

Ruth 1 Decisions

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

A) Benjamin Franklin was in France, meeting with a group of "intellectuals" who began to ridicule 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!!"**

Short book but Power packed!

A) 85 verses – the words Yahweh, Eloheim, Elshaddai, are used over 20 times

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

1) So in 85 verses we have over 40 references to God and His plan of redemption. –

Book of Redemption

A) The book of RUTH 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 –

1) because the 4 scenes center around – 4 peoples decisions

C) It was F.W. Boreham 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

THE SETTING

Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, {Time frame} - The Setting

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

C) 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

B) The Blackness of the backdrop of the book of Judges serves like a black piece of velvet

1) **That magnifies the brilliance of the Diamond that is placed upon it.**

C) The blackness of the book of Judges serves to magnify the **Beauty of God's redemption**

1) that is seen in the Jewel called the book of Ruth

Why is this Relevant for us?

A) We also are living in a day/ age where so many in our society are doing what is right in their own eyes

B) That mentality has led our society to this place where it is confused about marriage

1) Confused about sexuality – confused about Gender

C) A society where women are constantly being objectified - # Me too Movement

D) Violence is rampant – Human Sex trafficking is a major problem

E) These issues and many others are signs that we have lost our way- Doing in our own eyes

But in the midst of all of this Confusion – and sin

A) God's plan of redemption is still in place and still unfolding –

B) We get to play a part in it!

C) There is Hope – Where sin abounds – Grace abounds all the more.

D) So with that as a backdrop lets dive into the story

ACT 1 SCENE 1

Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, 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 bin} 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=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.

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 Bin

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) A Bottle, a relationship, the old life.

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 !

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

B) But 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 in some fashion will ALWAYS BE THE RESULT.**

So Elimelech dies – HIS boys Mahlon and Chilion – Sick and Tired take Moabite wives.

A) But then they die too! –

B) Again why did Elimelech take his family to Moab? **So they wouldn't die. He and his boys are dead.**

C) 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 PLAY you are thinking – this is going to be a depressing story.

D) 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 – **House of bread**

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

She comes to her senses – that is where I belong! – The Prodigal son came to that same conclusion – He left his father's house – ran to the world – partied Hard – all gone – famine

A) Pig Pen – He came to his senses – **My father's 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) Father's house is where I belong.

D) Neither the prodigal son or Naomi the prodigal daughter knew what to expect when they got there.

1) But they simply knew that is where we belong

E) The Son was received back by his Father – Ran to him – Party

1) Naomi will be received back by the people – excited

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) Follow the example that Son and Naomi and make a decision today – COME HOME – COME BACK

B) The Lord is waiting and ready to welcome you!

C) So 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 bonded with them}

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

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

C) 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- **Leverite law** – Single Brother was required to marry his brother's 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 –

A)Orpah decides to stay in Moab – Bids here mother in law farewell.

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

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

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

D)She has no concept of what is waiting for her in the land of Israel – with the God of Israel

1)She chooses to remain

E)We see that every day – people choose to reject Christ and linger in the world –

1)no concept of what they are missing in the Lord

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

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

B)As Orpah is walking back into Moab – no doubt tears – from all three women – Orpah glances back

C)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."

This is AMAZING TO ME!

A)Ruth is not just attaching herself to Naomi – but she is attaching herself to Naomi's God

B)But think about this – all she has known of Naomi's God is pain – DEATH

C)If we met Naomi – on the street and asked her to tell us her story –

1)what has following God – got you?

D)PAIN – GRIEF – DEATH

But 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)Think that is true today as well – when unbelievers watch Christians go through hard things

B)Naomi – hasn't completely abandoned God –
1)There was still a flicker of faith even in her backslidden state

C)Ruth noticed that and was drawn to that.

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

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

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) So she makes this decision – I am going with you!

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

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

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

D) Plus 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 fathers reaction** – Concerning his brother – He doesn't deserve all this fuss –

E) 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 it's wounded}

B) CV needs to be a place where prodigals feel welcome.

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

C) **You Prayer people – You need to take the time to sit with that person and ask –**

1) what happened – how avoid – how can I help?

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

E) **I LOVETHIS – 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. 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?"

She Recognizes God's chastening hand upon her!

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 parents' 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 better to walk with God through – hard times

1) Than to run from God seeking reprieve apart from him.

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

D) Hope: God is able to restore the years the locust have eaten.

See this is not a story 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.**

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

E) Naomi comes home – Says I went out full – Pleasant – Come back Mara – Bitter –

1) 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 as a substitute**

C) Passover – Pointed to Jesus

D) The Last supper – The Bread – this is my body given for you

1) Final Passover Lamb

E) Cup – Blood remission of sins

Sins forgiven – Guilt removed.

A) Restoration happens

B) God is able to Restore – the years the locust have eaten

C) Welcome home!