

Ruth's Romance of Redemption

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STUDY ONE

THE DISTRESS AND THE REMOVAL

"Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of BethlehemJudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of BethlehemJudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband" (Ruth 1:1-5)

The events recorded in the Book of Ruth took place "*when the judges ruled*" (v. 1). These are the first words of the Book. The Book of Judges gives us a survey of the condition of the people of Israel at the time the Book of Ruth was written. During the rule of the judges, the spiritual atmosphere was good when the people obeyed the Lord. The declination, however, was very apparent during these 450 years and especially toward the close of this period. The three outstanding conditions of the children of Israel are described in the book of Judges as follows:

1. Disobedience. When the Israelites would disobey the Lord, He in turn would send them chastisement from the hands of a foreign nation. When Israel would humble themselves and implore GOD for mercy, He would send them a deliverer -- a Gideon, a Deborah, or someone to help them out of their distress. However, every time they disobeyed GOD, the chastisement seemed to become greater, and a longer time elapsed before they called on GOD for deliverance. This shows that a person's heart will become harder by continuing in disobedience.

2. Defeat. When the Israelites disobeyed GOD, He sent some nation -- the Moabites, the Philistines, the Ammonites, or other enemies -- who would defeat them. They destroyed their property, their crops, and their cities. In turn, Israel would humble themselves, repent of their disobedience, and ask GOD for victory over their enemies. The disobedient will meet defeat. This was proved in the character of King Saul, who disobeyed the commands of Samuel and finally went down in defeat to a suicide's grave.

3. Disgrace. The Book of Judges describes the low and degrading moral condition of the children of Israel at that time. The 19th chapter is sufficient proof of their low standard of living. Along with the downfall of standards usually comes strife and jealousy. At this time, it existed in such a degree that brother fought against brother, and tribe against tribe. The tribe of Benjamin was so nearly wiped out at one time in cold bloody slaughter that only 600 men survived.

The Book of Judges closes with the words "*In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes*" (Judges 21:25). This described the condition of Israel. Each man was a law unto himself and declared, "*We are independent, we will be our own bosses*". When the laws of GOD, of a nation, or of a family are set aside, nothing but confusion, strife, and disorder can remain. There must be law and order to preserve peace, but here there was none, for there was "*no king in Israel.*" This should be a lesson to those in the ranks of the church who would be a law unto themselves and who, regardless of the opinions of others, desire to run the church according to their own plans. Many a spiritual church has been wrecked because of church bosses that existed within their ranks. Some consider the preacher only a figurehead and not one who is called by GOD to lead and guide the flock. Eternity alone will reveal the grief and sorrow some ministers have had to endure because of those who wanted to be dictators on the official board or within the society of the church. Notice how different the last verse of the Book of Ruth: "*And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.*" David means the "*beloved one,*" and the "*Beloved One*" -- JESUS CHRIST -- was a descendant of David.

THE NUMBER EIGHT

The Book of Ruth surely has its proper setting between the Book of Judges and the Books of Samuel. It is the eighth Book in the Bible. The number eight signifies "*a new beginning.*" It is associated with resurrection -- the beginning of a new order of things -- for CHRIST arose on the first day of the week, the eighth day. "*Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness,*" (II Peter 2:5), stepped from the ark into a new world with a total of eight people to begin, as it were, a new race (I Peter 3:20). The Jewish boy was circumcised on the eighth day, a type of new life, the new birth, and the new creation. The cleansed leper was presented by the priest before the Lord on the eighth day; this marked his new beginning: "*And on the eighth day he shall take two he lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, and three tenth deals of fine flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil. And the priest that maketh him clean shall present the man that is to be made clean, and those things, before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation*" (Leviticus 14:10-11). The eighth note in the musical scale is the note of new beginning, just as Sunday is the eighth day, the beginning of a new week. So we see from this that the Book of Ruth appropriately goes before the Books of Samuel because in the closing verse it introduces David, the eighth son of Jesse, from whom there would begin a new plan on the basis of Divine grace. The Book of Ruth describes this marvelous working of grace to the Gentile race through JESUS CHRIST of the seed of David. It is a bright picture on the dark background of Israel's apostasy had come to its fullness, and now GOD was to have a new beginning. After the rule of judges had failed, GOD began the order of prophets, as seen in the Book of Samuel, which follows Ruth. Just so, hundreds of years later, after the law had failed to give a man what his soul was in need of, GOD began His dispensation of grace through JESUS CHRIST, Who was of the seed of David. In this study we find the following:

- 1. THE FAMILY**
- 2. THE FAMINE**
- 3. THE FAILURE**

1. THE FAMILY

There were six members in the family: Elimelech and Naomi, the husband and wife; Mahlon and Chilion, the two sons; and Orpah and Ruth, the two daughters-in-law.

THE NUMBER SIX

The number six falls short of the number of perfection, seven, thus indicating incompleteness and symbolizing fallen man without CHRIST. He lacks the One Who is altogether necessary to bring him into the perfect state. Man was created on the sixth day, one short of seven, which is typical of rest. The descendants of Cain are mentioned only in the sixth generation. There were six cities of refuge, provided for safety from the avenger of blood. The only safe and perfect security is in the seventh -- JESUS CHRIST. At the marriage of Cana (John 2:6), there were six water pots of stone; these were empty and needed filling. JESUS CHRIST, the seventh, supplied their needs. He is the only One Who is able to bring man the blessings of which he stands in need. When JESUS was crucified, darkness began at the sixth hour (Matthew 27:45). So, the doom of man in his eternal state without the redeeming power of JESUS CHRIST in his life is outer darkness. The rebellious man who rejects GOD will finally end with the Antichrist, whose number is 666. Goliath, the giant of Gath, who is a type of the Antichrist, was 6 cubits tall, wore 6 pieces of armor, and carried an iron spearhead weighing 600 shekels. The image erected by Nebuchadnezzar in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon was 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide; this is prophetic of the image that shall be erected by the Antichrist before which the world must bow in worship.

However, there is yet another character found in the Book, the seventh; his name is Boaz. He is the one who so nicely portrays the Lord JESUS CHRIST as the kinsman redeemer for the Gentile race. There are other characters in the Book such as the neighbors, (4:17), handmaidens, young men, the servant, (2:5), and the disabled kinsman, (4:6), but their names are not mentioned.

THE NUMBER SEVEN

The number seven represents dispensational completeness. In some places it refers to Divine fulness, and in other places it speaks of dispensational perfection. It is composed of the numbers three and four, the Divine and the creature in unison. Sometimes it refers to the perfection of evil as in Matthew 12:45 where seven spirits re-entered the man, and his last state was worse than his first. GOD created the world in six days but rested on the seventh in answer to the complete satisfaction of His work. Moses was the seventh from Abraham and to him was given the complete law of GOD for the old dispensation. Enoch, who was not, for GOD translated him, was the seventh from Adam. He is a type of the church of JESUS CHRIST in its dispensational completeness when it will be raptured away to meet the Lord. There are seven epistles, bearing the complete instructions necessary for eternal life and godliness, written to the churches. There are seven letters written to the seven churches in Revelation, chapters two and three, giving the

complete church history from the Day of Pentecost until its close. When the people of GOD conquered Jericho, they marched around the walls seven times on the seventh day, following seven priests, who were carrying seven trumpets. This displayed the perfect, complete victory of faith over the city that was cursed. The complete and perfect measure of forgiveness is seventy times seven as taught by JESUS in Matthew 18:22. The seven devils cast out of Mary Magdalene by JESUS shows the complete climax of iniquity in her life. So we see that Boaz, being the seventh, is the one to bring about spiritual perfection in the life of Ruth, who prefigured the Gentile church.

The Seven Characters of the Book

We are now going to study the names of each of the seven characters, give their meaning, and then see how nicely they fit into the picture of the Book.

A. ELIMELECH. His name means "*GOD is my king*". In the days when there was no king in Israel, there was one man, at least, who looked to the GOD of Heaven to be king of his life. This shows that in every apostasy GOD has a few who have stood true to their faith in Him, just as Enoch in the antediluvian age and Elijah during the apostasy of Ahab.

B. NAOMI. Her name means "*my pleasant one*." Truly this is a wonderful name to have. However, because of her life of wandering and backsliding, she renounced the name and requested that she be called "*Mara*, meaning "*bitter*." Ten years in the land of Moab brought her home in a bitter condition.

C. MAHLON. This means "*sickly*." The offspring of Elimelech and Naomi were sickly. By inference, we note the spiritual decline of the parents, which is manifested in the names of their children. Usually children reap a portion of what is sown by the father and mother. When there is a decline in spirituality at the head of the home, the effect is soon noticeable in the children. Likewise, when the pastor and official board of a church cease to be spiritual, the result may soon be discerned. In the same way, when the head officers and officials of a church organization no longer have the missionary and evangelistic spirit, and worldliness creeps into their lives, it is soon apparent in the other avenues of the church.

D. CHILION. His name means "*consumptive*." He is possessed with a germ and a disease that will terminate in death. Again the same spiritual drifting of the parents is being manifested in the second child but in a worse form, showing their spiritual state is rapidly declining as years go on. Throughout the Old Testament the names of the people picture the circumstances surrounding their birth. When the angel announced to Abraham and Sarah that Isaac was to be born, she laughed. When he was born, they named him Isaac, meaning "*laughter*." When Joseph was sold by his brethren into Egypt, he went through many hardships and prison experience, which finally led him to the throne. While there he married a Gentile wife, who gave birth to a son. Joseph called his name "*Manasseh*," which means "*He hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house*." (Genesis 41:51). Likewise, around these parent's lives there, no doubt, existed an unrevealed reason for them to name these sons "*sickly*" and "*consumptive*."

E. ORPAH. This means "*a portion of the neck and back*." When Naomi left Moab for the land of Bethlehem, she tried to induce her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, to return to the land of

Moab, but they both declared, "*We will return with thee unto thy people.*" (1:10). Again she tried to persuade them to return to Moab. "*Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her.*" (v. 14). Thus, we see, the meaning of her name was fulfilled in her act when she turned her back on Bethlehem to worship idols in the land of Moab. How many have started like Orpah, but because of persecution, the separation the Christian life demands, or the mocking of some friends, they turned their backs on Bethlehem-Judah to return to their idol worship again.

F. RUTH. Her name means "*satisfied.*" She did not find her satisfaction in Moab, in Naomi, or in Bethlehem-Judah, but she found it in Boaz, whom she later married. Ruth was much like the man in the 91st Psalm, who had set his love upon the Lord, (v. 14), and because of that fact GOD said, "*With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation*" (v. 16). Many have tried to find satisfaction in different things, but the only lasting satisfaction that is worth while for time and eternity is to be found in JESUS CHRIST. Yet this satisfaction is not complete, for man still dwells in the realms of sin, still has a decaying body, and still lives in the midst of temptations. David sensed that fact and said, "*I shall be satisfied, when I wake with thy likeness.*" (Psalm 17:15). How we should thank GOD for the prospects ahead; "*It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him.*" (I John 3:2).

G. BOAZ. His name means "*in him is strength.*" When Solomon was building the temple, he brought out from Tyre, Hiram, who made and erected two pillars of brass.

"And king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. He was a widows son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work. For he cast two pillars of brass, of eighteen cubits high apiece: and a line of twelve cubits did compass either of them about. And he made two chapiters of molten brass, to set upon the tops of the pillars: the height of the one chapter was five cubits, and the height of the other chapter was five cubits: And nets of checker work, and wreaths of chain work, for the chapiters which were upon the top of the pillars; seven for the one chapter, and seven for the other chapter. And he made the pillars, and two rows round about upon the one network, to cover the chapiters that were upon the top, with pomegranates: and so did he for the other chapter. And the chapiters that were upon the top of the pillars were of lily work in the porch, four cubits. And the chapiters upon the two pillars had pomegranates also above, over against the belly which was by the network: and the pomegranates were two hundred in rows round about upon the other chapter. And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin: and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz. And upon the top of the pillars was lily work: so was the work of the pillars finished (I Kings 7:13-22).

The right pillar he named Jachin, which means "*he shall establish.*" The left pillar was called Boaz, meaning "*in it is strength.*" Throughout the Scripture brass is typical of judgment. The altar in the tabernacle was made of brass, signifying that the judgment of sin was met in the sacrifice there consumed. In the vision John the Revelator had on the Isle of Patmos he saw JESUS, "*His hairs were white like wool . . .; his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace.*" (Revelation 1:14-15). Here CHRIST is not dressed in His high priestly garments, for His work as HIGH PRIEST is completed; He now comes with His feet like unto fine brass to trample under His feet in judgment all those who have rejected the atonement He had offered. So these pillars portray JESUS CHRIST Who, like the

sacrifice on the altar, endured the judgment for lost men. Although Solomon was a great man and able to build, in his day, a magnificent temple, there is One Who is greater than Solomon, Who shall be able to build a greater Temple, the Church of the living GOD. By the *strength* of His death and resurrection, He shall be able to *establish* a church against which the gates of hell will not be able to prevail. This church, composed mostly of Gentile believers, will be called "*the body of CHRIST.*" From this we see the name Boaz points forward to Him Who is to be the descendant of David.

THE NUMBER TWO

You may wonder why there were two pillars. Two in Scripture is the number of **testimony**. JESUS said, "*In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*" (Matthew 18:16). JESUS, in answer to the challenge of the Pharisees, said, "*It is also written in your law, that the **testimony** of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.*" (John 8:17-18). This shows us that JESUS, in defense of His Divinity, held to the law as written in Deuteronomy 17:6. As CHRIST is the second person of the Godhead, so He is the **testimony** of the Father for He is called in Revelation "*the faithful and true witness.*" The ten commandments were written on two tables of stone and were called the tables of **testimony** (Exodus 31:18). These ten commandments express GOD's demand of righteousness for man. On the great Day of Atonement two scape goats were brought to the high priest, who selected one as the sacrifice upon which the sins of Israel were confessed. After the blood had been sprinkled and the sacrifice had been completed, the high priest laid his hands on the head of the live goat which was then led out to an unknown, unpopulated region of the wilderness as a **testimony** that the sins of Israel had been removed as far as the East is from the West and were remembered no more. JESUS told the disciples, "*Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me.*" (Acts 1:8). So our testimony today should be of such a nature that men can see the power of JESUS CHRIST in redemption.

We find that Boaz makes the seventh character in the book -- the one in whom Ruth could find her satisfaction.

II. THE FAMINE

The setting of the first part of the Book of Ruth is Bethlehem-Judah. These two words, Bethlehem-Judah, with their meaning the "*house of bread,*" later becomes the birthplace of Him Who was the "*Bread of Heaven,*" JESUS CHRIST. Judah, the tribe of which our Saviour was a descendant, means "*praise the Lord.*" Experimental knowledge of Him Who was born in Bethlehem produces praises unto Him Who is the Saviour of the world. So in the meaning of these two words we have food and worship -- nourishment for ourselves and worship for GOD. However, at this time we find in this country of Bethlehem-Judah, where there was supposed to have been bread and worship, a famine. In the very place where you would look for plenty, there was want. How true in many places today; where the worshipers, like Israel in the wilderness, should be fed on the "*Bread of Heaven,*" there exists nothing but a famine. Where the preaching of science, history, and current events takes the place of the Word of GOD, where the attendants (I was going to say worshipers) gathers for social benefits, and where there is no spiritual life -- just a form of religion, the worship of GOD in the Spirit is practically a thing of the past.

In Palestine, the country in which was Bethlehem-Judah, they did not have rivers as in Egypt upon which to rely for water for their crops. They had to depend entirely on Heaven's mercy to send them rain, and if the Heavens were shut and GOD failed to give them rain, nothing but shortage, suffering, and death lay before them. It is the same with us in the spiritual life. If we do not have spiritual rain coming from the open heavens, it means a famine for our souls and spiritual death in the future. It seems there never was such a need of a downpouring of a spiritual, HOLY GHOST rain on the places of worship as there is today in the orthodox ranks, saying nothing about the modernistic churches. In many places worship has become so formal that scarcely an "Amen" or a response can be heard to the sacred truth.

There are three things relative to GOD that I would have you notice under the subject of famine:

- A. THE VIGILANCE OF GOD.**
- B. THE VISITATION OF GOD.**
- C. THE VOICE OF GOD.**

A. THE VIGILANCE OF GOD.

In Leviticus 26 there are two pathways outlined: the first of obedience and bestowal, the second of disobedience and unhappiness. In considering the first, we see the order and the outcome. Four things commanded by GOD are as follows:

(1) **Refraining from idolatry.** (v. 1). No idols were to have standing room in their midst, for idolatry was an abomination to GOD.

(2) **Regarding the Sabbath.** "*Ye shall keep my sabbaths.*" (v. 2). This was a day provided for bodily rest, pointing forward to the time when we could have soul rest in the dispensation of grace.

(3) **Revering His sanctuary.** "*Reverence my sanctuary.*" (v. 2). GOD demands reverence in His house. He must be revered, for He is high and holy.

(4) **Respecting GOD's law.** (v. 3). He demands that they walk in His statutes and keep His commandments. These were GOD's orders to the children of Israel. The outcome with a sixfold promise may be observed in the following verses. These all begin with the words "*I will.*" The promise of:

(a) **A Plentiful Rainfall.** "*I will give you rain in due season.*" (v. 4). Showers of blessings were to be their portion if they were obedient.

(b) **A Peaceful Rest.** "*I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down.*" (v. 6). Peace and rest always follow obedience.

(c) **A Powerful Victory.** "*I will rid evil beasts out of the land.*" (v. 6). If they obeyed, their nation would be so strong and powerful that five would chase a hundred, and one hundred would put ten thousand to flight. (Leviticus 26:8).

(d) **A Prosperous Supply.** "*I will make you fruitful.*" (v. 9). Because of their faithfulness to Him, they would have things, old and new, coming from the hand of GOD. Likewise, if we are

obedient, GOD will supply us with old and new truths from His Word.

(e) **A Place of Worship.** *"I will set my tabernacle among you."* (v. 11). Instead of worshipping idols, they could worship the true and living GOD. A place for that has been arranged. It was a Tabernacle where they could gather, hear His voice, and see His presence.

(f) **A Pleasant Communion.** *"I will walk among you."* (v. 12). They had the promise of walking with GOD as Enoch of old. Just notice the six words embraced in these promises: rainfall, rest, victory, supply, worship, and communion. If Israel would obey His commandments, this was GOD's promise to them. But GOD was vigilant; He saw their disobedience and tried a chastening method to bring them to Himself.

B. THE VISITATION OF GOD.

As GOD visited Adam in the garden so He visited Israel in Canaan, but He visited them with chastisement instead of friendship. In Deuteronomy 11:13-14, He states, *"And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil."* Here we see that GOD promised them rain for the land, both the early rain to prepare the soil and the latter rain to mature the crops. The object was that *"thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil."* The drought which brought the famine to Bethlehem-Judah was a clear indication that Israel had disobeyed GOD and that the Heavens were shut. When there is a spiritual drought in individual lives or in church organizations, it is because men have departed from the living GOD; because of that the Heavens are shut, and the HOLY GHOST no longer sends the spiritual rains and showers of blessings. When the Heavens fail to give the rain, spiritual drought exists, and there is no glory on the individuals or in the services, it is a clear indication that GOD is visiting with the hand of chastisement. Of course, there are testing times for every believer, but they will not last forever. The open Heavens that came to CHRIST at the time of His baptism was a sign of thirty years of perfect obedience to the Father, for the Divine Voice spoke, *"This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased."* In a similar way, GOD appeared to Stephen, and he testified in the closing moments of his life, *"I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."* (Acts 7:56). Because of the faithfulness and obedience of Stephen in his message to the Jews of his day and because of his life of faith and holiness, GOD opened the dome above him and showed him His Blessed SON, who was waiting to welcome him - the first martyr of the New Testament. In the same way, GOD today visits the obedient with an open Heaven and spiritual rain from His bountiful hand, but on the disobedient he inflicts punishment by a rod of chastisement. This came to Bethlehem-Judah in the nature of a famine.

C. THE VOICE OF GOD.

The voice of GOD was a call to repentance. In mercy He was trying by a famine chastisement, to bring Israel from their false gods, from their rebellion and disobedience back to a state of worship and fellowship with Him. Some people run from the hand of chastisement and correction, as Abraham, who left the famine of Canaan and went to Egypt, and, as Elimelech and Naomi, go to Moab for help. What GOD wanted was a time of heart-searching. He wanted Israel to find out why the Heavens were closed. Why are we not blessed today with rain? Why must we endure this famine? Many in the ranks of Christendom have given up the fellowship of the

brethren, the worship of GOD, and their usefulness for service and have gone into a backslidden state rather than meet the issue of GOD's call to repentance. A neglected Bible and a neglected secret closet soon mean a withered soul. It is impossible for a person to keep spiritually blessed by neglecting the sacred pages of the Book and the secret place of prayer. To do so means a famine for the soul, a closed Heaven, and sooner or later, the result of the rod of chastisement will be visible. This is GOD's method of calling the disobedient back into relationship and fellowship where they should be.

III. THE FAILURE

They went to sojourn in the country of Moab." They did not go to Egypt, nor to Babylon, but to Moab. Rather than humbly repent and acknowledge their backslidden condition, many, as Elimelech and Naomi, have gone to Moab. There are three countries to which people living in Canaan have journeyed, Egypt, Babylon, and Moab. Let us consider them in their order.

A. EGYPT. The first five books of the Bible are full of typical teaching. The Book of Exodus brings to us Israel's bondage in Egypt. It is typical of the sinner in the world. Moses at different times mentioned the plagues of Egypt. Some people believe that leprosy originated there because it is called the "**plague of Egypt**." This is a sad picture of sin, incurable except by intervention of the Divine hand. When Joshua led Israel into the land of Canaan, GOD instructed him to circumcise the uncircumcised children which had been born in the wilderness during their forty years of wandering. When this was accomplished, Joshua named the place Gilgal, meaning *this day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you.*" (Joshua 5:9). Again and again Israel in their murmurings wanted to turn back to Egypt. The Book of Acts teaches that "*in their hearts they turned back again into Egypt.*" (Acts 7:39). The wilderness is a type of regeneration. There the children of Israel were separated, dwelling alone, not welcomed among the nations. Their guide was the pillar of cloud (typical of the HOLY SPIRIT) which led them on their way. They were fed by heavenly manna falling daily from the skies. They drank of the water following from the smitten rock, which again is typical of the HOLY SPIRIT. Egypt was **behind** them, Canaan was **before** them and GOD was **with** them. In the same way, the believer is delivered from this present evil world because of the blood on the doorpost and the three-days' journey crossing the Red Sea, which speaks of resurrection.

Israel in Canaan is typical of the believer in a fully consecrated, sanctified state. When they reached there, they were ready for conflict. GOD said, "*Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you.*" (Joshua 1:3). Here is the fight of faith, the onward march of the matured Christians led by their captain, Joshua, which means JESUS. They go from victory to victory, from glory to glory. The Christian is now dwelling in the heights of Canaan or in Heavenly places in CHRIST JESUS. He is resting from his own works and has the HOLY SPIRIT's rest as is promised. He stands, like a warrior ready for battle, clothed in the armor of GOD, but having nothing on his back to protect him in case he should flee from the enemy. However, he has a breastplate of righteousness to face the foe. His food is no longer manna, but milk and honey, grapes and pomegranates. He is a victor, a conqueror, and an overcomer. Such is the experience of full salvation for all those who would enter into Canaan.

B. BABYLON. Babylon is the home of the backslider and the apostate. It was there that Israel was carried after years of disobedience and rejection. They sat down on the banks of the

Euphrates river and wept as they remembered Zion. While their harps hung on willows, they were requested to sing one of the songs of Zion to which they replied, "*How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?*" (Psalm 137:4). This is a picture of the backslider. He is left without a song, without joy, without any bliss; he is in a state of weeping and wanting as he remembers the days of old. Babylon, according to the prophecy of Revelation 14:8, will end in utter destruction. Spiritual Babylon with its earthly corruptness is beyond healing and some day shall be destroyed (Revelation 18:21). For that reason GOD calls to His own and says, "*Come out of her, my people.*" (Revelation 18:4). Babylon originated with a spirit of defiance and independence toward GOD and took on the name of Babel: "*And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth*" (Genesis 11:1-9). As it began so will it end, in great confusion with GOD's judgments resting upon it. I urge the inhabitants still in the realms of hope to heed the commands of the Word and come out of her, "*my people,*" and turn to the ways of spirituality and truth.

C. MOAB. If Egypt is typical of the world, and Babylon is the home of the backslider and apostate, what can Moab be? Let us turn to Jeremiah 48:11. There you will find the following verse: "*Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.*" Here we find six statements concerning those in Moab.

1. He is Unconcerned. "*Moab hath been at ease from his youth.*" The Scripture says, "*Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.*" How many we find today in the ranks of the cold, formal church, of which Moab is typical, having no concern whatever for lost immortal souls. There is no concern for a lost world going at a rapid rate to an endless eternity; there is no soul burden or travail for those in the regions of darkness. They are at ease, having no missionary or evangelistic spirit but are self-satisfied needing nothing as the Laodicean church of Revelation, chapter three. Unless we constantly keep in a good spiritual condition, we will drift there unconsciously.

2. He is Unfaithful. "*He hath settled on his lees.*" "This metaphor is taken from the mode of preserving wines," says Adam Clarke. "They let them rest upon their lees (dregs) for a considerable time, as this improves them both in strength and flavour; and when this is sufficiently done, they rack, or pour them off into other vessels." These are they who have settled down -- doing nothing for GOD. Zephaniah in his prophecy states that punishment is due them: "*And I will punish the men that are settled on their lees*" (Ephesians 1:12).

3. He is Unengaged. "*And hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel.*" The meaning of this is

religious stagnation or spiritual inactivity. When a druggist fills a prescription, he takes various bottles and pours the contents into one vial. He then labels it, giving the directions on the bottle, "*Shake well before using.*" (NOTE: There weren't that many pill doctors in 1934). He does this because if the bottle stands undisturbed for any length of time, some of the important ingredients would settle to the bottom. Thus, the medicinal virtue of the mixture would be lost. So it is with many a Christian who should be emptied from vessel to vessel, for as GOD pours in, they should pour out. This truth is plainly taught in the case of Elisha and the widow. She was commanded to borrow vessels, not a few, and as long as she kept pouring, the supply of oil multiplied, which enabled her to pay the debt she owed (II Kings 4:1). Many professors of religion, like these religionists of Moab, live only for themselves. Sacrifice is unknown to them: fasting and prayer are out of the question. They are much like the Dead Sea, always receiving but never giving. Hudson Taylor was asked, "Why is it that you are always so fresh in what you say?" "I do not know," he replied, "unless it's because I pass on in the evening what the Lord gives to me in the morning." How many there are in the formal state who are inactive. They do very little calling on the sick or personal work among the unconverted. The praying and instructions at the altar of prayer are left to someone else. Remember as you empty the vessel, He is able to refill it, providing you empty it to the benefit of someone else.

4. He is Unpunished. "*Neither hath he gone into captivity.*" His slothful and formal condition has not yet, like Israel when she was carried into captivity, ended in judgment. This chapter closes with "*the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the Lord.*" (v. 47). At the close of this dispensation, the saints of GOD will sit down with JESUS at the Marriage of the LAMB, during which time the Laodicean church will be called into a tremendous judgment, the seven years of tribulation, which shall then fall on the earth. During these seven years of tribulation, this formal Laodicean people - form but no Saviour - will fall into captivity -- into the hands of the Antichrist and his God-rejecting confederates.

5. He is Unchanged. "*Therefore his taste remained in him.*" He still has the same old appetites. If you desire the dance halls, beer gardens, card parties, movies, tobacco, and other things of the world, your taste has not been changed. A newborn soul has an appetite for the Word of GOD, the prayer meetings, Bible studies, secret communion, and the fellowship of the saints. He can truthfully say, "The things I once loved, I now hate." As a new creature in CHRIST JESUS, old things have passed away and all things have become new. A radical, instantaneous, visible transformation has occurred in his life, and he can sing with the poet, "Everything is changed; Praise the Lord."

6. He is Undiscernable. "*And his scent is not changed.*" Scent in Scripture implies discernment. The formal, dead, professing Laodicean church and its members are without discernment. As they have no power to try the spirits to see if they are of GOD, they soon become an easy prey to any false doctrine that may be brought into the community or that may spring up in the Church of GOD. They have no ability to discern whether things are done in or out of the Spirit, nor can they detect the hypocrisy existing under the cloak of some professors. David in describing the heathen says, "*Noses have they, but they smell not*" (Psalm 115:6). This means that they have no discernment.

Moses in his blessing to the twelve tribes says of Levi, "*They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee*" (Deuteronomy 33:10). The margin

intimates that it is to be put under their nose. The meaning of this is that the Levites, the priestly tribe, which is typical of the true Church of CHRIST, will be able to smell (discern) the sweet fragrance of worship that goes up from the congregation. A Levite with a flat nose was disqualified to act as priest, for he would be unable to discern whether things were good or bad: "For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous" (Leviticus 21:18). A man filled with the Spirit of GOD can usually smell a spiritual campmeeting, a prophetic Bible conference, or a HOLY GHOST-filled revival though it is many miles away. In the Song of Solomon we have the picture of CHRIST and the bride. In describing the bride in chapter 7:4, Solomon says, "*Thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.*" The bride's nose is likened to a watchtower in which the guards would sit and look toward Damascus, the city in which dwelled Israel's enemy, the Assyrians. It speaks of vigilance. In the same way, the Christian should be ever on the watch for those spiritual enemies that would invade the land of his possession, destroy his heritage, and bring him into soul bondage. However, these dwellers in Moab were not vigilant, for their scent (discernment) was not changed.

The dwellers in Moab were not vigilant, for their scent (discernment) was not changed. This verse gives us the character and condition of the dwellers in Moab -- unconcerned, unfaithful, unengaged, unpunished, unchanged, undiscernible -- a type of the dead, formal Christless Laodicean church. A sixfold description is given; this is one short of seven, the perfect number: Six is the number of fallen man without CHRIST.

STEPS DOWNWARD

Elimelech and Naomi left Bethlehem -- the house of bread -- just to sojourn in the land of Moab. Next we see they continued there. The last clause of the fourth verse read "*and they dwelled there about ten years.*" They didn't intend to stay there. They were like many folks who depart from GOD to seek an easier way but finally unite with the cold, dead dwellers of Moab. Some of them leave a spiritual church because they don't like the preacher, because they were unsuccessful in retaining their position on the official board, because their Sunday School class, which they had taught for a few years, was given to another, or perhaps because of even smaller things. The demotion was too great; and consequently they united with some church less spiritual.

But there's a second step downward, which I want you to notice; "*they took them wives of the women of Moab*" (v. 4). The very people whom GOD forbade to enter the congregation of the Lord even to the tenth generation, (Deuteronomy 23:3), were taken as wives for the two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. Instead of remaining as a separate people, they married the very people who had previously cursed Israel under the kingship of Balak (Numbers 22). Here's a warning to parents: When you drift from the Lord JESUS CHRIST and from a spiritual place of worship, there is no telling what the outcome will be to you or your offspring. Unholy alliances have been the downfall of many of GOD's people. When Solomon took to himself wives of the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Hittites, he began his departure from the living GOD (I Kings 11:1). People often become so entangled by the meshes of the world in a backslidden state that it is very difficult and sometimes even impossible to bring them to the place where they once were. This is a warning for the young people to be sure that they make their choice in marriage according to the will of GOD. Many young people that were once Spirit-filled workers in GOD's

vineyard, soul-winners in His Kingdom, have married the wrong person only to settle down to live a wasted life ending in disaster. The only life they have to live ends with want and woe.

THE OUTCOME OF BACKSLIDING

But let us notice the outcome. Some few years after dwelling with the Moabites, separation enters the home. The rod of chastisement failed to bring Elimelech and Naomi to repentance, and now the rod of death takes the husband from the family circle of six.

A monument is erected with the name, "*Elimelech*," inscribed upon it. He who might have had his burial in the Cave of Machpelah with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, now is buried, perhaps with an idolatrous ceremony, in a strange land. A few months roll by, and Mahlon is taken sick. Ere long he goes the way of all the earth; Naomi's grief increases, and Orpah is left a widow. A second tombstone is erected, and there's a second testimony that departure from GOD ends in disaster. The last hope that the seed-line would not be destroyed remained in Chilion, but one day they notice that his face seemed flushed; soon a red blush appears upon his cheek and a lingering disease sets in (for Chilion means consumptive). In spite of protests, tears, and sorrow, they bid good-bye to the last male who came out of Bethlehem. A third marker is erected to tell the story of the departure from GOD to the land of Moab.

From Bethlehem's bread to bitterness, widowhood, want, and woe -- thus ends the first study of the Book of Ruth -- like a cloud without a silver lining, like a dark night without a star. In conclusion, this should teach us that we cannot outrun death, that apostates die in Babylon, sinners die in Egypt, and backsliders die in Moab, that death will sooner or later over take us in whatever country we reside or in whatever condition we may be. So it behooves us to remain in Bethlehem and take the chastisement GOD may send us. If your spiritual tide is low, repent and turn to Him, and the Heavens will again be opened, rain will descend, rivers will overflow, and your spiritual tide will come in. May the Lord grant this to all who read these pages.

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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