

This, with the stative verb, points to the act that Naomi had been "full," but things had radically changed! She was an empty vessel (cf. Judges 7:16), her hands were empty (Neh. 5:13), her entire life was vain (Deut. 32:47).

### 3. BLESSING AT BETHLEHEM v. 22.

#### a. Naomi's return.

This evidenced that a wanderer had returned home. The singular verb shows the force of the matter is that Naomi is back!

#### b. Ruth's presence.

Again she is called a "Moabite." She never lost her former identity, but God changed her (2 Cor. 5:17).

#### c. Harvest's beginning.

The plural verb shows that Ruth and Naomi came into the fulness of barley harvest. She had left in a famine (v. 1) and returned to find that God provided in the land where He had promised He would. This opens up the rest of the story.

Conclusion Elimelech never returned. He stands as a witness that some who remove themselves from spiritual privilege are not guaranteed a return to that position. This is not loss of salvation but loss of privilege (John 10:28; John 15:2, 6). God dealt differently with Naomi. She is a witness to God's grace. Ruth comes forward to exemplify the salvation of the heathen. God can do for a Moabite what He had done for Israel. What a God of compassion. Holy be His Name forever.

## THE BOOK OF RUTH

### "Destitution in Moab"

Ruth 1:19-22

#### Introduction

1. Here is a book with a message. Yet not one, but many messages. One certainly comes across with deep significance: God does meet the needs of His own.

2. In this instance it is the family of Elimelech. It appears that he took his family into Moab and did so at his own loss. He died there and so did his sons (vv. 3, 5). This left his wife, Naomi, in a desperate situation.

3. But God moved toward her. This is always His way of doing things. He brings blessing to His own people (v. 6). While still in Moab (this is affirmed so strongly!), God provided and called her back to Israel. The "prodigal" was touched while in "far country" (Luke 15:13).

4. Orpah and Ruth were the Moabitish daughters-in-law. Both apparently decided to return to Israel with Naomi (v. 7). Subsequent to this initial intent, it became evident that while Ruth had made a true commitment to the Lord (proper theology) and His behavior (life-style or sociology), Orpah had not so done. Orpah, therefore, turned back to Moab, but Ruth moved forward with Naomi. In doing this, she gave a testimony which is absolutely classical (vv. 16, 17). It included:

#### a. Negatively

The imperatival form with the negative gives the verb "intreat" full force. It means to fall upon in order to kill (Judges 8:21), but in a good sense to assail with petitions, urge, entreat (here, Jer. 7:16). Two actions are related:

1) To leave Idea is: to leave Naomi, God of Israel, and the new life-style she had taken with Naomi.

2) To return Idea is: to return to pagan Moabitish beliefs and life-style. The phrase "after thee" is a symbol of the true worship of God. This she could not do.

b. Positively

Five of the most unusual comments are made here:

1) To transfer Idea: where you go, I go. There was no intent to deviate from the path of the Lord as expressed in Naomi.

2) To reside Idea: the verb means to pass the night. Hence, Ruth's intent was to remain united to Naomi always.

3) To identify Idea: while there is no verb, the thought is that she would no longer be a Moabite, but an Israelite. Naomi's people were now hers. This is what happens when folks get saved! God's people become theirs forever now.

4) To worship Idea: the mention of God may sound simple, but its implication is that the Moabitish idols had been left behind (1 Thess. 1:9).

5) To persist Idea: there was to be no turning back from the commitment. Where Naomi died, she would also, and she would be buried there, too!

The force of all this wonderful testimony is given in the Word (v. 18). The formula given (v. 17) and the firm words of intent (v. 18) imply that nothing but death could separate the two. God would bring punishment if it were otherwise (cf. 1 Kings 19:2; 2 Kings 6:31).

Such a firm conviction by Ruth received a warm and generous response. It was rewarded fully (v. 18): 1) Naomi observed the commitment of Ruth (she "saw"). 2) Further, she decided nothing would change Ruth (so she "left off") which means to become languid, flabby or left alone (as in Ex. 14:12). Ruth's furrow had been cut.

5. With the stage set this way--Orpah gone and Ruth committed, Naomi forged ahead. This resulted in these events:

1. JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM v. 19.

a. The fact of it.

The text is simple. Ruth and Naomi travelled until they came to Bethlehem. That was it. They got to their destination as purposed.

b. The response to it.

Having travelled the 50 miles to Bethlehem, their arrival caused no small stir. The Hebrew verb employed for "moved" means to have a murmuring, a confused noise or sound. It means that all the "city" knew the matter (Psa. 42:6, 12). Commotion was everywhere. The stir was over both Ruth and Naomi as the plural pronoun notes. They then raised the question: "Is this (feminine singular) Naomi?" After ten years (v. 4), this was a major event.

2. CONFESSIO AT BETHLEHEM vv. 20, 21.

a. By instruction.

The imperatival force of the verbs "call me not, call" are significant. Naomi felt the impact of God's hand on herself, hence these strong verbs. Naomi means "my pleasantness" and comes from a verb meaning "to be sweet, lovely" (Prov. 9:17; Song of Sol. 7:7). Mara means "be perverse, strip, be against, bitter, oppose, rebel" (Ex. 15:23; Num. 33:8). Its root is a verb meaning to "make bitter, deal bitterly, cause someone extreme sorrow."

b. By evaluation.

Four times Naomi uses the name of God. Twice it is the covenant keeping Name (Jehovah) and twice it is the omnipotent God (Shaddai). Connected with these names of God are the affirmations in the verbs: dealt bitterly (v. 20), brought empty (amply supplied destitute, v. 21), answered forensically as a witness, hence to testify against (v. 20), and finally to actually suffer evil against (v. 20). For Naomi, the whole situation was against her. She failed to see at this point the hand of God in it all, albeit she used His Name frequently. She was bitter about everything.

c. By comparison.

The emphatic personal pronoun "I" is used (v. 20).