

The Book of Ruth
The Maid from Moab meets the Bachelor from Bethlehem

Chapter One:
Decision Determines Destiny

- I. Principle of Willing Choice
- A. ***Ruth 1:1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. 2 The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.***
- B. You are free to choose, but you are not free not to choose
- C. Choices have consequences that cannot be avoided
- D. The contours of Elimelech's wrongful choice
1. Wrong Motive - he's after bread, material, rather than spiritual things.
 - a. Mat 6:33 *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*
 2. Wrong Method - operating by sight not by faith. Here he was living on the house of bread (Bethlehem) but he only saw famine. He could not see God's providence. He yields to fear.
 3. Wrong Master - He went to Moab, went to the other side
 - a. Deut 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 to pronounce a curse on you.*
 - b. Josh 27:7 *Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them.*
- II. Problems of a Wicked Choice
- A. ***3 Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, 5 both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. 6 When she heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. 7***

With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. 8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. 9 May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them and they wept aloud 10 and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? 12 Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me--even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons-- 13 would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has gone out against me!" 14 At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her. 15 "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

- B. Sin brings only trouble. Naomi who survives nevertheless struggles with sin in her life and the consequences. She:
1. **REAPS** - Elimelech went looking for a livelihood and found only a grave. His sons marry Moabite women, something forbidden. Then they die, and three women are widowed.
 - a. Gen 2:17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."
 - b. Rom 6:21 What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 2. **REALIZES** - Further, it is heard that God came to the aid of his people back in Israel! Their whole trip was now seen as misguided. Had they remained they would have found food still been among their kin. Now Naomi is hungry, widowed and in a foreign land. V.6
 3. **RETURNS** - but from merely material motives (bread) v. 6
 4. **RECRIMINATES** - Naomi grows bitter and blames God (v. 13) *cf*:
 - a. *20 "Don't call me Naomi, " she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. 21 I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."*
 5. **RELAPSES** - She is so backslidden that she even tells them to go back to

their own gods. V. 15

III. Power of a Wise Choice

- A. **16 But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me." 18 When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. 19 So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?" 20 "Don't call me Naomi, " she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. 21 I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."**
- B. Now the Focus shifts to Ruth. Consider Ruth's condition. She is
1. Cursed - she is a Gentile, unwelcomed and considered cursed of God
 2. Crushed - she has lost her husband and has no children. She is the poorest of the poor.
 3. Condemned - Condemned to a life of poverty and begging
- C. But resolute Ruth makes a decision for God. This is in contrast to her sister Orpah who turns back and is never heard from again.
- D. Note Seven things about her Decision¹
1. **NEW DETERMINATION** - v. 16 **But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you.** She, unlike her sister will not be discouraged from going to God's land
 2. **NEW DIRECTION** - **Where you go I will go** - She will go out of Moab to the Promised land. The World behind me, the Cross before me.
 3. **NEW DEPENDANCE** - **where you stay I will stay.** i.e. I am coming into your household, under your shelter, I will live with your provisions.
 4. **NEW DESIRE** - **Your people will be my people** - I want to be with the people of God, I don't want to hang out with pagans. I don't want to stay in among a people of death, debauchery, degradation and defilement. Not with idol worshipers, but with the people of God. One of the marks of a true Christian is to love the people of God.
 5. **NEW DEVOTION** - **and your God my God.** I am turning from my idols to the one true God. I forsake them all that I may serve the God of Israel.
 6. **NEW DEDICATION** - v. 17 **Where you die I will die** - I am going with you all the way. I'm not going to go to God's house, and if things get bad I'll come back to Moab. This is a lifetime commitment.
 7. **NEW DESTINY** - **and there I will be buried.** Even death will not

¹Since Ruth is an image of the Church, we should also project these seven things onto our decision for Jesus.

separate us.

- a. *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 8:38)*
- b. *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 15:54)*

- E. It was her decision to make and she reaps a destiny in glory. Compare her decision to that of Elimelech. We are free to choose but we are not free not to choose.

IV. The Providence of well-timed Choice

- A. **22 So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.**
- B. It is the barely harvest that will provide opportunity for Ruth to meet Boaz, her *goel* (Redeemer)
- C. God may not come when you want him but he's right on time

The Book of Ruth

Basic Facts:

Date of Composition: ca. 950 B.C. It serves as a kind of transition book between the period of the

Judges and the Monarchy

Author: Unknown, some think it was Samuel.

Theme: Ruth is a story of faithfulness (Hesed) and redemption. Ruth shows faithfulness in accepting

a God of Israel, God shows faithfulness in preserving Ruth and sending her

a Redeemer (goel) Boaz.. Boaz too shows faithfulness by fulfilling his Covenant role as near kinsman.

Significance: From the Old Testament perspective the Book of Ruth shows a link to King David. Ruth is the great grandmother of King David and, interestingly enough, not

A Jew. From the New Testament perspective, Ruth is a relative Jesus who was of the House of David. Further, Boaz of Bethlehem is a type of Jesus. Ruth is a type of the Church. Their marriage symbolizes the marriage of Christ and the Church. Ruth further typifies the Christian and our call To leave all and accept Christ.

Dramatis Personae -

Elimelech (God is my king) - the Husband of Naomi who makes a bad decision to go to Moab and Who there dies

Naomi - (pleasant) - the wife of Elimelech and mother in law to Ruth

Mahlon and Chilion - sons of Elimelech and Naomi who die in Moab

Orpah - Moabite wife of Chilion who did not return with Ruth and Naomi

Ruth (Companion, friend) - Moabite wife of Mahlon who returns with Naomi And becomes the paragon of faith.

Boaz - distant Kinsman of Ruth who thereby becomes her Goel (redeemer) and Marries her.

Jesse - the son of Boaz and Ruth who is grandfather to David.