

Title: **Ruin in Moab**

Passage: **Ruth 1:3-5**

Theme: **Introduction to Ruth**

Number: **0912Ru1.3-5(2)**

Date: **September 16, 2012**

{Read Chapter One}

Here we are, back in the Book of Ruth. An OT drama that most of us are familiar with. We know, of course, that one cannot ever be too familiar w/The Word of God.

George Mueller, best known for having cared for over 10k orphans in England in t/19th c., after having read the Bible through 100x w/increasing delight, made this statement: "I look upon it as a lost day when I have not had a good time over t/Word of God. Friends often say, 'I have so much to do, so many people to see, I cannot find time for Scripture study.'

Perhaps there are not many who have more to do than I. For more than half a century I have never known one day when I had not more business than I could get through. For 4 years I have had annually about 30,000 letters, and most of these have passed through my own hands.

Then, as pastor of a church with 1,200 believers, great has been by care. Besides, I have had charge of five immense orphanages; also, at my publishing depot, the printing and circulating of millions of tracts, books, and Bibles; but I have always made it a rule never to begin work until I have had a good season with God and His Word. The blessing I have received has been wonderful." [cited in *Counter Attack*, Jay Carty, Multnomah Press, 1988, pp. 155ff]

We also know that sometimes familiarity doesn't = accuracy.

There's a story about t/famed Dr. Joseph Parker, Sr. Minister at the City Temple in London. Parker was a contemporary of Muller's. After the am service an elderly woman came to him and said with great gratitude, "You do throw so much light on the Bible, doctor. Do you know that until this morning I had always thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were man and wife!"

As far as the BOR is concerned, we hope to take familiarity & add to it t/precision and accuracy that is fitting for one handing t/Word of Truth.

I have a big challenge before me.

As I've said to sev. of you recently I'm a little out of my element when it comes to OT Exegesis. My expertise in Hebrew is way beyond rusty. And I'm much more comfortable preaching & teaching in t/didactic material of t/NT than I am t/narratives of t/OT.

So this is stretching me – I trust in a good way.

My desire was to make this an end of year series. That is, t/design is to spend a few months, not a few years, in this book.

Not a slight on Ruth as if t/book doesn't deserve t/time. Rather a comment on t/difference between studying a narrative (story) as opposed to t/epistles which are didactic or doctrinal in nature.

Last week we talked a little bit about t/different genres of lit. that are found in t/Bible & how we need to interpret Scripture w/that in mind.

We also talked about t/structure of t/book & noted that Ruth may be organized around t/theme of a 4 Act Drama (ea. of t/4 chpts. being a different act in t/story). Within ea act are multiple scenes.

I. Act One: The Royal Line with Hope in Ruin (1:1-22)

- A. Scene One: Retreat from Bethlehem (vv. 1-2)
- B. Scene Two: Ruin in Moab (vv. 3-5)
- C. Scene Three: Returning to Bethlehem (vv. 6-22)

II. Act Two: The Royal Line with Hope Renewed (2:1-23)

- A. Scene One: Ruth Reaping (vv. 1-7)
- B. Scene Two: Ruth Rewarded - Part 1(vv. 8-13)
- C. Scene Three: Ruth Rewarded - Part 2 (vv. 14-17)
- D. Scene Four: Ruth Reports (vv. 18-23)

III. Act Three: The Royal Line with Hope at Risk (3:1-18)

- A. Scene One: Remedy Proposed (vv. 1-5)
- B. Scene Two: Reception or Rejection (vv. 6-15)
- C. Scene Three: Resting in Providence (vv. 16-18)

IV. Act Four: The Royal Line with Hope Restored (4:1-17)

- A. Scene One: Resolving Legal Matters (vv. 1-12)
- B. Scene Two: Romance and Redemption (vv. 13-17)

*Epilogue - Royal Rights and The Resultant Redeemer (4:18-22)

We have a 4 Act Drama w/12 different scenes. What I hope to do is cover 1 scene ea. Sun.

Last week we covered scene 1. Only 2 vv. but we had much to look at as far as an Intro. / Overview of t/book is concerned.

This week we'll cover scene 2. Challenge there is that there's only 3 verses. In a narrative that's not much to cover as far as content.

The 3rd and last scene of Act 1 covers 17 vv. Challenge for me next time is to cover 17 vv. in one message.

So we don't have much to cover this wk & we have a truck load to cover next wk.

I'm not sure how that will all turn out at this point (keep your seat belts fastened).

If you weren't here last week you not only missed t/intro. you missed some essential background material to t/rest of t/book.

By way of reminder I want to give you a thumbnail sketch

[i] Authorship: Ruth did not write this book that bears her name

Acc. to Jewish tradition = prophet Samuel & while that's possible there's no real evidence to back it up.

Much like Esther, t/only other book in t/Bible named after a woman, we don't know who penned it.

[ii] The book itself was probably written right around 1000 BC

When David was King over Israel.

The book ends w/a genealogy terminating w/David. The fact that he is named but Solomon isn't may indicate that it was written when David was well-known but before t/time of his son, Solomon.

The story of Ruth is set during the time of the Judges, roughly 1375-1020 BC.

Look at 1:1 ==>

Now it came about in the days when the judges governed . . .

Author is referring to a specific block of time, implication being that this block of time (period of the Judges of Israel) is past.

350 yrs. of Judges in Israel (Judges = Chiefs / military leaders).

B4 Israel had a king.

Book of Judges names 12 of them, but there were more than that.

1 Sam 7:15 **Now Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.** 8:1
And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel.

Remember Samuel recognized Saul as Israel's first King

He also anointed David as Saul's replacement.

So we go from t/last Judges (Samuel and his sons) to t/first King, Saul, and Saul's replacement, David. All during t/lifetime of Samuel.

We don't know exactly when this story in Ruth occurred during those 350 yrs. But we're thinking that if there are no gaps in t/genealogies that it was during t/time of Jair or Samson, maybe 100 years before David comes to t/throne.

The entire story covers about a dozen years.

10 of those years are covered in t/first few vv. of Act 1.

I. Act One: The Royal Line with Hope in Ruin (1:1-22)

A. Scene One: Retreat from Bethlehem (vv. 1-2)

Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. . . .

1. Time of the Judges

Now it came about in the days when the judges governed . . .

Sin Cycles

In great distress, the people of Israel turned again to God, who in turn provided a deliverer for them (a judge).

T/Judge would die, they'd forsake God, the same pattern of events was repeated all over again.

Judges 21:25 (last v. in t/entire book): **In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.**

Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. . . .

There's a relationship between the period of the judges and famine.

The famine isn't just a matter of bad luck.

Deut. 28:1–15 (Blessings and Cursings // Reaping and Sowing)

1 “Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.

2 “All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God: 3 “Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. 4 “Blessed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock. 5 “Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

11 “The LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you.

12 “The LORD will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.

15 “But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

23 “The heaven which is over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you, iron. 24 “The LORD will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed.

2. The First Decision: Retreat from Bethlehem to Moab

. . . And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons.

The famine was localized (not uncommon). The area was particularly susceptible to the climate as there was no spring. They relied on cisterns. A drought would devastate the local crops.

(3) Moab

In contrast to Beth. water was plentiful in Moab which also had very rich soil.

(a) History of Israel and Moab was one of conflict

i. The Moabites were despised for at least 5 reasons:

- 1) They were the product of incest (Gen. 19);
- 2) When Israel left Egypt they would not allow them to pass through their territory.
- 3) Israel constitutionally excluded Moab from the Lord's assembly according to Deut. 23;
- 4) Moabite women seduced the Israelite men (resulting in t/punishment of Num 25)
- 5) Eglon, the Moabite King, had recently oppressed Israel (Judges 3:15ff).

3. The Bethlehem Players (v. 2)

And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion...

Verse 2 ends.

... Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there.

Ends the first scene of Act 1.

B. Scene Two: Ruin in Moab (vv. 3-5)

1. First Crisis in Moab: Elimelech Dies (3)

2. Interlude of Hope: Wives for Two Sons (4)

3. Second Crisis: Hope Dashed in Death (5)

1. First Crisis in Moab: Elimelech Dies (3)

Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died . . .

a. Questions? How did he die? *Why did he die?*

(1) Judgment?

To die and be buried on "unclean soil" (o/s Israel) was a curse, acc. to Amos 7:17.

That's what most of t/ancient Jewish commentators believed.

Elimelech died because he left the promised land that was itself under judgment (famine) and rather than repenting so that God would relent from the judgment (famine) he skipped town to a pagan land, Moab.

I don't know. Text doesn't say that, but we don't know what was going on behind the scenes & in t/heart.

What we do know ==>

. . . and she was left with her two sons.

b. Don't miss the gravity of this statement

Naomi is now a widow. Not only is she a widow, she's a widow away from Israel. That's akin to being o/s of t/CH. Not only are you away from home, you're away from Israel - t/Law & Prophets.

(1) Widows and Orphans – particular concern for God

These were t/destitute // disadvantaged.

Pentateuch – Concern for the widow & orphan is woven into t/Law. In Exodus 22:21-24; Exodus 23:6, the widow, the orphan, and the

poor fall under the protection of God Himself. This is reiterated in Deuteronomy (Deut. 10:18 ff.).

Deut 27:19 **Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen.**

Job's friends suggest that perhaps he is suffering because he has neglected or mistreated widows & orphans (a charge he denies).

This concern for widows and orphans rolls into t/NT.

James 1:27 {cite}

1 Tim. 5: **Honor widows who are widows indeed;** (cf. v. 8).

Anyone reading this in that culture ==>

Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died and she was left with her two sons.

would have a visceral reaction for her plight.

She is no longer a wife, she's a widow.

Her children no longer have a father.

She assumes the unwelcome role of being the head of t/family in a foreign land.

Will this second scene be "Ruin in Moab"?

B. Scene Two: Ruin in Moab (vv. 3-5)

2. Interlude of Hope: Wives for Two Sons (4)

And they took for themselves Moabite women as wives . . .

a. Hope for the royal line revived?

. . . the name of the one was Orpah

From a word meaning "neck"

Jewish midrashic explanation is that she turned her neck (turned away) from her mother in law.

In Hebrew the proper name Orpah sounds like “rebellious” (neck).

... and the name of the other Ruth.

Ruth sounds like “refreshing.”

Meaning is obscure. Root "to soak, irrigate, refresh".

According to 4:10 she was Mahlon's wife.

Etymologists have speculated considerably concerning possible implications of the use of these names, but there is no certainty as to the historical background or the meaning. [UBS]

b. What about Israelites marrying Moabite women?

Jewish Targum says that they "transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and took foreign wives from among the daughters of Moab."

Deuteronomy 23:3 “No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD,

Statement ==>

And they took for themselves Moabite women as wives . . .

Pretty straightforward.

(1) Don't see anything at 1st glance that indicates this was sinful

(2) But at second glance . . .

The Heb. word **שָׂאָה** = lit. "carried a woman" (carried away).

Neg. connotation. Idiom "carried away" for taking a wife is used 9x.

(a) Interesting connection that's very close in proximity to its use here in Ruth chap 1 – turn a page back to the last chap in Judges (21)
Book of Judges ends w/the tragic story

i. Bethlehem Trilogy (part 3 is what we see here in Ruth)

Judges 17-18 . A young Levite from Bethlehem leaves his hometown and meets a man from Ephraim named Micah. Micah hires the Levite to be his private priest in idolatry. He was later hired by the tribe of Dan and relocated with the Danites to Laish in N. Galilee. It was there that the Levite est. a cult center that proved to be a stumbling block to God's people for the next 1000 years. [cf. Eugene Merrill, Bib Sac, April-June 1985, p. 131]

Judges 19-21. Again we have Bethlehem and Ephraim and a Levite. The Levite from Ephraim takes a concubine from among the young women in Bethlehem. She went out on her own and was taken captive by the men of Gibeah who assaulted her through the night and left her dead. Upon finding out her husband assembled all the elders of Israel at Bethel where they determined to seek vengeance. The subsequent attack nearly exterminated the entire tribe of Benjamin.

Judges 21:1 – Men of Israel gave an oath that they would not give their daughters to t/sons of Benjamin in marriage. Tribe of Benjamin was down to a few hundred men w/o wives and was facing extinction. So the rest of Israel, feeling pity on their brothers, decided on their own to kill t/inhabitants of nearby Jabesh-Gilead leaving some 400 unmarried women.

Dyngus Day Jewish Style!

They scheduled a dance and told t/men of Benjamin to hide in the vineyards and when they saw something they liked, grab it!

(Remember - this was a dark time in Israel, v. 25).

Judges 21:23 **The sons of Benjamin did so, and took wives according to their number from those who danced, whom they carried away.**

Same word used.

Later usage this idiom came to be used mainly of illegitimate marriages & unequally yoked marriages.

Testimony of the ancient Jewish commentators is pretty much solidly behind the idea that this was a decision born of spiritual compromise.

Josephus says of Elimelech, “Coming into the territory of Moab, he sojourns there, and, things prospering according to his mind, he gives in marriage to his sons Moabitish wives.”

One Talmudist paraphrases the verse: “And they transgressed the edict of the word of the Lord, and took to themselves alien wives of the daughters of Moab.”

I don't know exactly where to land on this. Light of God's Word was dim & the sons were probably acting in keeping w/the darkness of t/time. Not saying that's an excuse.

Daniel Block, Professor of OT at Wheaton College ==>

. . . these marriages must be interpreted in light of Mosaic prohibitions against marriage with pagans, particularly Deut 7:3–4. The Moabites are not listed with these Canaanite nations, but since

they were the people of Chemosh, a foreign God, the spirit of the law would have them included. As the new head of this household, Naomi should have forestalled these marriages. . . . [L]ike Elimelech's movement to Moab in the first place, according to the covenant curses, marriage to foreigners in the land of exile was considered the judgment of God (Deut 28:32). [Block, 628–629]

b. A point to be made regarding God's sovereignty over our decisions

Sometimes the decisions we make are wrong. May have been that the decisions made up to this point in the story were wrong. Decision to leave Bethlehem for godless Moab. Decision to marry Moabite women. Decision to stay in Moab 10 years.

God is sovereign over all of our decisions. I've known people who were afraid to make any decision feeling they might make the wrong one. Failure to apprehend God's sovereignty.

This also isn't licence to do something we know is wrong. God may be in control no matter what we do; God may use our stupidity to further His will; but we are still accountable.

... And they lived there about ten years.

10 years of continued hardship. They ran away from famine in order to escape death and ran into the arms of death in escaping famine.

See that amplified in ==>

3. Second Crisis: Hope Dashed in Death (5)

Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died . . .

a. Noteworthy that the two sons were married for 10 years but fathered no children

God is t/one who sov. chooses to grant or withhold children.

We'll see later (4:13) God enables barren Ruth to conceive and bear a son for Boaz.

Here ==>

Naomi with no male remnant, neither husband nor children.

. . .and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.

Elimelech is out of the picture // Mahlon and Chilion

Now three widows.

Tragedy upon tragedy in the space of 5 vv.

Amos 5:19 *As when a man flees from a lion, And a bear meets him;
Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall, And a snake bites him.*

The old Baptist theologian Andrew Fuller ==>

"I conclude, therefore, many men have had affliction—none like Job; many women have had tribulation—none like Nomi." [UBS]

B. Scene Two: Ruin in Moab (vv. 3-5)

As for hope for the royal line? That will begin back in Beth. ==>

C. Scene Three: Returning to Bethlehem (vv. 6-22)

No matter how bad the ruin there's hope for God's elect.

We begin t/story in Beth. Moab is a parenthetical 10 years of woe.
Out of that disaster comes good.

Out of Moab comes Ruth. Ruth who goes back to Beth. w/her MIL
& meets a K.R. Boaz.

Out of Beth. comes David
Out of Beth. comes JC.
Out of JC. comes hope.

What a contrast! Moab symbolic of God's wrath.
Yet out of that wrath comes hope.

Sounds like the cross. T/cross is the God's love and wrath on display.
Righteous anger and incredible mercy.