs 31.25,26

b. Promise of Covenant

God is IN the Details of Life – We are Temples / God Comes to US

Other Religions – GO to Temple to Try & Find God THERE

Jesus “I am WITH YOU Always!” – Every Area of Life

v. 18 And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

No Other Word Spoken in Several WEEKS HARD Journey > Thinking

vs. 19-21 “Is this Naomi?” She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?”

RETURN of Naomi: Frail, Grey Hair, Lines of Pain & Loss on Face

Naomi Reason to COMPLAIN – NO Family, Kids, Fortune, Future

HONEST Hurts – Life has been MORE than I can BEAR

Back with NOTHING! God has brought ONLY CALAMITY

Does NOT See Ruth Standing NEXT to her

SOURCE of Blessings RIGHT WITH HER!

“I am EMPTY” – Right NEXT to her is FULNESS OF GOD

Wonderful Plan of God way Beyond her Wildest Imaginations

Ruth MOABITE more Committed to GOD, More Excited than Israelites

Bilquis Sheik – Not Find BIBLE in Pakistan – No Church BUILDING

Came USA – Churches on Every Street – Bibles Every Home

Sunday Morning – First Sunday in Christian America – Crowds on Road

Parks – Malls – Restaurants – Movies – Sport Stadium FULL

Churches are NEARLY EMPTY!

God of Mercy and Providence > Plans we cannot UNDERSTAND

v. 22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Tied Together w/ v. 1 – Back from Moab with HARVEST

Small Shaft Light Breaking thru DARK Sky – GOD About to WORK

FAMINE to HARVEST – Physical & Spiritual, Food & FAITH

RUTH is God’s Answer when NAOMI Cried “God, WHY Me?”

Why Book called Ruth, Not Naomi > Story about Life for RUTH

Story Not about God’s Punishment of SIN > Pardon for SINNERS

Worst EVIL in History of Human Race – Most WICKED Thing EVER

Meticulously Designed, Planned, Ordained, Prophesied by God

CROSS of His Son – Planned before Foundation of the World

See Jesus Christ as Greatest DISPLAY of God’s Goodness & Mercy

Ruth had No Idea that there’d be MORE than Food, even Family!

Royal Family – Grandmother of King DAVID, Great Granny of Jesus

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham... Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.
Matthew 1.1-6

God of Ruth, Naomi, Boaz, Obed – God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

Ruth 1.1 In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. 2 The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. 3 But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, 5 and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. 6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food. 7 So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. 8 But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. 10 And they said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? 12 Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, 13 would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me." 14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. 15 And she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." 16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where 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. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you." 18 And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more. 19 So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, "Is this Naomi?" 20 She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. 21 I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?" 22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Lord, our life is uncertain. Some seasons are pleasant and sweet, especially when there is bread in the house. And suddenly the storms come, famine strikes the House of Bread, and we change our name to 'Bitter'!

Give us eyes to see your tokens of kindness in our midst. Forgive us when we forget that the strangers we meet are made in your image and likeness. Help us to embrace and include others as you have embraced and included us.

When we travel far from you we discover our sins are too heavy to carry, too real to hide, and too deep to undo. Forgive what our lips tremble to name, what our hearts can no longer bear. Instead of looking for bread in godless lands, help us to run into your Strong Tower.

Silent Prayer, Confession, and Reflection

God you are My King. In your House I find the Bread of Life. You are Lord of the Harvest. Jesus you are my Kinsman Redeemer. Your loyal love and covenant mercy have granted me citizenship in your Kingdom.

I pledge myself to You like your daughter Ruth, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." In the Name of Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life.