

Ruth Chapter 1 “Decisions”

The book of Ruth is one of the finest short stories in all of Scripture!

A) When Benjamin Franklin was in France, he was talking to a group of **"intellectuals"** who began to scoff him for his belief in the Bible.

Benjamin Franklin was convinced that they were NOT familiar with the Book that they were mocking.

While they were talking he said: **"I have come across an intriguing, little known, love story that I would like to read for you tonight."**

He opened up a copy, not of the entire Bible, but a copy of the Book of Ruth in its own binding, and began to read it to them.

After he finished these 4 short chapters, the listeners were thrilled. **"That is a marvelous story" - "You MUST publish it and spread it everywhere"**

Franklin replied: "It HAS been published... It HAS been spread... It is in the Bible!!"

One of the only two books written that bear the name of women – the other is Esther –

A) But the book of Ruth is prophetically placed in an interesting place –

B) **8th book in our Bibles** – 8 is the number of new Beginnings

C) Ruth definitely signals a new beginning for the people of God!

D) Sandwiched between the book of Judges and 1 Samuel

The book of Judges is a picture of the decline of Israel spiritually – Anarchy

A) Tag in Judges is **“everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes.”**

B) The nation is turning away from God, darkness and idolatry are prevalent.

1) If Judges were a movie it would be rated R or NC 17

Bb) Judges on the one side 1st and 2nd Samuel on the other side – where we see the establishing of David and His kingdom. – God’s Monarchy

1) Time where the nation is seen returning to the Lord –

C) The bridge in between is Ruth.

It begins “In the time of the Judges – during this time of Anarchy and rebellion – there is this incredible story of redemption unfolding

A) God is working in the midst of individual lives – writing a story of redemption that will impact generations to follow

The Blackness of the backdrop of the book of Judges only serves like a piece of black velvet to magnify the Jewel that is placed upon it –

A) **The blackness of the book of Judges** only serves to magnify the **Beauty of God's redemption** that is seen in the Jewel called the book of Ruth

B) **That is good news for us** – because we are living in a day and age where there is a lack of political leadership

1) Where many are doing what is right in their own eyes

C) Spiritually we continue to move toward Anarchy

1) Taken the 10 commandments out of our schools and courthouses – {don't **want God's standard staring us in the face every day.**}

D) Taken out prayer

- 1) Rejected the Biblical view of Marriage
- 2) Rejected the Biblical view of the unborn

D) But in the midst of all of this God's plan of redemption is still in place and still unfolding –

1) We get to play a part in it!

E) Our mission is not to save America but to Save Americans!

So prophetically this book is placed in an interesting place – between the Anarchy but before God's monarchy is put into place.

Short book but Power packed!

A) **85 verses** – the words Yahweh, Elohim, El Shaddai, are used over **20 times**

B) **And the words redeem, redeemer and Kinsmen redeemer are used over 20 times as well.**

C) **So in 85 verses we have over 40 references to God and His plan of redemption. – Book of Redemption**

Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, **{Time frame}** that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, {House of bread} Bethlehem, Judah, {Place of praise} **{So there was famine in the house of bread, the place of praise}** And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. 2 The name of the man was Elimelech, **{God is King}** the name of his wife was Naomi, **{Pleasant}** and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion — Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. **{Cool names Star trek}**

Mahlon = sick

Chilion = pinning or tired - Sick and tired.

And they went to the country of Moab and remained there. **{Psalm 108:9 Moab is my wash pot or my garbage pan}** 3 Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died;

and she was left, and her two sons. 4 Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, {Say Oprah- how I see it- {talk show or an act at SeaWorld} her name means fawn – graceful} and the name of the other Ruth. = Beauty

{So Sick and tired married graceful and beauty}

And they dwelt there about ten years. 5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.

So the Story begins by telling us there was a famine in the land of Israel in Bethlehem.

A) Bethlehem = house of bread, but there is no bread in the house of bread.

B) Imagine going **to Pan era Bread** and there is not even food in the restaurant – multiply that 1,000 fold.

C) Now it seems that this famine and economic crisis was a result of God's judgment – because just 60 miles away in Moab – no famine there.

D) Duet 11 2 Kings 7 reveal that when there is a **famine** in Israel it rarely has to do with **natural phenomenon** –

1) But rather when there is a famine in Israel it is because God's people have turned from the true and living God to worship idols

E) When that happened **God would shut up the heavens** – no rain- crops would fail and famine would be the result.

1) See the Bible tells us that that the Lord loves –He chastens – His chastening is always to bring us back to Him. - Open our eyes

So it would seem very likely considering the condition in Israel during the time of the judges that this famine was the chastening hand of God.

A) The book of Judges reads like a 4 act play – each chapter comprising an Act. –

B) If Chapter 1 were Act 1 – I would give it 4 scenes and call it Decisions – because the 4 scenes center around – 4 pps decisions

C) It was **F.W. Boreham** that said “We make our decisions, and then our decisions turn around and make us”

D) We definitely see an example of that in Chapter 1

Act 1 Scene 1 –

We see a man by the name of Elimelech = God is King - Makes a decision to take his family out of the house of bread and flee to Moab.

A) Moab = Wash pot or Garbage can.

B) I can't count the number of times I have seen this repeated.

**C) Where you see people in the midst of a hard time
Run from the Lord.**

- 1) Emotional famine – Break up or a lay off.
- 2) Physical famine – sickness
- 3) Spiritual famine – dry times

D) Instead of clinging to the Lord – Instead of pressing in – they run to Moab. – They turn to the world.

- 1) Bottle, a relationship, the old life.

E) Pressure living in San Diego – 5th most expensive place to live in the U.S. – Recession

- 1) I need to move – I need to go to Moab

That is what we see happening here – they turned to Moab for temporary reprieve – but v. 4 tells us they remained there 10 yrs

A) That is always the way that it is. – people run to the world seeking temporary reprieve

B) But the days turn into weeks, the weeks turn into months and the months turn into years.

C) Although they have not completely forsaken the Lord they end up floundering in a place they were never intended to be.

1) Precious time and years slipping away – wasted!

D) All because we were not satisfied in the place that God appointed for us to be.

1) We didn't trust Him to be faithful to pull us through whatever situation and difficulty we found ourselves in.

So Elimelech –God is King – takes his family to Moab and the very next thing we are told that happens is Elimelech dies! {Hit camel? /Choke

A) Why did he go to Moab? So he wouldn't die – but he gets there – and he dies.

B) God is King – always dies in Moab – when you leave the Lord's will for your life.

1) When you stop wrestling – and praying – Lord not my will but your will be done – not my kingdom but your kingdom – come.

C) When you leave that place and just start giving into your will – doing what seems right in your eyes –

1) DEATH IS ALWAYS THE RESULT.

So Elimelech dies – the boys Mahlon and Chilion – sick and tired take Moabite wives.

A) But then they die too! – Again why did Elimelech take his family to Moab? So they wouldn't die. He and his boys are dead.

B) That is how Act 1 scene 1 comes to a close – **all 3 men are dead, the stage grows dark the curtain closes**

1) If you paid money for this you are thinking – this is going to be a depressing story.

C) Hang in there it gets better!

Act 1 Scene 2 Opens with another Decision!

A) Naomi this prodigal daughter decides I am going back Home – back to Bethlehem

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had visited His people by giving them bread. 7 Therefore she went out 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.

B) **She comes to her senses** – She heard there was bread in the house of bread again

1) God had visited His people by giving them bread

C) She comes to her senses – that is where I belong!

The Prodigal son came to that same conclusion – He left his fathers house – ran to the world – partied Hard – all gone – famine

A) Pig Pen – He came to his senses – My fathers servants are doing better than this.

B) **“I will go back home – tell my dad I have sinned no longer worthy to be his son – but beg him to let me be one of his servants”**

C) In the pig pen – He came to his senses! –

I BELONG HOME!

1) Fathers house is where I belong.

D) Neither the prodigal son nor Naomi the prodigal daughter knew what to expect when they got there.

1) But they simply knew that is where we belong

If you are a prodigal here today- I want you to embrace that – **You know in your heart** –You belong to the Lord – HS tugging on your heart! –

A) Naomi makes a decision – I am going back to Bethlehem.

8 And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house. The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 The Lord grant that you may find rest, {shelter, nourishment, provision} each in the house of her husband."

So she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. 10 And they said to her, "Surely we will return with you to your people."

11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; {she has owned them}

{Many young ladies would throw a party if their mother in law were leaving town.

But Naomi has been bonded to these two girls – they are close – been through a lot!

United by death – 3 widows – Widows fellowship

MY DAUGHTERS why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? {too young to stay single- Levirate Law – Single Brother was required to marry his brothers widow and produce a child to carry on the family name}

12 Turn back, my daughters, go — for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, 13 would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? {If I had a child today – are you going to wait for a 1 year old? – terrible two's ready for you!}
No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me!"

14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

So Act 1 Scene 2 ends with Another Decision – Orpah decides to stay in Moab – Bids here mother in law farewell.

A) Orpah fades from the pages of scripture never to be heard from again.

B) She chooses to stay in the wash pot – the garbage can – **it is safe**, she has friends and family –

1) **She knows it there** – she doesn't know anything different.

C) She has no concept of what is waiting for her in the land of Israel and with the God of Israel. – She chooses to remain

1) Again we see that every day – people choose to reject Christ and linger in the world – no concept of what they are missing.

D) To Orpah's defense – Naomi encourages her to stay because it seems like the most practical thing to do!

1) That is **Naomi's view point at the moment** – She is thinking practically – not spiritually at this moment.

E) So the light goes out on Scene 2 with Orpah walking back toward Moab!

Act 1 Scene 3 opens with two women standing alone together – Naomi and Ruth at the Crossroads – Orpah is gone now just the two.

ANOTHER DECISION – THIS TIME RUTH'S

15 And she {Naomi} said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

16 But Ruth said: One of the most beautiful of prose in all of literature recognized by both believers and unbelievers alike.

**"Entreat me not to leave you,
Or to turn back from following after you;
For wherever you go, I will go;
And wherever 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 will I be buried.
The Lord do so to me, and more also,
If anything but death parts you and me."**

Even in this backslidden place there is something that Ruth sees in Naomi and her relationship with God that she wants to attach herself to!

A) That is so often the case with the prodigal – they rarely ever turn their backs completely on God.

B) Not that they don't believe any more – they still believe they still know that following Him is right.

C) They are living in Moab – but they still pray at times – they will talk about the Lord

1) But there is no relationship with Him – no real – not close.

D) But others can look on and see – there is something that marks that prodigal as being different.

Every prodigal somewhere along the journey experiences what Naomi is experiencing here.

A) There is a Ruth that comes along side of them – Sometimes like here it is at the beginning

B) Another Prodigal that realizes I need to come back to Jesus too.

1) Sometimes it is an unbeliever that says – I want to know God too.

C) Many times it is a Christian bro or sis that decides to come along side of that Prodigal in their journey back to Christ.

1) It is so needed – the grace of God – that He supplies that.

Ruth is this remarkable woman who decides in her heart that there is more for her with her broken mother in law and her land and her God – than there is in her homeland of Moab.

A) Just like in the case of any prodigal the way back is never easy – it can be full of difficulties

B) This would have been a difficult journey 60 miles 4-5 days on foot

1) If they were residing in the upper region of Moab

It would have **resulted in a 4,000 ft descent** in order to head back toward Israel

2) Followed by a 3,000 foot ascent to get to Bethlehem.

C) Walking together – robbers – dangerous journey for two women going alone. –

1) Ruth says I am going with you!

18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her. 19 Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem.

So that is the way Scene 3 ends – The journey back

Act 1 Scene 4 we will call the Reception

I love what it says next- V.19 **And it happened, when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was excited because of them; and the women said, “Is this Naomi?”**

A) Note they were EXCITED –{ROAR} 10 yrs have passed – Excited!

Aa) This should be the reaction **of every church, every Christian** upon seeing a backslider come home!

B) Remember the **father in the story of the Prodigal son** – What did He do when He saw his son walking toward home? Ran – hug – kiss

C) Doesn't even let him finish his speech – My son was lost and now he is found. – Feast – celebration – **Heaven's reaction.**

D) There was one person who wasn't happy to see the prodigal son come home. – **Elder brother** –
1) **Bummed by his father's reaction** – Concerning his brother –He doesn't deserve all this fuss –

{Let him be like a servant- **good idea shovel manure Listen –Church we can do that too!**

A) Shame on us for the times we have looked with skepticism on a prodigal comes forward.

Aa) How long this time? Judging their hearts – Who are we to do that? - Pharisee – the Elder brother
{Shoots **its wounded**}

B) **Be done with that mentality – repent** – CCV needs to be a place where prodigals feel welcome.

C) **Excited rejoicing – come along side**

1) Prayer people – You need to take the time to sit with that person and ask – what happened – how avoid – how can I help?

D) **Call you this week – Get together for coffee –**

Listen God will not send us prodigals if we don't take care of them!

I LOVE THIS – THEY WERE EXCITED!!!!

They ask is this Naomi? Is that Pleasant- 10 yrs have gone by and Moab has taken its toll on her – aged her.

A) Prodigals usually come home – come back – **the question is always – at what cost.**

B) Living in the world – ages you – takes a toll on you.

C) They are like – Looks like Naomi – sort of? Is that you Naomi?

20 But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, {bitter} for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. {Not so much of a complaint but a confession – supported by what she says next}

21 I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

Listen V. 21 is the destination and perspective of every Prodigal.

A) They come to their senses and they come to this conclusion – I went out Full – come back empty.

B) I thought I was empty when I was leaving – now I realize – I was full –

C) I can't tell you how many times that I have heard that or something like it from Prodigals –

1) I realize now I went out full – now I am empty

2) **I had it good in my parent's house** – they are not really mean like I thought.

D) The world is mean – nasty – tasted it –

This is the destination of every Prodigal – you that it is Moab – the garbage pot –

A) Travel reviews – looked like Paradise in the Brochure – turned out to be a Dump.

B) The Prodigal comes to the realization that it is more blessed to walk with God through the difficulty than to have everything that this world had to offer you and be far from Him.

C) V.21 is always the Realization of the Prodigal – Went out full and I have come back empty.

D) You know how I know that? Been there – **Had my prodigal times! Many of us here have**

But also because this is a story not of punishment – but of redemption.

A) The Father loves you – because He does – He will never let you be satisfied in Moab.

B) He loves you too much to allow you be satisfied by anything that this world has to offer.

C) He will even make you miserable in Moab – you will even experience death – to get your attention – Come back – come home.

1) The only thing that remains to be seen is how long will it take? And what will be the cost.

D) Naomi comes home – Says I went out full – Pleasant – Come back Mara – Bitter – the world has left a bitter taste in my mouth.

Notice one last thing: Ruth 1:22

22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

You know what took place at the Beginning of the Barley harvest?

A) Passover- A lamb a substitute

B) Sins forgiven – Guilt removed.