

I. Introduction.

- A. The book of Ruth addresses real life.
- B. The book of Ruth is delightful literature.
- C. The book of Ruth illustrates many important biblical themes.
 - 1. The Lord is faithful to show lovingkindness (covenant mercy) to His people.
 - 2. Even in the darkest days the LORD preserves a faithful remnant. 2:4
 - 3. God is concerned about and actively involved in the lives of ordinary people.
 - 4. God works evil circumstances for our good.
 - 5. God brings redemption to His needy people. 4:14,21 Luke 24:27
 - 6. God includes the Gentiles among His covenant people. Gen. 12:3 Mt. 1:3,5,6
- D. The book of Ruth is for us. Romans 15:4 1 Cor. 10:11 2 Tim. 3:16-17 Mt. 1:5

II. Fleeing famine. v. 1-2

- A. The setting is in the days when the Judges governed (1150 BC?). v. 1a
 - 1. These were very dark days in the history of Israel. Judges 21:25
 - 2. Apparently the author is looking back as he writes. 4:22 2 Pet. 1:20-21
- B. We are introduced to an ordinary family in Bethlehem. v. 2a
- C. There was a famine in the land. v. 1b
 - 1. Historical events must be interpreted in light of the rest of Scripture – why would there be no bread in Bethlehem (House of Bread)?
 - 2. Under the Old Covenant, famine was the consequence of covenant unfaithfulness on the part of Israel. Lev. 26:3-5,18-20 Dt. 28:15,23-24 38-40 1 Ki. 17:2 2 Sa. 21:1
 - 3. Why would there be bread in pagan Moab? Hab. 1:13 Ps. 73:1ff
 - 4. Nothing happens by chance – divine providence. 1:13,20,6 Eph. 1:11 Rom. 8:28
- D. Elimalech leads his family out of the Promised Land. v. 1b,2b
 - 1. This move must be interpreted in light of the historical and covenantal context.
 - 2. The man whose name means “God is my King” flees from the town which means “House of Bread” to live in pagan Moab.
 - 3. He abandons his inheritance in the Promised Land without permission. 4:3
 - 4. He follows in the dangerous and foolish footsteps of the patriarchs who left the Promised Land without permission. Gen. 12:10ff 26:1ff
 - 5. Elimalech leads his family into pagan Moab. 1:15 Gen. 19:30ff Num. 22-25 Deut. 23:3-6 Judges 11:17
 - 6. He should have stayed in Bethlehem and participated in the repentance which would end the famine. 2 Chr. 7:13-14 Lev. 26:40ff Dt. 30:1ff Prov. 16:8
 - 7. What was supposed to be a short sojourn turns into a ten-year residence. v. 4
 - 8. Elimalech did what was right in his own eyes. Judges 21:25
- E. Application.
 - 1. It is important to understand both the differences and the similarities between the situations in Scripture and our context.
 - 2. Pursuing economic security as your top priority leads to spiritual ruin. 1 Ti. 6:10
 - 3. You may be tempted to abandon God’s people. Heb. 10:25 13:17
 - 4. Your sinful choices may affect others.
 - 5. How should you interpret the famines and calamities around you? John 9:1ff Heb. 12:1ff Romans 1:18ff Amos 8:11 Gen. 15:6 19:1ff

III. Losing everything – two weddings and three funerals. v. 3-5

- A. Naomi's husband dies – but at least she has two sons to take care of her and to continue the family line. v. 3
- B. Her two sons marry Moabite women – but at least there is hope that the family line can continue. v. 4a
 - 1. Were they wrong to marry Moabite women? 1:4,15 Dt. 7:3-4 23:3 Judges 3:6 2 Cor. 6:14f Ezra 9:1 Neh. 13:23 Mal. 2:11 1 Cor. 7:39 9:5 1 Ki. 11:1-2,33
 - 2. Their expediency seems to mirror that of their father. v. 1-2 Gen. 16:1ff
- C. What follows shows God's evaluation of their choice – barrenness and death. v. 4b-5
- D. Nothing happens by chance. v. 13b Heb. 9:27 Dt. 32:39 1 Sam. 2:6 Gen. 29:31 30:2
 - 1. Long life was a blessing of covenant faithfulness while covenant disobedience resulted in an early death. Gen. 25:8 Isa. 38:10 Dt. 28:22 Pr. 4:16 Amos 7:17
 - 2. Children were a blessing for covenant faithfulness and childlessness was a curse for unfaithfulness. 4:13 Deut. 7:12-13 28:4,18,62
 - 3. How do the Old Covenant promises of long life and many offspring apply to us? Isa. 53:10-11,8 John 11:26 18:36 10:10b Gal. 3:29 2 Tim. 3:12 Heb. 10:34
 - a. The Old Covenant had to do with physical land and promises which were typical of the eternal kingdom. The New Covenant is spiritual.
 - b. Jesus did not enjoy a long trouble-free life on this earth. Nor did He have any physical offspring. 1 Pet. 2:21 3:18 4:1
 - c. Jesus gives us abundant and eternal life in His heavenly kingdom.
 - d. Jesus, as the result of His covenant faithfulness, has many offspring.
- E. Though Naomi concludes that God is against her, a ray of light shines out of the darkness – the LORD visits His people. 1:13,20,6,22
- F. Application.
 - 1. We have our own Moabs – how are we tempted to sinful expediency?
 - 2. We may experience the consequences of our sin. Gal. 6:7
 - 3. God offers hope to His suffering wayward people. Ps. 119:67,71 Gen. 50:20

IV. Concluding applications – God has visited His people by sending Jesus, the Bread of Life and our Deliverer. Luke 1:68ff

Discussion Questions

1. What makes the book of Ruth special?
2. Who is the main character in the book of Ruth? Explain your answer.
3. What does *providence* mean? How is God's providence displayed in the book of Ruth?
4. Why was it wrong for Elimelech to move to Moab? How does this apply to us?
5. How should we interpret the calamities of famine, early death and barrenness in Ruth 1? How does our interpretation of the same events differ under the New Covenant? Why?
6. How does 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 apply to us today?
7. How do Christians sacrifice their spiritual good for the sake of economic prosperity?
8. How do Christians act with sinful expediency in matters of romance?
9. How could you use the book of Ruth to help someone who is in despair and believes that God is against him or her?
10. How could you use the book of Ruth to offer hope to someone who thinks that they have ruined their lives by sinful or foolish decisions in the past?
11. How does this passage point to Jesus Christ?