

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

This evening, we find ourselves beginning another book in the scripture and it is the beautiful Book of Ruth.

It is one of two books in the bible devoted to woman. Does anyone know the other book?

The interesting thing about these two books is that there are many comparisons that can be made about them.

- Ruth is a lowly peasant and Esther is the queen of the most powerful nation of its time.
- In the book of Ruth, we find a gentile who weds a Jew to preserve the royal lineage of Jesus Christ.
- In the book of Esther, which happens much later on, we have a Jew who marries a gentile to preserve the Jewish nation – and in doing so, the royal lineage of Jesus Christ.

- God is mentioned by name 25 times in the book of Ruth and in the book of Esther – God is never mentioned by name.

Many people consider the book of Ruth a beautiful love story between Boaz and Ruth – however church, a closer look into the scriptures reveals a greater love story – the love story of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who is willing to redeem us and rescue us from the penalty of our own sin.

Let's pray...

[Rth 1:1-22 NKJV] 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, 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, the name of his wife [was] Naomi, and the names of his two sons [were] Mahlon and Chilion-- Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country

of Moab and remained there. 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, and the name of the other Ruth. 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. 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. 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, 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; why will you go with me? [Are] there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 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? 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. 15 And she 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: "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." 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. 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?" 20 But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, 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?" 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.

In order to fully grasp the book of Ruth, we must know the context that surrounds the book –

So I am going to go ahead and provide a little background on what's going on.

A few weeks ago, when we finished the book of Genesis, the Israelites found themselves in the Land of Egypt.

That is where they prospered and grew in numbers.

After a certain amount of time, new leadership entered the Land of Egypt and the people started to resent the Israelites – so they turned them into slaves.

They were in Egypt a little over 400 years -

God lifts Moses to deliver the Israelites out of Egypt –

They wandered the wilderness for 40 years because they were stubborn – so God lifts up Joshua to lead a new generation of Israelites into the Promised Land.

And with Joshua as their leader, they battle all of the **ites** that were living in the Land of Milk and Honey and eventually, the twelve tribes get their inheritance.

However, something tragic happens when Joshua dies – the subsequent generations start the process all over again.

They start to worship idols – and they start to marry the men and women from the pagan nations around them –

In other words, they become disobedient to the will of God.

They forgot the warning that God had given them when He delivered them out of Egypt.

Turn with me to Deut 28

[Deu 28:1-2 NKJV] 1 "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. 2 "And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:

And what we see right after verse two is the blessing that God would give His people.

Abundance, blessings, victory over their enemies and so on.

So, there was a blessing – however, there was also a curse.

[Deu 28:15, 24 NKJV] 15 "But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake

you: ... 24 "The LORD will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed.

And that is the context where we find the book of Ruth –

In fact, if you look at the last verse from the book of Judges, it reveals to us what the problem was among the Israelites.

[Jdg 21:25 NKJV] 25 In those days [there was] no king in Israel; everyone did [what was] right in his own eyes.

And we can even make the argument that we live in similar times today.

However, despite the chaos and the anarchy and disobedience that is occurring, God is still at work – the same lesson that we just learned from the book of Habakkuk and that is what we see here in the book of Ruth.

[Rth 1:1-2 NKJV] 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, 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, the name of his wife [was] Naomi, and the names of his two sons [were] Mahlon and Chilion-- Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there.

So because of the famine that was happening in the land, this man named Elimelech – which by the way means – God is my king, decides to do something contrary to the meaning of his names and flees to Moab.

Nowhere in scripture do we see Elimelech fall to his knees and seek the council of God in his decision. It is all based on his fleshly desires.

The same thing happened to Abraham early on in his life, he flees a famine and goes down to Egypt without seeking the Lord and not only does he almost lose Sarah in the process, he also brings back Hagar with him.

The name Bethlehem means “House of Bread”

The name Judah, means “Praise” – remember that is the name that Leah gives him as the fourth son despite Jacob giving all the attention to his other wife Rachel.

Now, Moab, is where the descendants of the union between Lot and one of his daughters.

The Moabites were the enemies of the Israelites.

Twice in the Psalms, God says that Moab is His washpot. (Psalm 108:9)

The place were one sticks there dirty feet.

So, Elimelech is leaving the Promised Land, without seeking God, he is leaving the house of bread, he is leaving the house of praise to seek refuge in God's washpot.

Church, this is what happens when we rely on our own wisdom.

That is the 1st mistake that Abimelech made.

The second mistake that Abimelech made was that his focused was on the physical and not the spiritual.

His motives may have been right – he wanted to feed his wife and his children, but he went about it the wrong way.

Church, there are many families today, where we mistake pure motives for God's way.

I have to provide for my family, I have to work 60-80 hours a week to make ends meet, to put food on the table and clothes on their back - and in the process, we abandon the spiritual.

In verse three we have the death of Elimilech

[Rth 1:4 NKJV] 4 Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one [was] Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years.

The family was originally just supposed to be fleeing famine – however, it appears that they have taken up residency in Moab as the sons have now married Moabite woman and they have now lived in Moab for 10 years – Moab has become their home.

[Rth 1:5 NKJV] 5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.

To be a childless widow was to be among the lowest, most disadvantaged classes in the ancient world.

There was no one to support you, and you had to live on the generosity of strangers. Naomi had no family in Moab, and no one else to help her.

It was a desperate situation.

[Rth 1:6 NKJV] 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.

Upon learning that there was bread in the “house of bread” we see Naomi now wanting to go back.

Notice that it wasn't until Naomi lost everything before she heard that there was bread back home.

I don't think God was punishing her for leaving Bethlehem.

Her loss was a corrective one in order to get her back on track, back to the house of bread and the house of praise.

[Rth 1:7-8 NKJV] 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. 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.

As Naomi begins her journey back home to Judah, she tells her two daughter in laws that they would be better off staying in their own land – **this is something that Naomi had to find out the hard way.**

She tells them to go back home and marry Moabite men.

[Rth 1:10-13 NKJV] 10 And they said to her, "Surely we will return with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? [Are] there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 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? No, my daughters; **for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!"**

What Naomi is referring to here in verses 10-13 is the practice that is outlined in the book of Deuteronomy 25.

We saw this in the book of Genesis with the sons of Judah and Tamar. Remember, Tamar married the oldest son and he was wicked – so God killed him, and then the next brother married Tamar and he wouldn't consummate the marriage and God killed him too.

[Deu 25:5-10 NKJV] 5 "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be [married] to a stranger outside [the family]; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. 6 "And it shall

be [that] the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. 7 "But if the man does not want to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate to the elders, and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to raise up a name to his brother in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother.' 8 "Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him. But [if] he stands firm and says, 'I do not want to take her,' 9 "then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother's house.' 10 "And his name shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal removed.'

What Naomi is telling Ruth and Orpah is that even if she was to get remarried and get pregnant right away and conceive – it would be

ridiculous to have them wait until they are old enough to assume the responsibility of marrying them.

At the end of verse 13, Naomi appears to think that God is working against her.

However, the pain and the bitter repercussions that she is experiencing are the consequences of their decision to move and live in Moab.

Naomi is wrong to think that God is working against her – little does she know that God is currently working in her.

[Rth 1:14-18 NKJV] 14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. 15 And she 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: "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."** 18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her.

Orpah was persuaded by Naomi's logic, said a tearful goodbye, & headed home.

Logic wasn't the issue with Ruth, love was. She loved her mother-in-law & decided she was willing to endure whatever fate handed her as long as she could be close to Naomi.

Even after Naomi claimed that God was against her – the statement that Ruth is making here to Naomi is, "the worst God gives is better than the best the world can offer"

Church, Ruth is a wonderful picture of the sinner who repents & comes to faith in Jesus Christ.

God has made it clear that no sinner shall inherit eternal life.

But when the sinner repents of his/her sin, turns their back on all they once were & pledges unswerving devotion to Christ, God no longer calls that person a sinner – now they're a saint.

You see church, it wasn't Naomi's goodness that caused Ruth to follow her. It was Naomi's brokenness and repentant heart that she followed.

[Rth 1:19-20 NKJV] 19 Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem. 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?" 20 But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

Naomi and her family had been away for 10 years, when she finally returns she returns with a Moabite.

When Naomi says “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara”

Naomi means Pleasant

Mara – means bitter.

Naomi is not complaining here – she was simply acknowledging the chastening hand of God upon her life.

**[Heb 12:6 NKJV] 6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives."**

[Rth 1:22 NKJV] 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.

Poor Naomi, she lost her husband, she lost her two sons, almost all of her possessions, all her possessions – however, she must realize that she is still in chapter 1

The blessings will come and be revealed in chapter four.

Sometimes we are fixated on the circumstances in our lives and fail to realize that we are still in chapter one.

God is working in each and every one of our lives right now. Our responsibility is to simply trust Him and walk by faith and look forward to the day when we meet our Redeemer.

Amen...

Let's pray...

CALVARY
Santa Cruz