

2149 RUTH-[1]-HOW IT ALL BEGAN - Ruth 1:1-22

INTRODUCTION. God has used a lot of **literary forms** in **communicating** His truth and Word to us. Narrative/History/Poetry/Epistle/Prophecy/Parables,etc As children are taught through **illustrations and pictures**, so God, step by step enlightens His people. X constantly used **parables** as a means of getting a **message home** to His hearers. So here, in **history**, we have God ‘speaking’ to us and showing us in **concrete form** His will and purpose. All of Scripture is written for **our learning!** Here we have an account of God’s gracious dealings with one of His own dear children - whom He **brought out** of **pagan** darkness into His covenant love/care!

GOD USES ‘MEANS’ to BRING HIS PEOPLE to FAITH

The apparently **insignificant common** events of life are all used by God! *a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons* [1]! **APP** Yes, such a **simple event** had profound and **eternal consequences!** The places we decide to go to and live, the people we meet there are all part of a **chain** of events under God to fulfil His purposes so that we cannot tell what is significant and what is not! **All events connect** together!

Yes, and **adverse/painful** providences are used too! *a famine in the land* – yes God can and does, more often than we realise, use **adverse** circumstances to bring His people out of spiritual darkness! It was the famine that **caused** Elimelech to **leave** Judah and go to Moab! *But even more painful **multiple deaths** - Elimelech/Mahlon/Chilion all died! Even **bereavement** can, under God, be blessed! Events would have taken a completely different turn if these three deaths had not taken place! **APP** Who knows what good may come out of the many tragedies we hear and know of today - so **pray!**

The GREATEST INFLUENCE on RUTH

The **most direct** means was **Naomi’s character!** The best ‘means’ are Godly people! Naomi had a tremendous influence on Ruth! She **let her light shine before men...** [Mat 5:16]. Paul gives Timothy good advice about widows **let them first learn to show godliness to their own household** [1Tim5:4] Naomi certainly did in her household! She

was a great example! So much so that Ruth **wanted** to be **like** Naomi and Orpah also wanted to **follow** Naomi back to Judah. **No domestic** fall outs! *If possible, so far as it depends on you, **live peaceably** with all* [R12:18] **APP** What an opportunity for Ruth & Orpah to ‘get away from this ‘Covenant God religious stuff!’ But no – they were **impressed** by it! **APP** How do your household members see **you**?

Naomi was what Paul called **truly a widow** [1Tim5:5] Such people says Paul, have **set her hope in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day** [1Tim5:5]! Having lost her husband, the visible means of her provider, she **trusts** God more than ever! She believes God *would supply all her needs* [Phil 4:19]

She **believed** in the **promise** that God **would** visit His people. She believed God would ultimately make Israel a great nation. She knew God would not forsake His own inheritance! What He promised, He was able to perform. And on hearing about things in Israel she knew God **had** visited His people [6] She was able to **recognise** God’s hand in Providence towards Israel. Luke uses this term ‘God visiting His people’, **twice** in his gospel re Christ’s coming! [Luke1:68,7:16]

Although Naomi was a godly person, she also had **PNS! Personal Negative Syndrome!** She had **her own negative disposition** about herself! Yes! *...the hand of the Lord has gone out **against** me* [13]! *Do not call me Naomi,(=pleasant) call me **Mara** (=bitter), for the Lord has dealt **very bitterly** with me. I went out **full**, and the Lord has brought me back **empty**...the Lord has **testified against** me and the Almighty has brought **calamity** upon me* [20,21]! **APP** My friends - **how wrong** can believers be about **assessing their favour** with God? How wrong was Naomi about who she was? She was **highly, highly, favoured!** God was **smiling** on her. Look: *the women said to Naomi, ‘Blessed be the Lord, who has not left **you** this day without a redeemer and may His name be renowned in Israel! He shall be a **restorer of life** and a **nourisher** of your old age....a son has been born to **Naomi**...Obed. He was the father of **David** - in line with **X!***

Note: she was **not angry** with the Lord - but she did have ‘**low self-esteem**’ regarding her own **usefulness** for the Lord! She was a strong believer, yet she had a **negative self-view!** Missing her husband ?!

Yet, Naomi was **truly humble!** Despite these ‘negative’ thoughts about herself, she **decided to return** to her homeland in that **more humble position** than when she left! She **obeyed the call** of God in providence to return to where God had visited His people. **Pride** did not **prevent** her from doing what was obviously the right/wise thing!

RUTH’S CHOICE and DECISION

So one day Naomi stated loud and clear, she was returning back to Judah. Naomi made **her** decision. Now what about the girls? They too had to make a decision. We hear a lot today about having **choices!** Well, life is full of choices and we need to remember that **every single choice has consequences!** Some **very long term!**

The girls needed to **count the cost!** Going with Naomi would mean **leaving all their relatives!** And all their **associations!** The whole **culture** of Moab! **Radical!** **APP** following the Lord and making a decision for the Lord means leaving your **most precious idols!** That’s what leaving Moab and going to Judah meant for Ruth/Orpah!

Jesus said a very solemn thing *If anyone comes to Me and does **not hate** his own **father** and **mother** and **wife** and **children** and **brothers** and **sisters**, yes, and even his **own life**, he **cannot** be my disciple* [Luke 14:26] Of course Jesus did **not mean** that we **literally** hate our family members – but **relatively** speaking, Xns are required to put Christ’s Kingdom **before** everything else!

Going to Judah also meant **new associations/friends!** Some people ‘fear’ meeting new people! Some people **enjoy** it! Some people **thrive** under new/exciting changes - some don’t! But **consequences!**

There was **internal turmoil** within Ruth – and Orpah! They both **knew** that Israel welcomed **aliens** and **proselytes** – just like the Church, anyone who **wants** to live under the **Lordship of Christ** is welcome! Their **own consciences** testified that they **could not use** ‘We are Moabites’ as an **excuse** for not going to Judah!

The CLIMAX of the CRISIS

Just because God and the Holy Spirit was ‘at work’ on the soul of Ruth, did **not** mean she was **calm** and **collected** under all the

considerations! On the contrary—her **emotions** were very **engaged!** God can still be over-ruling in the midst of our **confusion** and **indecision!** Joseph did not find calm in running away from Potipher's wife! He **felt** the power of the flesh. Even with God's grace in our hearts, it can very **difficult/heart-rending** to make some of the decisions God calls us to make! So Ruth too had her moments!

The **climax** was surely when **Orpah** decided to go back – that made it all the **more difficult** for her to make the **opposite** choice! **APP** When your **closest** friends decide not to 'do church', it can be very difficult to say 'I **don't agree** - I believe the Bible is right'!

But there was even more '**pressure**' on Ruth when, listen for it, **Naomi**, of all people, **told her to return after your sister-in-law!** [15] That surely was **testing!** Whether Naomi meant it as a test to Ruth I don't know, but it must have put **tremendous pressure** on Ruth! To have your godly mother-in-law and your sister-in-law advising you in one direction when you are disposed to another!

Then comes one of the most famous sayings in the bible: *Do **not urge** me to **leave** you or to **return** from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God...May the Lord do so to me and more also if **anything but death parts** me from you* [16,17]

Ruth was saying the 'bottom line' was she **preferred** to be with **God's people** and have Naomi's God than her former friends/gods. Her **heart** was with Israel's God. *We **know** that we **have** passed out of death into life, **because we love the brothers*** [1J3:14].

Ruth was **determined** to go with her [18] – she refused to return to her own country! *If they had been thinking of that country from which they had gone out, they would have **had opportunity to return.** But as it is, they desire a **better** country* [Heb 11:15] They *acknowledged that they were **strangers** and **exiles** on the earth!* How **different** from **Agrippa** *Almost you **persuade** me... a Christian*

APP My title, 'How it all began?' How the **birth of Jesus Christ** was planned long ago and who were His ancestors! The NT Boaz!