

## THE BOOK OF RUTH

### "Dejection in Moab"

Ruth 1:1-5

#### Introduction

1. This short book of 85 verses is tremendously significant in the Word of God. It provides important links in the genealogy of David (4:13-22).
2. The book also provides information concerning the kinsman redeemer concept. This relates particularly to our Lord Jesus who became our kin and redeemed us with His perfect sacrifice on Calvary.
3. The historical incidents in the book reveal the marvelous overruling of the Lord in the events of the family of Elimelech. Our times truly are in His hands (Psa. 31:15). What transpired is clearly recorded in these verses. Study them and be benefited in your heart:

#### 1. The TIME of the problem v. 1.

All that takes place in this book is related to the times of the "judges." Paul tells about this period briefly (Acts 13:20). The basic purposes in ministry of the judges is outlined in the Word (Judges 2:1-23). Among the judges recorded are eight major ones (those who engaged in military activity and had an extensive record in the Bible, such as Othneil, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, Eli, and Samuel). Six minor ones are also recorded (Shamfar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon). A key verse for the ministry of the judges is Judges 2:16, but a statement of the character of the times is Judges 21:25--people did what they desired in their own eyes. It was a sad period in the history of Israel.

#### 2. The PLACE of the problem v. 1.

Two basic places of significance are mentioned: Bethlehem-Judah and Moab. Now there were two Bethlehems, one in the north and the other in the south. This is the southern one and the same city in which our Lord was born (Micah 5:2). The old name of Bethlehem was Ephrath (Micah 5:2). Now the name of this city means "house of bread" and the old name means "fruitful region." Tragically it had now become a place of famine! This is the price of apostasy. While there may be a variety of reasons why this came to pass, it probably is best to see it as the result of an invasion of the land under Midian. This is described in detail in Judges 6. Since their devastation of the land reached to Gaza, it is very likely they got to Bethlehem, too. Now the other place which is important is Moab. One thing is known

of this place: the nation was born out of incest (Gen. 19:31-37). They had attempted to curse the people of God (Num. 22-24). They finally seduced Israel into idolatry and fornication (Num. 25:1-5). God placed a severe prohibition against relationship with this group (Deut. 23:3-6). Moab had also oppressed Israel for 18 years and this ended through a bloody war (Judges 3:12-30). That Naomi and Elimelech should have gone to Moab is striking. Perhaps it was a time of peace with Moab, but one does wonder how, if corn was scarce in the land, where God had pledged to feed them, they should find things any better in a land on which His curse was resting!

3. The PERSONS of the problem vv. 2-5.

a. Elimelech

This name means "my God is king." He was the husband and head of the family. He should have known that famine was inflicted for sin (Lev. 26). But he sought food in Moab and found a grave.

b. Naomi

Her name means "pleasantness" or "favor." She followed her husband to Moab. She felt her name should be changed to "Mara" (bitterness). She went to Moab with a family and returned empty, her husband and sons having been taken in death.

c. Mahlon and Chilion

These are the names of the two sons. The former (Mahlon) means "weakly" and the latter "pining." They are both genuine Hebrew names. Some have taken the names to mean "song" and "crown" respectively.

d. Ruth and Orpah

The latter name may mean "neck, mane." The former (Ruth) is very uncertain but may mean "friend" or "slightly."

Conclusion Elimelech and his experience is much like that of Israel. Under the theocracy, the Lord was their King. But they went astray into apostasy. They could no longer say "God is my King"---Elimelech had died! His fruit (sons) did too, so Israel lost her song and crown. When all of this took place, Naomi, who spoke of pleasantness and favor, was turned to bitterness. Beloved, this is all true of Israel and individual believers, too. How needful to behave in such a manner that the Lord is King always.