

## Ruth – Part 2

Ruth 1:8-22

Let me encourage you to open your Bible and read Ruth 1:1-7, and I would ask you to have your Bible open as we study the book of Ruth, God's message of love. Well, in all that had happened in Ruth Chapter 1, in verse 1 it talks about famine; then we read about the death of her husband in verse 3, and then, if that wasn't enough, we read about the death of her two sons. This is Naomi's sons and husband, of course. We read about the death of her two sons in verse 5, and Naomi through all of this had retained her allegiance to the one and true living God. We see this, that she was in Moab but even in the midst of idolatry, Chapter 1, verses 6-7, it says there that she arose.

And we see in verse 8 the release here, and it says, <sup>8</sup>*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.* You'll remember that Naomi's husband had died; the two sons had died; and they had married wives. These two were with Naomi at this time, but now she gives them permission to go back or to go and stay in the house that they were born and raised in to stay in Moab.

Naomi, in essence, is saying go. Naomi releases her two daughters-in-law, according to Ruth 1:8. Why would Orpah and Ruth need permission from Naomi to return to their mothers' house? Well, Jewish tradition is this, that the woman moved to the husband's home and family upon marriage, so these women were actually part of the household that they had married into. A woman's loyalties were expected to transfer to her new family and home.

In other words, they were to pay allegiance and stay with the people, the family they had

married into and that is that of her husband. They were to stay. But here we read in verses 9 and 10... <sup>9</sup>*The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband...* This is Naomi, now, speaking to these two women... *Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.* <sup>10</sup>*And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.*

Here we see that a blessing is offered. Naomi was giving the daughters-in-law permission to remarry, according to verse 9. Why would these two daughters-in-law say...*Surely, we will return with thee unto thy people.* Once again, Jewish law says the widow is entitled to maintenance until she remarries. In other words, the settlement would come from the husband's estate, and this, of course, would be somewhat like a Jewish prenuptial agreement.

In Jewish law as developed by the rabbis, while orphans inherit their father's estate, a widow does not inherit her husband's estate, but the *ketubah*, that is, the Jewish prenuptial agreement I spoke of, consists of a settlement on the estate from which the widow is entitled to maintenance until she remarries

We go on and we read now in Ruth 1:11-13. It says, <sup>11</sup>*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?* <sup>12</sup>*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;* <sup>13</sup>*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.*

I have to ask myself a question here. Was Naomi being judged by God in all of this? I go to the New Testament and I find answers. You know, the Bible explains itself if we look. And in II Corinthians 4:8-9, it says, *We are troubled on every side... speaking of Christians now.* <sup>8</sup>*We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;* <sup>9</sup>*Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.*

Things come into our lives that sometimes people would point to us and say, "Uh-huh, you're being judged of God." Well, that's not always the case. Christians have problems. Don't think that, when a person gets saved, all their problems will cease. We still have problems. And I think that's what was happening with Naomi.

And if we keep reading in II Corinthians Chapter 4 and we actually drop back a couple of verses to verses 6-7, it says, <sup>6</sup>*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* <sup>7</sup>*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

God will take the bad things in our lives if we let Him and He will turn those into the good. He will turn those things so that we can be witnesses for Him.

Notice here with me now. We'll get back to the book of Ruth. She's saying to these women, her daughters-in-law, "Go home, go home." And Naomi again tells the daughters-in-law to go back to their ancestral homes. She says, "Turn again." Naomi felt God's

judgment had come upon her, and as we've just read, I don't believe that was the case at all. She had decided to go back.

Notice that this is an opposite direction. Opposite directions we see are taking place in Ruth Chapter 1. Let's read verses 14-18:

<sup>14</sup>*And they lifted up their voice, and wept again... and this is the two daughters-in-law and, of course, Naomi was weeping, as well... and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.* <sup>15</sup>*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.* <sup>16</sup>*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:* <sup>17</sup>*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.* <sup>18</sup>*When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.* This is Naomi. She left speaking to Ruth at this point.

Orpah decided to go back to Moab, or stay in Moab, and Ruth decided to go with her mother-in-law, Naomi. We see here two directions. Orpah turns to the world. This is a form of turning to the world when she stays in Moab. Was Orpah saved? Had she turned to the true God of Naomi? She had every opportunity to believe God and accept Him as the true and only God. She no doubt would have received the knowledge of God from Naomi, if not from her husband. In other words, she knew everything about God. According to Jewish tradition, she would have been taught, but she would rather go by the way of the world than to go by the way of God.

And I read in I John 2:15, it says, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* We need to love God. We need to let God lead, guide, and direct us and choose His way.

I believe in verse 16 we see that Ruth turns to God. Although she was a Moabite, she insisted on doing all the things that would have been expected of a Jewish girl, and while young people tended to marry within the village where the bride could continue contact with her birth family, it was clear that the girl moved to her husband's home and not the other way around. And we see that her loyalties were expected to transfer to her new family and home and that of her husband. We've talked about that.

When Naomi decided to go back to Bethlehem, Ruth insisted on going, too. We see that in verse 17. As we read in I Peter 2:25, it says, *For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

And again, we read in I Thessalonians 1:9: *For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.* This is what Ruth was doing. She had decided to follow Jesus. She had decided to follow God. Ruth, I believe, started understanding Jewish laws and its forms of worship and its ritual observance and so forth during the time she was married to Mahlon. The values and norms of the Jewish people, their customs in terms of language, history, mythology, self-views, and institutional participation would continue to be learned by Ruth as she lived among the Jewish people of that land.

Well, Ruth did not convert. She became a Jew. The concept of "becoming" is vital here,

especially since the process begins prior to formal declarations and continues afterward. As a good Jewish girl, Ruth's place was with her mother-in-law, not with her birth family, and she refused Naomi's willingness to release her from that obligation. She would stay with Naomi. She would go back with her.

We see in verse 19 there was a pilgrim's journey to the land of bread. It says, *<sup>19</sup>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?* In other words, the sweet one. The sweet one, Naomi, returns. Remember, the name "Naomi" means gracious or sweetness. All the city gathered about Naomi and Ruth, and Naomi's testimony as a servant of the Lord was still remembered by all, even after her ten-year absence from the people.

Notice verses 20-21 now. *<sup>20</sup>And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. <sup>21</sup>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?*

In other words, it was like she was empty, emptiness. "Mara" means bitter, and at this time, Naomi felt that she had been afflicted by God. We've talked about that. I believe that she was doing what was right. She went with her husband; now she's coming back. And in verse 22, it says: *<sup>22</sup>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.*

Now, the right season we're seeing here, the beginning of barley harvest. Naomi and Ruth

left the land of the dead and entered into the land of the living at the right time. And now is the right time for you to enter the land of the living by trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior. Ask Him to come into your heart. Receive Him as Savior today and He'll save you and He'll make sure that you go to Heaven. He'll never leave you nor forsake you.

And Christian, you need to be serving God and telling people about the land of the living.

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