

Return to the One True God
Naomi and Ruth Return to Bethlehem
Ruth 1:6–22

A Godward Decision (Ruth 1:6-14) We found out from the last 5 verses that three ladies had lost their husbands. They were in the midst of a famine, so decisions for the future had to be made. They are picking up the ruins and returning to either what they had known, or they were turning to a commitment to something new. We don't find out who was Ruth's late husband was until chapter 4. Ruth was married to Mahlon.

The Hebrew verb "to return" is used 12 times in Chapter 1. Mostly this verb is used to describe a changing course of action, but it can also mean spiritual renewal.

There are only two choices in life, to follow God through Jesus Christ or to not follow Him. At the end of Judges in **21:25** ***"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."*** Our decisions are either based on a biblical worldview or on a secular worldview. The selfish side will always choose the comfortable, the convenient, or the carnal, but the guiding of the Holy Spirit causes one to fight one's flesh and become rooted in faith. We can either be an Orpah or a Ruth. Orpah decided to go back to what she knew, Moab. Ruth decided to trust this new God and go with Naomi to Bethlehem. Comfort is often the greatest killer of obedience to God! Allow me to set the stage concerning the choice to return to Moab.

As you may recall, the Moabites came as a result of Lot's sin. The Moabites were pagans with a belief in multiple gods, but the chief god they worshipped was Chemosh. We see this in Judges 11:24. In fact Solomon built an altar to honor Chemosh because of his Moabite wife.

Thankfully King Josiah destroyed the Israelite branch of this cult in 2 Kings 23. It was known that children were sacrificed in celebration and worship of Chemosh. The One True God will never bless the murder of children. Many scholars believe that the famine was a direct result of the Godlessness occurring nationally, yet there will always be a remnant of those who trust in the Lord. So a decision to go back to Moab is a decision to not trust in God. Even some scholars speculate if the deaths of the men were from disobedience, we don't know, so I don't want to entertain such.

A Godward Devotion (Ruth 1:15-18) This is not Naomi's shining moment here in verse 15. We have all had lapse of judgement, especially during grief. Naomi had given Ruth every reason not to go with her, yet Ruth was clearly devoted to the care of her mother-in-law. In Ruth's devotion to Naomi, sprung further a new faith in the One True God! Allow this to be a testimony of faith that we pass on to our loved ones. In God's great providence you and I have heard the gospel, the gospel has transformed us, and we pass this on. When we start to admire someone, it's because they have the attributes of God don't they? A coworker takes notice of your calmness during chaos and says, "I want the joy that you have! What is different

about you?" 1 Peter 3:15 states: ***"but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,"***

A Godward Direction (Ruth 1:19-22) So with Ruth's devotion and Naomi's decision they have a direction to return to Bethlehem. As you recall, Bethlehem was known as the "house of bread." Who would later be born there? You got it, Jesus, the "Bread of Life." Either turn to Christ or return to Christ! Luke 15:17-22 is a great reminder of what it looks like to return to the One True God! (show a picture of prodigal son)

"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' 20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.'"