



Lesson 90

Ruth's Loyalty

Story Elements

- **Text:** Ruth 1:1-22
- **Setting:** circa 1100 B.C.
- **Main Characters:** God, Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon, Chilion, Orpah, and Ruth.
- **Plot:** Naomi, Elimelech and their sons flee from Bethlehem to Moab. After ten years and three tragic

deaths, Naomi returns to Bethlehem with her faithful and loving daughter-in-law Ruth.

- **Key word(s):** *thy people shall be my people, and thy God my _____* (v 16)
- **Climax:** **Ruth 1:15** *And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.*

Fleeing the Famine

1. (v 1) The story takes place during the times of the judges. Since we know that David's great-grandfather Boaz, who appears later in the story, was the son of _____ (Matt. 1:5), we can figure "by working backward in time from the well-known date of David's reign (1011-971 B.C.), the time period of Ruth would most likely be during the judgeship of Jair, c. 1126-1105 B.C. (Judg. 10:3-5)"¹
2. (vv 1-2) Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their sons Mahlon and Chilion, fled the famine in Bethlehem and sojourned in Moab.

APPLICATION → It is a sad irony that Bethlehem, which means house of bread, should be devoid of bread while Moab, a stranger to the blessings of the covenant, would fare better. Matthew Henry explains, "Common gifts of providence are often bestowed in greater plenty upon those that are strangers to God than upon those that know and worship him. *Moab is at ease from his youth, while Israel is emptied from vessel to vessel* (Jer. 48:11), not because God loves Moabites better, but because they have their portion in this life."² It is a mistake to envy the world for its blessings or to doubt God's goodness when the wicked prosper – the believer is called to a life of faith-building _____.

3. (vv 3-6) During his sojourn in Moab, Elimelech died. He was followed in death by his two sons. Naomi, widowed and childless, set her sights to return to Bethlehem with her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, who were also widowed and childless.

APPLICATION → Elimelech took his family out of God's inheritance to save their lives, but three of the four members of the family perish in Moab. "We cannot expect to prosper when we go out of the way of our _____. *He that will save his life by any indirect course shall lose it.*"³

Faithful to Follow

4. (vv 6-7) After a ten-year sojourn in Moab, news reached Naomi that Bethlehem was no longer suffering famine. Naomi prepared to return to the land of Judah.
 - a. (vv 8-9) We see Naomi's faith and loving heart on display when she bid her daughters-in-law goodbye with a beautiful benediction: *the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find _____, each of you in the house of her husband.*

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005) p 288.

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 372.

³ Henry, 373.

- b. (vv 10-13) When Orpah and Ruth insisted on going with Naomi, she admonished them to return to their own people – in Naomi’s eyes, there was no happy future with her, *the hand of the LORD is gone out _____ me.*

APPLICATION → Naomi’s example as a godly Israelite woman left such an impression on her pagan daughters-in-law that they were willing to forsake their Moabite upbringings to follow her to Judah. Naomi so lived and loved that Orpah and Ruth were inclined to follow her back to Judah. Naomi fulfilled 1 Peter 3:1-5, so that her daughters-in-law beheld her *chaste conversation coupled with fear. 3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; 4 But let it be the _____ man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. 5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands.*

5. (vv 14-15) Orpah relented, and returned to her family, but Ruth stayed by Naomi’s side. Again, Naomi pressed Ruth to leave, saying, *thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.*

APPLICATION → Naomi speaks of Orpah returning to her gods because Naomi knew that, ultimately, choosing to go with her was choosing to walk with the LORD. Just as Naomi’s appeals turned Orpah back to her Moab, they tied Ruth closely to her mother-in-law. Similarly, the gospel is to some *the savour of _____ unto death; and to the other the savour of _____ unto life.* 2 Cor. 2:16

6. (vv 16-18) Ruth’s response to Naomi are some of the most beautiful words of love and devotion ever to be recorded. Notice the scope of her loving devotion:
- “Whither thou goest I will _____, though to a country I never saw and in a low and ill opinion of which I have been trained up; though far from my own country, yet with thee every road shall be pleasant.*
 - “Where thou lodgest I will _____, Where thou settest up thy staff I will set up mine, be it where it may.”*
 - Thy people shall be my _____.* From Naomi’s character she concludes certainly that the great nation was a wise and an understanding people. She judges of them all by her good mother, who, wherever she went, was a credit to her country (as all those should study to be who profess relation to the better country, that is, the heavenly), and therefore she will think herself happy if she may be reckoned one of them.
 - Thy God shall be my _____, and farewell to all the gods of Moab, which are vanity and a lie. I will adore the God of Israel, the only living and true God, trust in him alone, serve him, and in every thing be ruled by him;”* this is to take the Lord for our God.
 - Where thou diest will I _____.* ...she wishes to die in the same place, in token of her dying after the same manner. “Let me die the death of righteous Naomi, and let my last end be like hers.”
 - There will I be _____, Naomi and she having joined souls, she desires they may mingle dust, in hopes of rising together, and being together for ever in the other world.⁴*

Answer Key: Key word(s): God • 1. Rahab • 2. → struggle • 3. → duty • 4. a. rest; b. against; → hidden • 5. → death • 6. a. go; b. lodge; c. people; d. God; e. die; f. buried.

⁴ 6. a. through f. are condensed from Henry, 374.