

The Romance of Redemption – The Book of Ruth #1

Ruin

Ruth 1:1-5

Introduction:

1. This is the only book of the Bible named for a Gentile woman
 - a. It is one of two books named for women
 - b. Esther was a Jew who married and Gentile man and Ruth was a Gentile who married a Jewish man
2. This is a love story which never mentions the word “love”
3. The setting for the story of Ruth is ruin
 - a. Ruin brought Ruth on the stage of this moving Biblical narrative
 - b. Ruin caused Ruth, a Moabitess, to become part of a Jewish family and eventually she became the ancestress of Christ
 - c. Naomi described this ruin as going from “fullness to emptiness” in 1:21
 - d. But emptiness and ruin were not the end of the account of Ruth
4. The grace of God changed the emptiness to be replaced by fullness of blessing
 - a. Where death had reigned, grace brought life
 - b. Hearts that had been emptied of joy / hope were filled with rejoicing / promise
5. What a great picture of salvation
 - a. What sin ruins – God can restore
 - b. Where helplessness and hopelessness reign the Savior can step in providing righteousness and redemption.

I. The Famine – vs 1a

1 Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land.

- Our story begins with a famine of food
- The famine is a significant part of the ruin that is the background for this story
- Our text gives us two specifics about this famine

A. The Period – “in the days when judges ruled”

1. “now” connects Ruth with the book of Judges
 - a) *The period of the Judges lasted for 450 yrs – Acts 13:20 – 13 judges ruled*
 - b) *It is not possible from this verse to determine exactly when in the 450 yrs that the book of Ruth occurs*
2. Reference to this period would tell us about the character of this time
 - a) *This was an evil period in the history of Israel*
 - b) *It was a time of moral and theological degradation*
 - c) *8x Judges said that Israel “did evil”*
 - d) *The last verse sums up the darkness of those days*
Jg 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.
 - e) *There was absence of a ruler and absence of righteousness*
3. This explains why the famine came – God’s judgment
 - a) *With all the evil of the days of the Judges there was plenty of cause for God to bring famine to the land – famines chasten God’s people*
 - b) *Enemies would come in to steal crops and food from the people*
 - c) *That there were not more famines during this time is a testimony to the grace of God*

4. The days of the Judges were days of disobedience
 - a) *Sin → Judgment → Repentance → Deliverance → Back around*
 - b) *Each time the nation went through the cycle, the chastening became greater and longer*
 - c) *Each time through the cycle, they waited longer before repenting*
 - d) *When we backslide, our hearts become hardened by continuing in disobedience*
5. The days of the Judges were days of defeat
 - a) *Disobeying God brought defeat for the Israelites*
 - b) *Property and cities were destroyed, crops and animals were taken*
 - c) *Remember that the disobedient will meet defeat - just look at Saul*
6. The days of the Judges were days of disgrace
 - a) *The moral condition of Israel was low during the days of the judges*
 - b) *21:25 - "every man did that which was right in his own eyes"*
 - c) *This sounds like America today - doesn't it?*

B. The Place – vs 1b

1 And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab...

1. The place of this famine was in Bethlehem in the land of Judah
 - a) *Judah here distinguishes this place from the Bethlehem in the territory of Zebulun*
 - b) *This town is famous today for David and Christ were born there*
 - c) *At the time of Ruth neither David nor Christ had been born yet*
2. There is an inconsistency here
 - a) *Bethlehem = house of bread – a very fertile region*
 - b) *It is surprising to see a famine here*
 - c) *How inconsistent for a Jew to lead his family from Bethlehem to Moab*
 - d) *Sin always changes fruitfulness to famine*
3. There is not a greater place to abide than in the will of God and no better place to attend than the house of God
 - a) *To abide in the will of God fills the heart with heavenly praise*
 - b) *To attend the house of God feeds the soul with heavenly bread*

II. The Failures – vs 1, 2, 4

- The famine of food was bad enough
- But there were moral and spiritual failures in these verses

A. Failure in the Move – vs 1b

1 ...And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

1. There was Disobedience in the Move
 - a) *Moving to Moab was an act of disobedience*
 - b) *Elimelech did that which was right in his own eyes*
 - c) *The Israelites were to live in the land given to them by God*
 - d) *Joshua warned the people not to live among the heathen*

Jos 23:7 That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them: 12 Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you:

- e) *The Israelites were not to live among the heathen in Palestine neither were they to live among the heathen in their lands*
- f) *Forsaking Palestine was practically a denial of one's faith*
- g) *This is a picture of a believer leaving the will of God and the house of God*
 - (1) Ps 108:9 – God says, “Moab is my washpot”
 - (2) They left the house of bread for the garbage can
- h) *STAY where God's Bread is found!*
 - (1) Stay there even during the hard times! Do not leave the land of Praise and the House of Bread for any reason!
 - (2) Christian don't let anything take the place of the Bible (Bread) in your life!
 - (3) Live it! Study it! Memorize it! Meditate in it! Obey it! Live it! Speak of it!
 - (4) Teach it to your family and other loved ones! Honor it as the written Word that tells you of Jesus, the Living Word!
- i) *The devil has used food to lead believers astray*
 - (1) He tried that with Jesus in Matt 4:3
 - (2) Esau comes to mind! Hebrews 12:16 briefly talks about: "Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." He actually "sold out" for one meal of soup!
 - (3) Samson loved food ("honey") so much he violated his Nazarite Vow to reach into the carcass of a DEAD lion ... simple to get "dessert!" Judges 14:9

2. There was Distrust in the Move

- a) *This move evidenced a lack of faith in God*
Pr 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.
- b) *It said that Elimelech did not trust God to take care of him*
- c) *Elimelech looked at the famine through the eyes of the flesh instead of faith*
- d) *The real test of our faith comes when things get tough*
- e) *Difficult times either drive us closer to God for further away*
- f) *His name means “God is my king” but he did not act like it here*
- g) *Elimelech's decision to leave can be defended only with human reasoning*
 - (1) “I’ve got to provide for my family”
 - (2) “I’m not sitting around waiting to die”
 - (3) “At least, I’m going to do something”

3. The Defiled in the Move

- a) *It was not just Elimelech – he took his wife and sons*
- b) *When you backslide, you do not backslide alone*
- c) *When you sin, you cause others to sin*
- d) *As father, he should have led his family in the right way – not away from God*

4. The Deterrent in the Move

- a) *The warning from Abraham in Gen 12 was plain*
- b) *Abraham left Canaan and went to Egypt during a time of famine*
- c) *In Egypt he picked up Hagar who caused many problems later*
- d) *Elimelech should have learned from Abraham's lesson*

5. The Duration of the Move – vs 2, 4

2b ... And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. 4... and they dwelled there about ten years.

- a) *Maybe they planned to stay in Moab just a short time*
- b) *The short time turned into ten years*
- c) *Imagine, ten years out of the will of God*
 - (1) Like a believer who stops attending on Wed night
 - (2) They miss now and then and eventually quit
- d) *This continued even when losses were great*
 - (1) Elimelech died and the family stayed in Moab
 - (2) One son died and they stayed in Moab
 - (3) The other son died and they stayed in Moab
- e) *Oh how sin blinds the eyes in spite of the cost*

B. Failure in Their Marriages – vs 3-4

3 And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. 4 And they took them wives of the women of Moab...

1. Marriages Forbidden

- a) *Like the move to Moab, the marriage to Moabites was also wrong*
- b) *Both Ezra and Nehemiah faced the problem of intermarriage of God's people with others*
- c) *Both condemned these marriages strongly*
- d) *Today believers should not intermarry with unbelievers*

2Co 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

2. Marriages Furthered

- a) *Elimelech left Israel for Moab and this led to the intermarriage*
- b) *If you fail to separate from the world, then you will become more and more entangled with the world*
- c) *Keep company with the unholy and soon you will be yoking up with the ungodly*
- d) *Mock separation if you will, but a lack of separation has brought much sorrow to Christians and lead them further from God*

III. The Fatalities – vs 5

3 And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. 5 And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

- Three fatalities occurred, Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion all died
- They sought to escape death by starvation but died anyway

A. Cause

Ro 6:23a For the wages of sin is death...

1. The cause of these deaths was sin
2. These deaths were judgment from God for leaving Israel for Moab
3. The names of the sons indicate that they were sickly
 - a) *Mahlon = puny, sickly*
 - b) *Chilion = pining, consumption*
4. The move to Moab looked so promising
 - a) *But it eventually led to the death of the three men*
 - b) *Sin is like that – it looks promising but brings death*

5. Could it be that Elimelech and Naomi had begun to drift from God long before they ever left Bethlehem?
 - a) *Elimelech = my God is king – but he didn't live up to his name*
 - b) *Was God trying to get their attention ?*
 - c) *Were the boys the first act of discipline?*
 - d) *Was this God smacking the hands of Naomi and Elimelech saying, "You need to get right with me and once again walk with me."*

B. Consequences

5 And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

1. Though Naomi survived, she was left desolate
2. She had neither husband nor sons
3. Naomi is a picture of the desolation that comes from sin
 - a) *It impoverished the prodigal son*
 - b) *It can bankrupt a soul for all eternity*
4. This is not to suggest that all tragedy and sorrow is the result of sin or disobedience – but many times it is
5. When there is a decline in the parents, it is seen in the children
6. When there is a decline in the pastor and church leaders, it will be seen in the church.

Conclusion:

1. We can trust God to take care of us
2. Be careful about disobeying God, it will cause sorrow
3. Dad, you are the spiritual leader of your family – lead them properly