



## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

*Choosing to Serve the Lord Instead ... by Billy*

**READ: RUTH 1: 1-22**

This chapter portrays a tragic scenario for a mother named Naomi: famine, migration, loss of husband, loss of sons and lack of offspring.

It was not uncommon for famine to cause migration to a foreign land. It happened this way for Abraham (*Gen.12:10*) and Isaac (*Gen.26:1*)

It was likely that the famine was the result of the oppression of the Midianites during the time of the Judges. (*6:1-6*)

The move east to Moab was the chosen option. Moab was not a great friend to Israel. Shortly after they settled down Naomi's husband died and she is left with her two sons. They both marry women from Moab.

Ten years pass and no children are born and both husbands die tragically. The scene is set for what follows. Then Naomi hears in the grapevine that the Lord had visited (come to the aid of) His people once again.

*"I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her needy with bread."* (*Psa.132:15* speaking of Zion)

She decided to return to Bethlehem (house of bread) but she told her two daughters in law to return to their mother's houses in Moab.

There was evidently a bond of love between Naomi and the young women and she prayed God's blessing upon them in return for their kindness to her family. (*Gen.12:3*)

She was guided by a cultural priority which was common in Israel. To be without a husband was to be without security for the future.

And to be without children was considered worthy of shame. This way of thinking is certainly not prominent in the NT (*1 Cor.7:32-35*)

Orpah and Ruth had lived a different life in Moab and they had served different gods. For Orpah it was difficult to leave Naomi because of her emotional attachment but her heart was still in Moab. For Ruth although she loved Naomi dearly, she loved what Naomi believed even more.

*"But Ruth said, do not urge me to leave you or turn back 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."* (*Ruth 1:16*)

Ruth is a picture of the determined life of the believer who realizes that there is nothing to return to that can compare with knowing Jesus.

*(Continued page 2...)*



## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Week 11

- Joshua possessed a similar spirit of determination when he declared..as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (*Josh.24:15*)
- Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem and the locals hardly recognized Naomi the pleasant one. Now her life was full of bitterness so she no longer wanted to answer to that name. She was persuaded in her mind that the Lord’s hand was against her believing that she was being punished for sin.
- *“Wherever they went, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had spoken and as the Lord had sworn to them, so they were severely distressed.”* (*Judges 2:15*) Because they served Baal.
- Maybe Naomi felt guilty about her life in Moab where other gods were worshipped. Maybe she felt that she had been in denial of her sin.
- Ultimately the true believer will rise above feelings of guilt and shame as they endure the trial of their faith. Meantime there are many depressed Christians who have lost their focus.
- *“I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty.”* (*Ruth 1:21*)
- Each new day provides an opportunity for us to choose the narrative for our life. Naomi at this point chose to focus on despair.
- She forgot one thing. Not that she forgot God, as she still recognized Him as El Shaddai. She forgot that God had a plan.
- She didn’t return from Moab empty. She came back with Ruth.
- *“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be a ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”* (*Micah 5:2*)
- This passage foresees the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem’s manger. But something else happened in the same town.
- This is where Ruth met Boaz and out of their union a son named Obed was born. *“so they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.”* (*Ruth 4:17b*)
- They returned in time for the barley harvest (April). This was a time of celebration and renewal. A time of restoration was beginning for Naomi.
- Out of this “house of bread” proceeded One Who called Himself, the Bread of Life.
- *“This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.”* (*John 6:58*)
- His disciples understood these words and like Ruth they clung to their Lord. *“To whom else shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”* (v.68) ■