

The Truth About Moab

Ruth 1: 1-7

Today I want to begin our study in the wonderful book of Ruth. Within this portion of Scripture, we find one of the greatest pictures of grace presented in the Bible. This biblical account focuses on three main characters: Ruth, a pagan girl from Moab who received an abundant measure of grace; Naomi, her mother-in-law, who found herself away from God and in desperate need of returning; and Boaz, a kinsman of Naomi's who provided hope and redemption for them as they returned to Bethlehem. The central theme of Ruth is the unmerited favor and grace of God to those who are undeserving.

The opening verses we have read provide insight to the conditions of Moab and the dangers associated with dwelling there. We find Elimelech had decided to move his family from Bethlehem to the land of Moab, just across the Jordan River to the east of the land of promise.

Moab was not a favorable place for those who trusted the Lord. The environment of Moab created an atmosphere that made it difficult to live for the Lord and continue serving Him. It was a land inhabited by those who worshipped idols and served strange gods, descendants of Moab, the son of Lot born out of an ungodly relationship with his daughter. They were a rebellious and sinful people who attacked and sought to defeat Israel as they journeyed in the wilderness.

God declared in [Ps.60:8 - Moab is my washpot](#); viewed as a filthy and despised vessel used by slaves to wash the feet of a conquering victor. The world in which we live appeals to the flesh, but in the end, it always brings devastation and defeat. As we begin our study, I want to examine the [realities](#) of dwelling in a foreign land as we consider: [The Truth about Moab](#).

I. A Destitute Land (1) – [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.](#) Here we find a three-fold famine in the land of Moab.

A. A Famine of Food – These were desperate times for the people of Israel and the other nations around them. We find that there was a famine in the land. They faced shortages concerning their food resources, caused by an extended period of drought. Simply obtaining enough food and provisions to survive was a difficult and overwhelming task.

B. A Famine of Faithfulness (1) – We also discover that this was during [the days when the judges ruled](#). That may seem insignificant, but we must understand the philosophy of life during that time.

A predominant theme is revealed several times in Judges. [Judges 21:25 – In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.](#) Men were not concerned with living according to the Word or ways of God. They did that which was right in their eyes, that which was accepted of society.

- Would you not agree that we are living in a similar today? Most are not concerned with morality. They are not concerned with living in a manner that pleases the Lord. They live according to what they view as being right in their eyes. “If it feels good, do it!”

C. A Famine of Favor – In that day Israel no longer regarded the Lord or His ways, living only to please the flesh, and they paid a heavy price for their sinful living. The land of milk and honey was no longer producing its abundance. God had removed His hand of favor and the people were suffering from His absence in their lives.

- I certainly don’t assume every tragedy humanity faces is the result of God’s judgment. However, we would be foolish and untruthful to deny the fact that turning away from the Lord bears consequence. America is suffering a famine of favor!

II. A Deceptive Land (1b-2) – [V.2 – 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.](#) Let’s consider:

A. Their Lineage – Elimelech brought his family from the land of his fathers, the land of promise. He dwelt in Bethlehem-Judah. Bethlehem means “*house of bread.*” Judah means “*praise.*” Granted there was a famine in the land, but Elimelech made a conscious decision to abandon the blessing and praise of God for a land of idolatry and sinful lusts. He could not claim ignorance for his decision. His lineage was in Bethlehem.

- It is also interesting to note that Elimelech means “*my God is king.*” As Elimelech’s name was mentioned it bore witness to the power and ability of God, and yet he failed to trust Him. He focused on the temporary trial rather than the eternal God! Have we not been guilty of the same?

B. Their Longing – As I considered this passage, I was saddened by the decision of Elimelech, but I do want to give him the benefit of the doubt. We find in [v.1](#) that he had planned to [sojourn](#) in Moab. That has the idea of “*a temporary stay; a temporary dwelling.*” He should have trusted God, but he had not planned on staying in Moab. He planned to stay a while and return to Bethlehem.

- Many have a genuine desire to serve the Lord, not planning to get caught up in the lure of the world. They may wander from the Lord, but there is no real desire to abandon Him altogether. This is a dangerous decision to make. Satan will never show the end result of sin. He only shows that which appeals to the flesh. Many have fallen and are no longer serving the Lord, but they did not set out to abandon God altogether. They had only planned to enjoy life a bit.

C. Their Living (2b) – *And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.* Here we find a totally different desire and living arrangement. What began as a desire to *sojourn* developed into *continuing* in Moab. Rather than a temporary dwelling, they had now settled down and were quite comfortable with their new home. As time went on, they likely thought little of Bethlehem and the life they lived before.

- Are you getting the picture? We can't dabble in sin, expecting to please the flesh for a season and leave whenever we choose. Far too often what begins as a temporary arrangement or a "one time affair" turns into an extended stay. Sin will take you farther than you expected to go, keep you longer than you intended to stay, and cost far more than you want to pay.

III. A Devastating Land (2-5)

A. A Place of Discipline – Living in sin is never without consequence. The names of Elimelech's sons bear witness to that fundamental truth. *Mahlon* means "sick" and *Chilion* means "pining, wasting away." Keep in mind, the children were born before they left for Moab. God had sent a warning prior to their departure for Moab.

B. A Place of Disobedience (4) – *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.* It is apparent in various passages that God was displeased with His people marrying among the heathen nations. He warned against it and commanded that they refrain from such practices. However, Mahlon and Chilion took wives of Moab. Their brief stay turned into a ten-year period of disobedience.

- If you dwell among the world, apart from God long enough, eventually you will embrace the ideals of the world. You will come to the place that you no longer remember the land of your heritage and begin to embrace the ways of the world. Dwelling apart from God will result in disobedience!

C. A Place of Death (3, 5a) – [And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.](#)

^[5a] [And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them.](#) Death occurred while dwelling in Moab. We cannot say with absolute certainty their deaths were a result of God's judgment, but they could have been. He sent the famine as a call for repentance. God is patient and loving, but He is also holy!

- I am convinced that many have filled an early grave because of disobedience. I do not believe that God will allow one of His children to continue to bring reproach. Disobedience may not always result in physical death, but it will always affect us spiritually. We cannot lose our salvation, but we can decline spiritually, rendering ourselves of no use to God. That is not living!

D. A Place of Desolation (5b) – [and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.](#) Sin brought desolation and despair to Naomi. She lost those whom she loved the most. She was now a stranger in a foreign land, separated from her family in death.

- Rest assured, the end result of sin is never pretty or desirable. It always ends in pain and suffering. I have never met one who rejoiced that they had wandered from God in sin. Consider the homes and lives that are ruined today because of sin.

IV. A Defining Land (6-7) – [Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.](#) ^[7] [Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.](#) Here we find the grace of God extended to the undeserving. These elements will always be present when we deal with our sin.

A. A Place of Remembrance – After all of the wasted time and devastation, Naomi remembered Bethlehem. She heard God had been faithful, visiting His people, and providing bread. She longed for home. The journey back to God must begin with remembrance. We must remember Him and desire to return home. He will be as the prodigal's father watching and awaiting our return.

B. A Place of Repentance – These verses don't specifically say, but it is evident Naomi had a repentant heart. She realized Moab had brought nothing but defeat, despair, and death. She wanted to return to Bethlehem and sought restoration.

- Simply remembering our fellowship with God isn't enough. We must reach the place that we are willing to repent and seek His forgiveness. We must abandon Moab and seek the joy of the Lord and His holiness.

C. A Place of Returning – Naomi determined in her heart to return to the land of Judah. She had dwelt in Moab long enough and it was time to go home. The scars and pain of Moab were still there, but she had come to herself and realized her need.

- Many today need to arise from their Moab and begin the journey home. The consequences of sin will possibly remain. Time lost cannot be retrieved, but that is no reason to remain away from God. He is a loving God and He will forgive, but we must make our way toward Him.

Conclusion: In these beginning verses we see the devastation of sin. Our lives are all different, but the results of sin are much the same. I rejoice that we serve a God of grace and mercy who will allow us to return from Moab. If you are dwelling there, it is time to come home!