

Ruth

MOAB, LOYALTY AND COMMITMENT

Introduction

There was a famine in the land of Bethlehem-judah. The famine may have been God's judgment on His people during a time of spiritual and moral decay (Judges 21:25). The book of Ruth takes place sometime during the time of the judges. This was a very dark period of time in Israel's history. The Jews had been unable to conquer completely the Promised Land. They lived among the Canaanites and immersed themselves in the heathen ways of the Canaanites.

Progression of Events

- Elimelech, his wife, Naomi and their two sons were forced to leave Bethlehem in Judah and move to a foreign land called Moab because of the famine in the land. Moab, an enemy nation of Israel, was about a 60-mile journey from Bethlehem.

Reading Deuteronomy 28:15, 22-24 may help explain the famine.

- When Elimelech died, Naomi became a single mom to her sons Mahlon and Chilion. When her sons were grown, they married Moab women. The women's names were Orpah and Ruth. They lived together in Moab about ten years, then both the sons died. Orpah and Ruth were widows just like Naomi.

Did You Know...

Bethlehem-judah means the house of bread and praise

The book of Ruth is the eighth book of the Bible.

Orpah means "double-minded" or some say, "stiff-necked."

Ruth means "satisfied."

- Upon hearing the famine had ended and God's blessings were upon Judah, Naomi decided to return home. Through each difficulty, God had faithfully taken care of Naomi. God does the same for us today. No matter how difficult you may think your life is, Jesus is your Savior and God will meet your needs. "And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

- 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” (Ruth 1:8). Ruth and Orpah were faced with an important choice; to return to their families and the society infested with sin, or go with Naomi and adopt the customs of her people. Sin separates us from God, “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2). Sin is doing and saying anything not pleasant to God. God loves you just as He loved Orpah and Ruth. You too have an important decision to make like Orpah and Ruth did; worship God faithfully or continue in sin.

In Ruth’s Day...

In ancient times, women depended on their husbands. If a husband died, all of his property and belongings went to the family member who owned the family birthright and the widow would be left with absolutely nothing. If no one came to her aid, she could spend the rest of her life in poverty.

Israelite law realized the plight of the widow and made some specific laws.

1. If the widow had sons, it was their responsibility to take care of their mother.
2. If the widow had no sons, she could return to her parents.

If a widow’s husband had brothers, they were required to take her in as their wife, beginning with the oldest. Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, apparently had no brothers.

- Naomi considered the well being of her daughter-in-laws when she encouraged them to return to their families and start their lives over again. Marriage during this time meant security and Naomi knew these young women would have little chance finding a husband as foreigners in Judah.

- While neither woman wanted to go, Orpah turned back to her family and her gods. Naomi said to Ruth, “Look, your sister-in-law is going back to her own people and her own gods. Go back with her” (Ruth 1:15). Orpah is not mentioned again. Ruth decided to stay with Naomi despite the three attempts by Naomi to encourage her to return home to Moab. Ruth chose a life with Naomi over her family. Right decisions are very important. Because Ruth made the right decision she became the great grandmother of David and a descendant in the line of Jesus Christ.

- 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. Where you die, I will die and there will be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me” (Ruth 1:16, 17). Even though Ruth was a Moabitess this did not stop her from worshipping the one true God. The Jewish people are not the only people God loves. God used the Jews so the rest of the world would know Him. This was fulfilled when Jesus Christ was born and the entire world came to know God. God loves all people equally and without partiality. The story of Ruth is certainly an example of this.

- The name Naomi means “pleasant, delightful, lovely”. Once Naomi and Ruth reached Bethlehem the people joyfully welcomed her home. However, Naomi was depressed and full of grief. She expressed this grief toward God when she said, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty” (Ruth 1:20,21). Mara means “bitter”. Naomi’s

bitter attitude clouded her ability to see God was providing her a blessing and she was not returning home empty-handed. The blessing was Ruth.

- When they arrived back in Bethlehem, it was the beginning of the barley harvest. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Discussion and Questions

1. At what time did the events in Ruth take place?
2. What is said about this time period?
3. Who moved to Moab?
4. How long did they live in Moab and what tragedies struck them?
5. What counsel did Naomi give to Ruth and Orpah?
6. How did Ruth and Orpah respond?
7. Read Ruth 1:16,17. Was Ruth’s decision only a matter of personal loyalty to her mother-in-law?
8. In Naomi’s grief, what was it she could not see?
9. What season was it when they returned to Bethlehem?

Memory Verse

“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. Where you die, I will die and there will be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me”

Ruth 1:16, 17

Craft: Friendship Salad

Materials

- Apples
- Oranges
- Strawberries
- Blueberries
- Raspberries
- Bananas
- Kiwi
- Peaches
- Mixing bowl
- Little bowls or cups
- Forks

Directions

1. Cut up all the fruit.
2. Give each child a type of fruit to put in the bowl.
3. Mix the fruit together to make a fruit salad.
4. Pass out the salad for everyone to eat.

Discuss how everyone is different like the fruit in the salad. When mixed together the fruit becomes a wonderful salad. It works together and tastes better with all the different kinds of fruit. Just like friends, each person is different but when together helping each other, they can do many great things. Then share the fruit salad with friends because good friends share.