

The Romance of Redemption

The Deciding of Ruth

Lesson 1

Ruth 1

INTRODUCTION: The book of Ruth begins with the story of a “*prodigal family*.” The family of Elimelech had journeyed into the far country of Moab. Ten years and three deaths later, Elimelech’s wife decides to return to Bethlehem-Judah. This decision to return causes Ruth to have to make a decision also. This first chapter records for us THE DECIDING OF RUTH.

I. THE DECISION OF ELIMELECH v 1-5

- A. Elimelech decided to leave Bethlehem-Judah because of the famine v 1-2
BETHLEHEM-JUDAH (v 1) - “*house of bread and praise*” - a small country town in Judah
MOAB (v 1) - “*from father*” - the Gentile country just east of the Dead Sea (Genesis 19:37)
ELIMELECH (v 2) - “*God is my king*”
NAOMI (v 2) - “*pleasant; sweetness*”
MALON (v 2) - “*sickly*”
CHILION (v 2) - “*pinning*”
The family of Elimelech is first seen as a happy contented family dwelling in the land of Judah. However, God has sent a special judgment upon His rebellious people in the form of a famine. (Leviticus 26:14-16; Deuteronomy 11:16-17) Rather than bear the chastisement of the Lord, Elimelech decides to lead his family to leave Bethlehem-Judah for the worldly country of Moab. (Hebrews 12:5-7)
- B. Elimelech and his two sons die in the land of Moab v 3-5
ORPAH (v 4) - “*hind; fawn*”
RUTH (v 4) - “*friendship*”
After living out of God’s will in Moab for some time, Elimelech died leaving Naomi, and her two sons. Following the death of their father, the two boys married Moabite girls which was forbidden by God’s law. (Deuteronomy 7:3-4; Nehemiah 13:23-27) The two sons, with their wives, and their mother remained in the land of Moab about ten years. (v 4) Finally, both sons also died leaving three widows in the land of Moab. (I Corinthians 11:31-32)

II THE DECISION OF NAOMI v 6-15

- A. Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem-Judah v 6-7
With her husband and sons dead, Naomi decided to return to her home town

where her relatives still lived. Both daughters-in-law determined to go back with Naomi for they had heard how that God was once again blessing Israel with good crops. (Luke 15:17-20)

- B. Naomi encourages her daughters-in-law to return to their mother's house and remarry v 8-13
Naomi knows that she is too old to have any more children, and even if she did have another son, it would be years and years before he would be ready to marry one of these daughters-in-law. (Deuteronomy 25:5-6)
- C. Orpah decides to go back into Moab v 14-15
Orpah's decision seemed to her to be the only reasonable thing to do:
- 1) she wanted a husband and children (v 9)
 - 2) she didn't want to leave her family (v 15)
 - 3) she didn't want to leave her gods (v 15)
- Orpah didn't hate Naomi, nor did she hate the Lord, nor did she hate God's people in Israel. She just loved Moab (the world) more! This decision of Orpah's was a bad one, and nothing more is ever said about her. (I John 2:15-17; James 4:4)

III THE DECISION OF RUTH v 16-22

- A. Ruth decided to return to Bethlehem-Judah with Naomi v 16-18
Ruth's response to Naomi contains some of the most beautiful language ever written (v 16-17). Ruth made the right decision about:
- 1) her relatives (v 16) - she left her relatives for the Hebrews
 - 2) her nation (v 16) - she left Moab for Israel
 - 3) her religion (v 16) - she left her idols for God
- Naomi was thoroughly convinced that Ruth intended to go with her, so she left off persuading her to go back to the land of Moab. Ruth's trust now had to be totally in the God of Israel. (Deuteronomy 23:3)
- B. Naomi and Ruth enter Bethlehem-Judah v 18-22
MARA (v 20) - "*bitterness*"
The journey around the Dead Sea from Moab to Bethlehem would have been around 75 miles. It must have been a pitiful sight to see these two poor widows staggering slowly down the road and into the town of Bethlehem-Judah. The town's people could not believe that this poor widow lady could actually be "*Naomi*." Naomi now realized how rich she had been when she left, and how poor and empty she was now. At last, the prodigal had come home. (Luke 15:20-24)
BARLEY HARVEST (v 22) - the first harvest of the year usually occurring in the month of April.