

Reading: Ruth 1:1-5

## THE ROMANCE OF REDEMPTION

### 1. DEPARTURE FROM GOD

The great Benjamin Franklin, though not a professing Christian, recognised the literary excellence of the Book of Ruth. It is reported that when representing the new born republic of America at the French capital, Paris, he was angry when he heard many learned men ridiculing the Bible and expressing surprise that any one should ever take time reading it. Franklin one day announced to them that he had a copy of a very manuscript, and invited them to his apartments on a certain evening to hear it read. At the time appointed, his literary friends were all present and he had an accomplished elocutionist read to them his copy of the manuscript. *They were loud in their praise of it, and the most critical of them announced it to be superior to anything they had ever read or listened to, and asked if they might have copies.* Can you imagine their astonishment when the ingenious American informed them, with a twinkle in his eye, that they had been listening to one of the 66 books of the Bible, a Book that they held in contempt.

Do you know what book of the Bible it was ? It was the Book of Ruth with the name of God omitted, so that the infidel Frenchmen might not suspect it was the Bible that was being read to them. My .... Ruth is the name of one of the most delightful books in the Old Testament. Remarkable for its brevity, its eight five verses are easily read in twenty minutes. Precious for its deep unfolding of the person of God, the truth of redemption, the workings of providence, this charming and beautifully written story is both simple and sublime .... a gem of literature and a wonder of language. Now there are several things that I want to do by way of introduction to this Book.

#### 1. The STUDY of this Book:

We can study this little book from many angles. Ruth may be looked at:

**Historically:** this includes the history of Elimelech and his family, the departure of Ruth from Moab to the country of Bethlehem, and her marriage to Boaz.

**Devotionally:** When life's great choice came to Ruth she decided aright, and from that day onward her steadfast path of faith and trust is an outstanding pattern for believers today.

***Prophetically:*** For here we see the Jew set aside temporarily that the Gentile might receive salvation.

***Typically:*** For much truth centres around the seven personalities in the Book. Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion are types of backsliders from God, whose restoration to the Lord is not revealed. Naomi, is a backslidden saint who is happily restored to the Lord. Ruth is a picture of a sinner, who through links with believers trusted the Lord. Orpah is a sad type of those who show some interest in spiritual things, but turn back and perish. ( Heb 6:4-6 ) And of course Boaz is a beautiful type of the Lord Jesus as the redeemer and strength of His people. ( Jer 50:34 ) 1,

## 2. The SETTING of this Book:

For the story of Ruth occurred in the days “ *when the judges ruled,*” Israel. ( 1370 to 1041 BC ) Thus, this book bridges the time from the Judges to Israel’s monarchy. Now,

### (a) The Book of Judges is the Book of “ No King.”

“ *In those days there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*” ( 21:25 ) We are living in a period similar to the Book of Judges today, spiritually speaking. There is no king in Israel today, and people are doing what they please.

### (b) The Book of 1 Samuel is the Book of “ Man’s King.”

Do you recall the cry of the people in Samuel’s day ?

“ *Give us a king to judge us .... That we also may be like all the nations.*” ( 1 Sam 8:20 ) Saul was never meant to be the king who would establish a dynasty in Israel. How do we know this ? Because we are told very clearly in ( Gen 49:10 ) that the king was to come from the tribe of Judah and not from Benjamin. First Samuel is the book of “ *man’s king.*” (a) (b)

### (c) Second Samuel is the Book of “ God’s King.”

Who was God’s king ? David was, and he was one of Ruth’s descendants. And he was a man after God’s own heart. So Judges is the book of “ *no king.*” That’s where we are living now. Every person is doing that which is right in his own eyes. First Samuel is the book of

“ *man’s king,*” and that’s where the world is headed. Second Samuel is the book of

“ *God’s king.*” God will send His King to establish the true kingdom. So Ruth is set in the midst of apostasy and anarchy. 1, 2,

### 3. The SCENES in the Book:

For there are four outstanding scenes in the book of Ruth.

*Scene No 1: Moab* ( Ch 1:1-18 ) Period about 10 years.

*Scene No 2: The field of Boaz* ( 1:19-2:23 ) Period several months possibly mid April to mid June.

*Scene No 3: One day in Bethlehem* and one night at the threshing floor. ( Ch 3 )

*Scene No 4: Bethlehem, the city.* Period about 1 year.  
( Ch 4 )

### 4. The SIGNIFICANCE of the Book:

Ruth has only four brief chapters *but it is a mighty midget with a mighty message.* In fact it has several messages. It gives us a genealogy that leads to the Lord Jesus and it explains His coming from the line of David.

( 4:18-22 ) But surely the primary purpose of the book is to bring before us the wonderful truth of redemption. My .... redemption is only possible through a Kinsman-Redeemer. God could not redeem apart from a Mediator, and since only God could redeem it was necessary for Him to become that person of which Boaz is a beautiful picture.

### 5. The STRUCTURE of the Book:

The book of Ruth contains 4 chapters. We could entitle ***Chapter 1: Weeping***, for throughout this chapter we see nothing but trouble and weeping. ***Chapter 2: could be called Working***, for here we see Ruth serving in the harvest field as a gleaner coming into contact with Boaz her husband to be. ***Chapter 3: is all about Waiting***, for after presenting herself to Boaz and asking him to fulfil his role as near kinsman ( 3:9 ) Ruth hears wise counsel from her mother in law, “ *Sit still, my daughter until thou know how the matter will fall.*” ( 3:18 ) ***Of course*** ( ***Ch 4*** ) ***ends with the Wedding.*** So we go from Ch 1 which is filled with Sorrow to Ch 2 which is all about Service, to Ch 3 which is a beautiful picture of Submission to Ch 4, which is all about Satisfaction. Or to change it slightly *Ch 1, From the Forbidden Land.*

*Ch 2 Into the Harvest Field. Ch 3 Onto the Threshing Floor. Ch 4 At the City Gate.*  
Now we have entitled our opening study “ ***Departure from God.***” Notice,

## **(1) THE PERIOD**

Look if you will at ( 1:1 ) Those were dark days. In one sense, they were the darkest days in the history of the nation of Israel. You will recall that the Israelites had been in Egyptian bondage, and God had redeemed them by blood and by power, and had brought them through the wilderness. Then He brought them into the Promised Land. And what great promise there was. You would think that this new generation whose fathers had known the rigours of slavery in Egypt would serve the Lord in a wonderful way. But you know they didn't. For the book of Judges tells a sorry and sordid story of a departure from God. This was,

### **(a) A TIME OF APATHY:**

The 12 tribes of Israel were apathetic, for they failed to go up and take the land, and to claim it for their inheritance. When Joshua was an old man the Lord said to him, “ *there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.*” ( Jos 13:1 ) The first generation left pockets of the enemy untouched ( 1:17-29 ) and the second generation came along and said, “ *why bother.*”

( Judges 2:10-11 ) “ *Sure we have all the land we need and these Canaanites they are not so bad, we can get along with them.*” My .... do you know what that is ? it's the second generation syndrome. It is a lukewarmness, a complacency, an apathy about amazing biblical truths that we have heard from our childhood or from our Bible teachers. Is that where you are spiritually ? Somewhere along the way you've lost your passion. (a)

### **(b) A TIME OF APOSTASY:**

In which they departed from the worship of the true God and served Baal. ( Judges 2:11-13 ) The Hebrew text is far more strongly worded “ *The children of Israel did the evil.*” They threw themselves into the supreme sin, the sin of all sin. Look at ( 2:13 ) Baal and Ashtaroth were false deities in the Canaanite pantheon of gods. All sorts of immorality and prostitution was associated with this worship. Do you see how low Israel had fallen ? Their apathy led to apostasy and their apostasy ended in anarchy for this was,

### **(c) A TIME OF ANARCHY:**

Look again at the key verse in the book of Judges.

( 21:25 ) Today, there is still no king in Israel, and there will not be until Christ

returns. What a period this was. A day of darkness, and disobedience, and disgrace, and yet amid the darkness there shines this sweet story of Ruth. ( For time period of Ruth see Judges 10:3-5 )

My .... is our day any different from Ruth's ? Are things getting any better ? Or we looking at world betterment or at world breakdown ? Yet despite the sinfulness of the age, we by the grace of God can live simple lives to His glory.

## **(2) THE PROBLEM**

Look at ( 1:1 ) How strange that there should be a famine in Bethlehem which means “ *house of bread,*” and later become the birthplace of Him who was the “ *bread of Heaven.*” Judah, the tribe of which our Saviour came means “ *praise the Lord.*” Do you know something ? When you know the Lord Jesus who was born in Bethlehem it produces praise unto Him who is the Saviour of the world. J. Vernon McGee writes “ *the presence of a famine is the telltale mark of flagrant sin and the displeasure of God.*” You see, there was,

### ***(a) A NATIONAL Departure from God:***

You see, this famine was a mark of God's governmental dealings with His people, on account of their departure from Him. The brief statement, “ *there was a famine in the land,*” states the fact, but the earlier Scriptures show the cause. Look at Leviticus ( Ch 26 ) where there are two pathways outlined. The first is the pathway of obedience and blessing, the second is the pathway of disobedience and cursing. Now notice that in this chapter

#### **1. What is Commanded by God:**

They were to,

##### **\* *Refrain from Idolatry:***

Look at ( 26:1 ) Idolatry was an abomination to God.

##### **\* *Regard the Sabbath:***

“ *Ye shall keep my Sabbaths,*” ( 26:2 )

##### **\* *Revere His Sanctuary:***

“ *Reverence my sanctuary,*” ( 26:2 ) For God is high and holy.

##### **\* *Respect God's Law:***

Look at ( 26:3 ) Now these were God's commands to the children of Israel. 1.

#### **2. What is Promised by God:**

And these promises all begin with the words “ *I will.*”

There was the promise of,

**\* *A Plentiful Rainfall:***

( 26:4 ) Showers of blessing were to be their lot if they were obedient.

**\* *A Peaceful Rest:***

“ *And I will give you peace in the land,*” ( 26:6 ) Peace and rest always follow obedience.

**\* *A Powerful Victory:***

“ *I will rid evil beasts .... and ye shall chase,*” ( 26:8 )

**\* *A Prosperous Supply:***

“ *I will make you fruitful,*” ( 26:9 )

**\* *A Place of Worship:***

“ *I will set my tabernacle among you,*” it was a tabernacle where they could gather and hear His voice.

**\* *A Pleasant Communion:***

“ *I will walk among you,*” ( 26:12 ) They had the promise of walking with God as Enoch of old.

But notice the tone changes in ( 26:14-20 ) My .... this famine in Israel indicated a national departure from the Lord. ( Deut 28:15 ) Is this not where we are this .... as a nation ? Think of the Gerry Springer programme on the B.B.C. where the Lord Jesus was dishonoured. Think of the rights for gay men and gay women. As a nation we are sinking deeper and deeper into the quagmire of sin. But do you know the result ? “ *Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.*” ( Amos 8:11 ) My .... is the faithful ministry of the Word of God not becoming less and less ? Bless God for His moving among us, thank God for His moving in foreign parts but what about these islands of ours ? I just wonder is the Lord sending a famine of His Word ? (a)

***(b) A PERSONAL Departure from God:***

Look at ( 1:1-2 ) Now remember there were two men in Bethlehem-Judah who faced the same famine. But what a difference in their actions. Boaz passed through the testing time of famine. Trusting the Lord, he proved the Lord. But Elimelech failed the test and went to live in Moab, which became for him the end of testimony .... a place of death. Moab represents,

*1. In its Origin, Moral Impurity:*

Do you recall how the Moabites came into being ?

( Gen 19:35-38 ) This vile deed established the kind of people the Moabites were. They were not friendly towards godliness. There's something in the Word of God that's quite interesting. In ( Ps 108:9 ) it says,

“ *Moab is my washpot.*” That's what God says of Moab. You say they were an outcast people with a sordid beginning and God says, “ *Moab is my garbage can.*” Now do you see this ? Here's a family for you see when you backslide you do not backslide alone, when you sin you take others with you. Here they are they leave the house of bread and praise and they go over to eat out of a garbage can. Did you ever hear that story before ? Do you remember the prodigal ? He left the fathers house in which there was plenty, and after letting the good times roll, he longed to fill his stomach with the husks that the swine did eat. 1.

### 2. In its History, Spiritual Enmity:

When Israel travelled to Canaan, Moab refused to let Israel through their land. ( Jud 11:17 ) would not help Israel ( Deut 23:4 ) hired the prophet Balaam to curse Israel ( Num 22:1 ) and then some Moabite women seduced the Israelite men not only to corrupt their morals but to corrupt their worship. The result, 24,000 dead Israelites because of the judgment of God.

### 3. In its Creed, Actual Idolatry:

For these Moabites were idolaters. ( Num 21:29 25:3 )

This move was not only dangerous physically but spiritually and yet we read “ *they came into the country of Moab and continued there.*” ( 1:2 ) Think of it ! Ten years out of the will of God, and what a price they had to pay ! (b) Is this the reason why God's blessing is no longer on your life ? Do you ever wonder why you have not got the desire for the Word and prayer that you used to have ? Why do you no longer witness for the Lord ? Is it because of sin in your life ? *Is this the reason for the shut and silent heaven ? Does this explain the barrenness of your soul ?* Outwardly, everything seems normal but in heart, have you departed from the Lord ? Here's Elimelech facing a problem, a famine one of thirteen that are mentioned in the Bible so what does he do ? (1) (2)

### **(3) THE PATH**

You know, when trouble comes to our lives we can one of three things, *endure it, escape it, or enlist it.* If we only *endure* our trials, then trials become our master, and we have a tendency to become hard and bitter. If we try to *escape* our trials, then we probably miss the purposes God wants to achieve in our lives. But if we learn to *enlist* our trials, they become our servants instead of our masters and work

for us, and God will work all things together for our good and His glory. ( Rom 8:28 ) Now Elimelech might be commended for seeking to provide for his wife and family ( 1 Tim 5:8 ) but did he act wisely ? My .... the path he chose indicates to us at least three things. Elimelech,

***(a) Was Living for SELF not for GOD:***

For he left the place where God was known and honoured for a land of idolatry and immorality. My .... He must have been acquainted with the history and doings of Balaam who induced the people of God to join themselves to Baal-Peor, and to indulge in the idolatry and immortality that of the gods of Moab. He must have known of the thousands that perished from the plague that followed. Yet in spite of the plain warnings of God, Elimelech took this downward step to seek bread for his family. Do you know what his name means ? Elimelech means “ *my God is King.* ” A King is one who is to be honoured and obeyed, but as soon as difficult circumstances arrive, Elimelech leads his family astray.

Oh, his intentions were good for as ( 1:1 ) suggests “ *he went to sojourn,* ” live for a while, but in ( 1:2 ) we read he “ *continued there.* ” He settled down in disobedience.

My .... Are you living for self or for God ? Have you embarked on the pathway of disobedience ? Have you taken the first step downward, backward ? I tell you many a professing Christian never had any intention of staying in the world of idolatry and immorality but they

“ *continued there.* ” Years lost, out of the will of God. Do you recall what they said, “ *What’s the harm in the first drink, what’s wrong with the disco, what’s the problem with flirting about with the opposite sex ?* ” Do you know something ? They are still in Moab this .... ! (a)

***(b) Was Living by SIGHT not by FAITH:***

Sight not faith guided this family. Do you recall that Abraham made the same mistake when he encountered a famine in the land of promise. ( Gen 12:10 ) Instead of waiting for God to tell what to do next, he fled to Egypt and got into trouble. My .... no matter how difficult our circumstances may be the safest and best place is in the will of God. Its easy to say with David, “ *O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest.* ” ( Ps 55:6 ) But its wiser to claim the promise of

( Is 40:31 ) and wait on the Lord for “ *wings like eagles,* ” and by faith soar above the storms of life. How do you walk by faith ? By claiming the promises of God and obeying the Word of God, in spite of what you see, how you feel, or what may



happen. It means committing yourself to the Lord and relying wholly on Him to meet the need. My .... when we live by faith, it glorifies God, witnesses to a lost world and builds Christian character into our lives. When George Muller of Bristol had hundreds of children to feed daily, the price of a loaf went up. A Christian came to him in great distress, and said, “ *what will you do now ?*” “ *Do ?*” exclaimed the man of God. “ *I will do what I have always done .... trust my loving heavenly Father.*” How is it that we find so easy to trust the Lord with regard to our eternal interest, but so hard with regard to our temporal interest ? ( Rom 8:32 ) (a) (b)

***(c) Was Living in SIN not in OBEDIENCE:***

Someone has said, “ *Collapse in the Christian life is rarely a blow out its usually a slow leak.*” One gets the impression that Elimelech’s defection was of long standing for he named his boys Mahlon and Chilion.

Mahlon means “ *sick,*” and Chilion means “ *pining.*”

You see, away back at the birth of the boys years before there was any outward sign of defection, Elimelech’s faith was sickly and pining. His heart was away from the Lord long before his feet followed. And now Elimelech settles down in disobedience to God’s revealed will. Will you notice some very important ? He brought his children with him. You see, this man’s spiritual condition had an effect on his family for they married strange women. Mahlon married Ruth ( 4:10 ) and Chilion married Orpah. Now Jews were forbidden to marry Gentile women ( Deut 7:1-11 23:5-6 Neh 13:1-3

Ezra 9:1-4 ) but they did it anyhow. My .... do you ever wonder why your children fail to grow up in the fear of God ? Do you ever wonder why they remain unsaved ?

One thing is absolutely sure, their lives are being affected by yours. ( Rom 14:7 ) You see, the Christian who goes into Moab, he not only brings harm to himself, but harm to others, dishonour to the Lord’s name and terrible damage to the Lord’s work ! How you ever seen it happen ? I have ! And how terrible have been the consequences ! Do you notice the consequences here ?

For look at,

**(4) THE PENALTY**

For here we see the chastening hand of God fall heavily on this family. For there was:

***(a) DEATH IN THE FAMILY:***

Look if you will in ( 1:3 ) I tell you man proposes but God disposes. For God in His governmental dealings cut him off and the house of the emigrants from Bethlehem became the home of mourning. Surely this family learnt their lesson. But no, instead of turning to the Lord in repentance an unholy alliance was formed which was contrary to the Word of God. Look at ( 1:4 ) Do you know something ? One sin leads to another. Elimelech left Israel to move the 50 miles to Moab and this eventually led to these forbidden marriages. Incidentally, are you forming a relationship which is outside the will of God ? Scripture is very clear about whom we should date and who we should marry. Do you recall Paul's words ? “ *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.* ” ( 2 Cor 6:14 ) And “ *married only in the Lord.* ” ( 1 Cor 7:31 ) Elimelech died but in due course Mahlon and Chilion died also and the land of Naomi's dreams became the land of their despair. (a)

**(b) DISCIPLINE FROM THE LORD:**

Do you see what Naomi says in ( 1:13 ) ? Look if you will at ( 1:21 ) Do you what Naomi means ? “ *My pleasant one.* ” But here pleasantness becomes bitterness. My .... sometimes God has to take drastic measures to bring us back to where we belong. Was this not the problem at Corinth ? They were turning the Lord's Table into an orgy of eating and drinking. So what did God do ? He came in governmental judgement and took some of them home to glory. ( 1 Cor 11:30 ) Do you know something ? It never pays to rebel against God. Jonah discovered that. Naomi discovered that. Will you have to discover that ? **Departure from God !** My .... have you departed from the Lord ? Are you going forward or going backward?