

**I. Introduction and review.**

**II. Naomi comes to a crossroads. v. 6-7**

- A. She learns that the LORD has visited His people in Bethlehem, sending them food.
  - 1. For the LORD to *visit* means that he takes notice of a situation and responds – either in compassion or judgment. Gen. 21:1 50:24 Ex. 4:31 20:5 Deut. 5:9
  - 2. After a prolonged period of suffering, He ends the famine. Lev. 26:40ff 2 Chr. 7:14
  - 3. Nothing happens by chance. 1:1-5 Eph. 1:11 Deut. 32:39
  - 4. The LORD often works simultaneously in many lives through one event.
  - 5. This is a great turning point in Naomi's story and in the lives of Orpah and Ruth.
  
- B. The prodigal daughter decides to return to her home.
  - 1. Perhaps because she thinks that her hopes for survival lie with her own people, not the Moabites. Ex. 22:22-24 Ps. 146:9
  - 2. She later acknowledges that LORD brought her back. 1:21
  - 3. At this point her daughters-in-law are still with her.
  - 4. It was not safe or easy for women to travel in those days. Judges 19:1ff
  
- C. The LORD providentially intervenes in our lives. Rom. 8:28 10:14-15 Js. 1:2ff
  
- D. The LORD has visited us by sending us the Bread of Life. Luke 1:68ff John 6:35

**III. Orpah and Ruth come to a crossroads. v. 8-18**

- A. Why does Naomi try to persuade her daughters-in-law to return to Moab? v. 8-9
  - 1. Her counsel has the appearance of selfless concern for others.
  - 2. She invokes the Name of the LORD in blessing them. v. 8b,9a 2:12 4:11-15
  - 3. Her reasoning again is worldly and expedient – focusing upon earthly security rather than their spiritual good. 1:1-2,4 Mt. 6:33
  - 4. True *rest* and *lovingkindness* come from the LORD and are to be found among His people. 2:20 3:10 4:14ff Gen. 12:3 Deut. 12:9 1 Kings 8:56 Ps. 95:11
  
- B. Both Orpah and Ruth initially express determination to return to Bethlehem with Naomi. v. 9b-10
  
- C. Naomi further pleads with Orpah and Ruth to return to Moab because there would be no hope for them to marry in Judah. v. 11-13a Gen. 38:6ff Deut. 25:5ff
  
- D. Naomi declares that her life is bitter because the LORD is against her. v. 13b
  - 1. She implies that they would be better off to get away from her.
  - 2. Naomi appears to be a believer whose faith is very weak.
  - 3. Naomi represents the sad state of Israel at this time.
  - 4. Some have suggested that Naomi might have had other more noble motives for trying to turn Orpah and Ruth back to Moab.
    - a. Is she testing their faith commitment to the LORD? Mark 8:34-38 10:21
    - b. Whether Naomi intended to test their faith or not, her words did force them to count the cost of following her to Bethlehem.

- E. Orpah does the sensible thing and turns for home. v. 14a**
1. She (like Elimalech, Mahlon and Chilion) does what is expedient.
  2. She returns to a people under God's judgment. v. 15 Jer. 48:46 Nu. 21:29 2 Ki. 3:26-27
  3. She passes off of the scene never to be heard from again.
  4. Her decision to continue on the broad road is set in sharp contrast to Ruth's willingness to risk everything to travel on the narrow road. Mt. 7:13-14
- F. Ruth turns to the LORD. v. 14b-18**
1. Ruth clings (cleaves) to Naomi. v. 14b 2:8,21,23 Gen. 2:24
  2. Naomi's words define the cost of Ruth's decision. v. 15
  3. Ruth turns to the LORD – conversion. v. 16-17
    - a. Ruth's famous words are not expressions of loyalty to an earthly husband or even primarily to her mother-in-law, but to the LORD.
    - b. She turns from the false gods of Moab to find refuge under the wings of the LORD God of Israel. 1:15 2:11-12
    - c. Her conversion was radical and costly – like Rahab and Abraham. Josh. 2:11ff 24:2 Mt. 1:5 Js. 2:25 Heb. 11:8-10,25-26,31 Gen. 12:1ff
  4. Ruth even swears an oath of loyalty. v. 17b 1 Sam. 3:17 14:44 1 Ki. 2:23
  5. Naomi stops trying to dissuade Ruth. v. 18
- G. Application.**
1. You can get terrible counsel from believers. 1:15 Ps. 1:1 Pr. 3:5-6 14:12
  2. Be careful about the advice you give to others.
  3. What kind of testimony about the LORD are you giving to others? Mt. 5:13-16
  4. God can work in spite of very weak evangelists (Naomi). Isa. 55:10-11
  5. Is it appropriate to quote Ruth's words at a wedding? v. 16-17 Gen. 2:24 Eph. 5:25 Rev. 21:2
  6. Can Ruth's words also be applied to other human relationships – loyalty to family and friends? Pr. 18:24
  7. Ruth's words reflect our commitment to the LORD and His commitment to us. Heb. 13:5b Romans 8:38-39 John 10:27-29

#### **IV. Concluding application – crossroads and conversion.**

- A. Ruth's conversion is a picture of what it means for us to turn from the world to follow Christ – repentance and faith. Mark 8:34-38 Mt. 10:34-39 19:29**
1. Have you, like Ruth, turned away from idols, to the LORD? 1 Th. 1:9-10
  2. Are God's people your people? Acts 2:47 Heb. 10:24-25 1 Cor. 12:12ff
- B. Your conversion may prove to be costly. Mark 8:34-38 Mt. 10:22,34-39 John 15:18-19**
1. Seek first God's kingdom while trusting Him to meet your earthly needs. Mt. 6:33
  2. In the end those who turn to the LORD receive a great reward. Mt. 19:27-30
- C. The sensible, expedient (broad) way of Orpah leads to destruction. Mt. 7:13-14**

#### **Discussion questions**

1. What three things should you look for when studying Old Testament narratives?
2. Why does Naomi tell her daughters-in-law to return to Moab?
3. How are many people today like Orpah?
4. How does Ruth's decision illustrate what it means for us to follow Christ?
5. How is Ruth like Rahab? Josh. 2:11ff
6. What would you say to a professing believer who doesn't want to be part of any church?
7. Do you think that Ruth 1:16-17 should be used in weddings? Why or why not?
8. How does this passage point to Christ?