

RUTH

Lesson 1

Ruth Chapter 1

We begin our study of Ruth with a look at the first chapter of the book. The story of Ruth is one which illustrates how God's will is worked out in the lives of ordinary people doing ordinary things. Ruth became the great grandmother of King David, and that she was a Moabite woman, not a Jew. Isn't it interesting that the "Lion of Judah" has in his ancestry a Moabite, among others. This was God's way of blessing people outside the Jewish community who put their faith in Him.

The story takes place near the end of the times of the Judges, a period when the Jews were known for idol worship, worldly living, selfishness, and condoning all manner of wicked lifestyles. It is within this perverted and wicked environment that Naomi and Ruth will return to Bethlehem seeking help in their time of need. Little did they know that Boaz would become their kinsman redeemer and that, later, God would send Samuel, the first prophet who would anoint Saul the first king of a united Israel; and then Saul's son David, the great grandson of Ruth. It is no wonder, given the harvest theme which surrounds Ruth and Boaz, that the Jews traditionally read this book each year at the Feast of Weeks, i.e., Pentecost.

Read Ruth Chapter 1 and answer the following:

1. Re-read verses Ruth 1:1-5. Can you imagine what Naomi must have felt like? How long had they lived in Moab? Who supported her while she lived there? What had now happened to that support? (see Ruth 1:5)
2. Naomi left Bethlehem with a healthy husband and two sons. Now who does she have? (see Ruth 1:5) Does she have any means to care for herself or her family? What skills did she have?
3. In the land in those days, the custom was that if a brother died and left a wife, the living brother should take the widow for his wife, father a son, and name it after the deceased brother. In this way, the family's land and heritage could be passed unbroken from generation to generation. Which verses in Ruth Chapter 1 apply to this custom?
4. Who decided to take Naomi up on this custom and return her to her husband's brother? (see Ruth 1:14)
5. In Ruth 1:15-18, Ruth pleads with Naomi to let her stay with her, and to go where she goes. Ruth also says something that sheds great light on Naomi: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God". How did Ruth know who Naomi's God was? Is she making a profession of faith in the God of Israel? What do you suppose led her to do that?
6. Naomi leaves Bethlehem with a husband and two sons, and returns many years later a widow with a daughter-in-law who is also a widow. (See Ruth 1:19) Is it any wonder that the town's folk were abuzz with gossip and questions? Do you suppose that this is another good example of people judging only by what they can see on the outside? Do you suppose any of them asked what God's will might be in Naomi's and Ruth's lives now that they had returned to Bethlehem? Are we guilty of the same thing, i.e., judging on appearance?

7. Is Naomi happy regarding her condition? Does she see that anything good can come from all the calamity in her life? Do you suppose she believes God has forgotten her, or has simply cast her aside? As we close Chapter 1, do verses 21 and 22 indicate any hope on Naomi's part that God is watching over her? How do you suppose her testimony about God looked to the others that were around her at that time? And yet the harvest was just beginning.

May God bless you this week as you faithfully study His Word.

In Christ,

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