

Book of Ruth**Chapter 1**

The right choice—20% off \$10 to sale price \$8 during book of Ruth series.

Book of Ruth takes place during period of book of Judges 350-400 years of anarchy, moral declension, civil unrest, spiritual apostasy ‘*everyone did what was right in his own eyes*’ repeated phrase—**news today as bad or worse.**

In spite of a corrupted culture that abandon God there was still the presence of good people, godly people whose bright light shone in a dark world. A family in **Bethlehem** is in the center of the story. God always has His remnant no matter what the conditions are like. The book of Ruth reveals God’s plan for the ages in spite the corrupt & perverse ways people were living.

*In the last days perilous times come, people will be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...because of iniquity the love of many will wax cold’ **Matt 24***

*1 Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons. 2 And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon (*sickly*) and Chilion (*pining*), Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah.*

Bethlehem-*house of bread*; Judah-*praise*; Elimelech-*my God is king*; Naomi-*pleasant*; Mahlon-*sickly*; Chilion-*pining*; Ruth-*friendship/companion*

Children named after circumstances of birth—twins Esau (*hairy*) & Jacob (*heal catcher*) –

We don’t move & leave our problems behind, we bring them w/ us plus they will come back to teach us or haunt us.

Famine often a sign of judgment – house of bread, land of praise – Elimelech my God is king now leaving all that the namesake implies for a pagan land.

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They sojourned or meandered like weather vain. Good intentions often result in bad outcomes. Yet God sovereignty turns bad decisions into divine providence.

These were difficult days—*every man did what was right in his own eyes*, **no** king, **no** strong leader, backsliders, these were dark days witnessed by the last three chapters of Judges. Worshiped Baal & Ashtoreth so God turned them over to the enemy to plunder & abuse them. The people were severely distressed as the hand of the Lord was upon them for evil. The book of Judges spans 350-400 years.

Yet God is sovereign & moves a nation & people according to His will, blessing or destruction or chastisement. And always has His godly ones in middle of these dark days.

Famine reveals much—faith or fear, determination or falling away, strength or weakness. Some give up & move out. Elimelech looking out for his family or lacking faith to stick it out, we don't know. But left the *'house of bread'* Bethlehem for a pagan country, God said of Moab 'is my washbowl'. Son of incest—Lot & daughter--connotation of "waste, nothingness" (*Smith & Cornwall's "Exhaustive Dictionary of Bible Names"*)

They left promise land to seek help in a pagan land & lost everything. We can do a lot of unwise things in time of desperation & yet God uses circumstances, good & bad, to accomplish His purposes. *"Many are the afflictions of the righteous. But the Lord delivers him out of them all. Ps 34:19*

Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there. 3 Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. 4 And they took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years. 5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.

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Show map Moab was situated along the eastern border of the Dead Sea, on the plateau between the Dead Sea & the Arabian desert. It was about 35 miles long and 25 miles wide. Although primarily a high plateau, Moab also had mountainous areas & deep gorges. It was a fertile area for crops & herds.

Naomi at an all time low & questions arise – why did we come here? Why sons marry pagan women? Law in Israel only marry Hebrew. Good intentions can lead to a bad outcome. Wanting the best for the family & things turn bitter. Yet God can take **mistakes** & create **masterpieces**.

No sooner in the land & Elimelech dies—had to wonder if it right decision. Maybe to comfort & start over sons marry Moabite women. In land 10 years & son die. Naomi heartbroken & questioning why did we move here, how can God be in this. Death of love one brings grief & anger & blame & regret—God why did you allow this? For C of G **grieving** for self not one who now is w/ Lord. For Naomi hurt, despair & questions. Has Moabite daughter in laws. Law of Moses said

.Moabites distant relation to Israel &, yet harassed when Jews came out of Egypt to promise land--worshippers of Chemosh--child sacrifice.

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD had visited His people in giving them food. 7 So she departed 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. 8 And 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 "May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each 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, but we will surely return with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 12 "Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons, 13 would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me."

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Selfless--to lessen the pain & suffering of the girls—Naomi may feel guilt that she part of the plan that turned sour, so go back.

Pain can bring the **best** out of a person or the **worst**. Naomi not thinking of herself, although it was a time when she needed support & encouragement. Thinking of the girls & their future, she sends them back to their people to remarry & have a family. Jewish culture was such that the family marry w/in the family, a **go'el (kinsman redeemer)**. Brother die the next brother or next of kin marry the widow & raise up offspring to deceased.

Yet Naomi tells them it is not a possibility that she marry have children & they wait until sons come of age to marry. Reality is there is no way she can supply a **go'el** she's too old. Go back to your people & find a husband. An act of selfless love example of compassion-*looks out for need of others*.

14 And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. 15 Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law." 16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back 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 I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me." 18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

Ruth is selfless as well—*we draw to ourselves of like kind*—she saw in Naomi & family God of Israel love not like Chemosh god of death – child sacrifice

We have a tendency to think less of Orpah because she goes back *'to her people and her gods'* but if we consider that for ten years she had heard & seen the example of the God of Israel from the life of Naomi & the time of her marriage to her husband---could it be possible she went back to her people as an evangelist telling of the God who is creator & gives life instead of the god Chemos who takes life. We will never know this side of heaven but it may be true.

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Even w/ Naomi's encouragement to Ruth to return w/ her sister in law. Ruth is steadfast in her loyalty to her mother in law & the impact made on her life not only to follow her but her God...*ultimately to death do us part*. The kind of friendship and loyalty she shows is what we need to emulate.

Again pain can bring the best out of a person and it shows here in Ruth, bearing the loss of a husband and support of a grieving mother in law, leaving the land of your birth going to a foreign land. We admire her willingness to trust the future to providence which known or unknown is in God's sovereign hands.

19 So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came about when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, "Is this Naomi?" 20 And she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. 21 "I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?" 22 So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

We tend to blame God for the messes we get ourselves into & say why did God allow it when we ourselves created the situation. Naomi acknowledges that God was in charge of the bad decisions. She's broken but not bitter, hurting but not hating. In our despondency because of hurt & disillusionment we can lose purpose & vision yet in God providence & sovereignty we look to Him. He is the **pro** of every situation we get ourselves into. Though we lose vision He is our provision. When Mary lost vision at Jesus tomb because her eyes filled w/ tears she mistook Him for the gardener & said *'where have you laid the body of my Lord'* Jesus said her name & her eyes were opened, she rejoiced at the presence of her resurrected Lord.

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For I know the plans that I have for you plans for welfare and not calamity to give you a future and a hope Jer 29:11

Reunion of old friends & acquaintances—what they remembered her to be—**-Pleasantness** Naomi--happy, joyful when she left but something is different about her, she doesn't look the same, she looks haggard, worn out, kind of a sour look, even unpleasant.

They asked her are you Naomi? Don't call me **pleasant**, call me **bitter**—God has not been good to me—blaming God for misfortune. I went out full and came back empty – like prodigal – God is against me, He has brought this grief upon me.

Ruth awkward, hard to fit in as a Moabite woman—lowest of the low in that culture. *Dt 23: 3 No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation. 4 For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim-to pronounce a curse on you.*

Often times faith that is there is hidden, covered up by the pain, sorrow & grieve that is so present—Mary didn't recognize the Lord thru the tears but then she did. Faith hides itself blinds us to the Lord until faith arise as son of 'god in our hearts *Ps 30:5 For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning.*

Faith says.....*"Though the fig tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail, and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." Hab 3:17-19*