

Ruth – Part 1

Ruth 1:1-7

The book of Ruth is God's message of love. As we look in this book, we see that it's not only written for the Israelites; it was also written to all mankind to exhibit the never-ending love of God. It teaches that genuine love at times may require uncompromising sacrifice. Regardless of our lot in life, we can live according to the precepts of God. Genuine love and kindness will be rewarded, and God abundantly blesses those who seek to live obedient lives. Obedient living does not allow for accidents in God's plan.

God extends mercy to the merciful, and we should follow God's admonition as found in Romans 12:1-2 where it says, *¹I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ²And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

As we look at the book of Ruth, first of all let me say that God is the author. God has written the complete Bible, and as we think of this, you say, "Well, He didn't pin it down." No, He used man. But He spoke; man listened. And man not only listened to what God said, but man wrote down the things that took place during the time they lived. God is the author and we need always to remember that as we study the Word of God.

Ruth 1:1 says, *¹Now 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 sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.*

We see in this verse the journey begins. The account begins with judges when judges ruled, according to verse 1. The judges ruled about 450 years, and you go to Acts 13:17-20, and it says, *¹⁷The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it. ¹⁸And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. ¹⁹And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. ²⁰And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet*

As we look at this, we look into the book of Judges as Ruth begins and we're going into the book of Ruth. As we study the Bible, we find certain things, and I find that there was a total of thirteen judges during the time of the judges. Some people will disagree with that, but I have a list of them.

In Judges 21:25, it says, *In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.* Well, the thirteen judges, and we look in the book of Judges, Chapter 2, verse 14, as it talks about the institution of judges. It says there, *And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them.* And then in Judges 2:16, it says, *Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.*

I see, first of all, Othniel in Judges Chapter 3, Ehud Judges Chapter 3, and then Shamgar in Judges Chapter 3, Deborah in Judges Chapter 4, and also Barak. We view him and Deborah together there. He was a judge. We also see

Gideon in Judges Chapter 6, Tola in Judges Chapter 10, Jair in Judges 10, and Jephthah in Judges 11:1, and Ibzan, Judges 12; Elon, Judges 12; Abdon, Judges 12; and then, finally, Samson in Judges 13.

I suppose, in all these judges, if you would ask someone to name a judge, for the most part they would name Samson. We know the story about Samson and Delilah, how that she cut his hair and he lost his strength, but that's probably one of the most famous judges that anyone could name.

We can look at these judges and then look at ourselves and realize something, that God can use even us. These fellows and this lady, Deborah, these people were not perfect. In I Corinthians 1:26-27, it says,²⁶ *For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:* ²⁷ *But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.*

I see that not only do we look back and we see the judges involved coming into the book of Ruth, but we also see that we're speaking about real people. Once again, Ruth 1:1 says,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.*

The account is real, and I want you to notice the word in verse 1 there, the word "Moab." The Moabs were descendants of Lot, Moab being the son of Lot and his older daughter. Of course, this was an incestuous relationship there and you can read that, if you like, going back in the book of Genesis there and reading the account that took place between Lot and his daughter.

The book of Ruth is not a fable or a parable. God doesn't pull any punches. He lets us know exactly what's happening, and He doesn't sugarcoat anything. He lets us know what is exactly going on, and the first thing I see here, these are real people. As we look on, the book of Ruth is an actual account of a certain family, according to verse 1. It does not say this: "Now, once upon a time...." It says, *Now it came to pass....*

Not only do we see real people involved here; we ask this question: Why did this family leave Bethlehem-Judah? Again, we read in verse 1 that there was a famine, Ruth 1:1. They were out of the will of God. Judges 21:25 says, *In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.* I do not believe the husband prayed about this very long. I believe he made a mistake, but later on, we're going to see how God turns this mistake into something wonderful. And I might say this... the book of Ruth is God's message of love and it's a beautiful love story that you and I need to pay attention to.

Why did this family leave Bethlehem-Judah? There was a famine and they were out of the will of God. Who left Bethlehem-Judah? According to the verse that we looked at and the next verse, verse 2 of Ruth Chapter 1, it says, 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.*

Notice that God uses specific names here of those involved: Elimelech, which means "my god is king"; Naomi, which means "the gracious or sweetness"; and we see Mahlon, one of the sons, means "weakly"; and Chilion, means "pining or wasting."

Bethlehemjudah means “the house of bread,” and the family went to Moab. And we see here as we study the Word of God, the Moabites were descendants of Lot. Moab was the son of Lot and his older daughter. These people left the land of the living and went into the land of the dead. Ruth 1:3: *And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.* We see in this verse death. Elimelech's wages was death.

In verse 4 it says, *And they took them wives...* This is speaking of the two sons now. *They took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah... not Oprah but Orpah... and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.* We see taking place here a marriage, two marriages. Ruth was married to Mahlon, and you see that in Ruth 4:10. And we see that Ruth means “friend or companion.”

Ruth 4:10 says, *Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance...* and let me say this. I'm jumping ahead a little bit here, because this is speaking of Boaz. Boaz is speaking here. And it says that he did this... *that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day.*

Orpah was married to Chilion, and Orpah means “fawn.” You can read Ruth 1:4 and Ruth 4:9 in comparison with this. Now, Orpah, I believe, could also mean “young one.” And we look at Ruth 1:5 and it says, *And Mahlon and Chilion died...* Boy, the husband died and now these two fellows died. It says they died... *also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.* In other words, they were gone. They left her. And I want you to notice here that death has no mercy. Death takes the heirs in this verse, Chapter 1 and verse 5.

And notice here that Naomi makes a decision in verse 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.* Now we see someone going God's way, because we see that she's made a decision here.

Naomi decides to leave Moab, according to verse 6. And as we look at verse 7, it says, *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...* the land of the living.

Naomi decides to return to Judah, the house of bread. And I wonder today, have you decided to go to the land of the living? The land of the living, of course, is Heaven, that place where we know that our Savior lives. Did you know it could also mean where you're at right now? The land of the living? Now, we're not in Heaven yet, that's for sure, but you can leave the land of death, and that is the land of sin.

You say, what do you mean? What I mean is this. You can turn and ask God: “Lord, forgive me of my sin. I want to live forever. I want to have eternal life.” And as you do that, Jesus Christ will come in. You can have a personal relationship with Him, by saying, “Lord, forgive me of my sin. Come into my heart. I receive You as my Lord and Savior.”

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