

Unlocking The Mystery & Treasure Of Our Inheritance

#38 Sojourn To Moab

The Period of the Judges, known as the Dark Period Of Israel's History, covers about 400 years from the death of Joshua to the establishment of the monarchy.

Life was not easy in the period of the judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Israel experienced one of its lowest points in history. It was a record of division, cruelty, apostasy, civil war and national disgrace. They were in dire straits because they lacked godly leadership. The priesthood was defiled, there was no sustained prophetic message from the LORD, and the law of Moses was being ignored.

Family In Focus: Elimelech [God Is My King], his wife Naomi [Pleasant], their sons Mahlon [Song] and Chilion [complete] lived in Bethlehem [House of Bread].

Consider: Their family: God was their King. They lived in a house of bread where theirs was a pleasant experience of life. Songs often filled their lips and with it they had a sense of completeness.

Consider: Our Life In Christ: 1. Jesus is intended to be our King and rule us in all things.

2. Then we find ourselves living in a "House of Bread." John 6:35 "He who comes to Me shall never hunger and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." Real satisfaction

3. This experience is PLEASANT.

Prov. 3:17 Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.

4. We will have difficult circumstances but we will experience God's amazing peace.

Our experiences are to be filled with songs of praises [Mahlon] to Him who meets our needs and of the abundant life in Christ being complete and fulfilling [Chilion].

5. This is God's intention for the life where He is allowed to rule as King.

Ruth 1:1a gives a picture of Israel during this dark time.

Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land.

Note: There is more than just an absence of food. There had been an extended period of spiritual famine. Moses had warned Israel their fields and flocks would be cursed if they failed to cleanse the Promised Land of pagan corruption. [Deut. 28:17-18, 22-24, 38-40]

God disciplined the Israelites for their disobedience and worship of pagan idols.

Note: The godly had to suffer because of the ungodly.

Trial: A famine in Bethlehem = "House of Bread"

Consider:

1. As a believer, I can turn away from the Lord in a trial and not heed God's Word of correction.

2. God may find it necessary for my restoration to "shut up heaven so there is no rain."

a. Refreshing moving of the Holy Spirit is no longer in my heart

b. Bible becomes dull and dry; praying is empty

c. Christian service is a chore

d. No joyous testimony

Question: Is it possible for there to be such a famine in my soul?

Problem: Some Israelites will leave Bethlehem, a symbol of God's fullness, to search for bread in pagan Moab.

Three Mistakes We Must Avoid In Dealing With Trials

I. Unbelief: Trying To Run From Our Problems - Ruth 1:1-5

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 Bethlehem, Judah, went To Sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. ² The name of the man *was* Elimelech, the name of his wife *was* Naomi,...

Question: Why do I at times Sojourn out of the fullness of the abundant life and experience a spiritual famine [a time when my heart seems cold and out of touch with God].

Why don't I seek the Lord's face?

1. Something else captures our heart and our desires.

2. It is not because these things are so attractive; it is that "Bethlehem" has become so dry.

3. I need something new to occupy my time. It seems church is dry and dead.

4. Whose fault is it? Am I dead and dry because I am not maintaining my relationship with God?

5. Whose fault is it that He who is my joy has become so dull that my heart is now set on the fields of Moab?

6. Instead of facing my fault, I go to "Moab" to find a substitute there for what I have lost.

My excursion into Moab is just for a short time - just a little lowering of the standards of my consecration to God.

7. I am forsaking MY INHERITANCE of the fullness of the abundant life in Jesus Christ!

8. My INHERITANCE in Christ remains untended and not enjoyed.

9. Question: Have I forsaken the enjoyment of my once-fruitful fields?

Note: Elimelech should have sought God's face in the trial, but he found another way.

Elimelech made the wrong decision when he fled to Moab to escape the famine.

1. Walking by Sight & Not by Faith

a. Moab, the Gentile heathen land, had fields that were green and fertile.

b. Elimelech left his land that was part of his inheritance!

c. No matter how difficult the circumstance, the best place is in God's will.

d. Claim the promise of Isa. 40:31: WAIT on the Lord to receive His strength and "wings like eagles" and by faith soar above the storms of life.

e. Walk by faith? Claim the promises of God and obey His Word in spite of what you see and how you feel. Commit to Him and rely totally on Him to meet your need.

f. When we live by faith, it glorifies God, witnesses to others and builds His character into our lives.

g. God said "the righteous shall live by faith."

If I refuse to trust Him, I am calling Him a liar and dishonoring Him.

2. Elimelech majored on the physical and not the spiritual.

a. When Paul faced a threatening future, he said, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself." [Acts 20:24]

3. Elimelech honored the enemy and not the LORD.

a. Elimelech means: My God Is King - He left God out of his decisions.

a. Took his family 50 miles away to Moab. He abandoned God and sought refuge from the enemy.

b. Moab had invaded Israel and ruled over them for 18 years. [Judges 3:12-14]

c. Moabites were a proud people whom God disdained. "Moab is my washpot." {Ps. 60:8}

4. Consequences: His 2 sons married Moabite women.

Jewish men were forbidden to marry Gentile women - especially Moabite and Ammonite.

a. Recall: It was the Moabite women in Moses' day who seduced the Jewish men into idolatry and immorality which resulted in the death of 24,000 Israelites. [Num. 25]

b. Note: They fled Judah to escape death, but he and both sons died anyway.

c. They had planned to only "sojourn," but they remained 10 years. [Ruth 1:4]

d. At the end of 10 years, all that remained were 3 lonely widows and 3 Jewish graves in a heathen land. Everything else was gone. Such is the sad consequence of UNBELIEF.

Truth: We cannot run away and escape our trials. We take our unbelieving and disobedient heart with us. Oswald Chambers: "The majority of us begin with the bigger problem outside and forget the one inside. A man has to learn the plagues of his own heart before his own problems can be solved."

II. Deception: Trying To Hide Our Mistakes - Ruth 1:6-18

Consider 3 testimonies

1. Naomi - Ruth 1:6-15

Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had visited His people by giving them bread.

a. God visited His faithful people in Bethlehem, but not His disobedient daughter in Moab.

b. Naomi heard the report the famine had ended and decided to return home.

Question: Have you encountered a spirit-filled Christian who has returned from a Moab experience? Their testimony encourages "famine" believers.

Does my life and testimony encourage a "Naomi" believer to return to Bethlehem?

c. When we have disobeyed the Lord and departed from His will, we must confess our sin and return to the place of blessing.

Isa. 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts;

Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him;

And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

d. Her decision was right, but her motive was wrong. Still interested in food and not fellowship with God. Do you hear confession of sin? She was returning to her land but not to her Lord.

- e. Note: She did not want her 2 daughter-in-laws to go with her. She tried to influence them to return to their families and false gods. Why?
- f. Perhaps they would be living proof she and her husband had permitted their sons to marry women outside the covenant. Trying to cover up her disobedience?
- g. If she returned to Bethlehem alone, nobody would know her family had broken the law of Moses. True repentance involves honest confessions and brokenness within.
- Prov. 28:13 He who covers his sins will not prosper,
But whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy.

2. Testimony of Orpah - Ruth 1:11-14

- a. Orpah and Ruth started the journey back with Naomi, but she stopped them and urged them not to accompany her. [urges them 3 times to return to the families]
- b. She even prayed for them [v. 8-9] that the LORD would be kind to them and find them new husbands and give them rest after all their sorrow.
- Question: Of what value are the prayers of a backslidden believer? [Ps. 66:18]
- c. Orpah started to Bethlehem, kissed Naomi and wept with her, yet she chose to leave her.
- d. Never mentioned again in Scripture

3. Testimony of Ruth - Ruth 1:15-18

- a. Everything within and around her presented obstacles to her faith, yet she trusted God.
- b. She was a Moabite who worshiped the god Chemosh, accepted human sacrifices and encouraged immorality. [Num. 21:29; I Kings 11:7, 33; II Kings 3:26-27; Num. 25]
- c. Her circumstances were against her which could have made her bitter against God. Her father-in-law and husband died and she was left a widow without any support.
- d. Her mother-in-law urged her to return to Moab and its false gods.
- e. A divine law said, "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the congregation of the Lord; even to the 10th generation none of his descendants shall enter the congregation of the Lord forever." [Duet. 23:3] Permanent Exclusion
- f. Yet she trusted God's grace and threw herself completely on His mercy.
- Law excludes us from God's family, but grace includes us as we put our trust in Him.

III. Bitterness: Blame God For Our Trials [Ruth 1:19-22]

1. Naomi had been away from home for 10 years. Women were shocked when they saw her. Life had taken its toll. Instead of her trials making her better, they made her bitter.
- Ruth 1:21 "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. ²¹ I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?"
1. When we sojourn to Moab, God begins working to bring us back to Bethlehem.
2. Losses: Elimelech died = God ceases to be King in my life.
3. Losses: Mahlon & Chilion die - We lose our song and all sense of fulfillment in life.

4. God may take a more direct hand in our affairs and allow various grave and difficult situations. We may become bitter Christians.

a. His discipline is always to restore us and provoke us to repent by making Moab less attractive to remain there.

5. God will continue His work to restore us to Himself in new areas where self has known little or no surrender. Trials and losses are to bring us to absolute surrender.

Surrender to God our natural desires for ourselves.

Consider: We cannot control our circumstances, but we can control how we respond.

Faith and trust in God = Daring to believe God is working everything for our good even when we don't feel like it or see it happening.

Morrison: "Nine-tenths of our unhappiness is selfishness, and is an insult in the face of God."

Consider: Because she didn't surrender to the Lord and accept His loving chastening, she did not experience, ...

Heb. 12:11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Decision: When trouble comes we can:

1. Endure the Trial: Our trials become our master and we tend to become hard and bitter.

2. Escape the Trial: We will likely miss the purpose God wants to achieve in our lives.

3. Enlist the Trial: Our trials will become our servants and work for us.

God will work all things together for our good and His glory. [Rom. 8:28]

II Cor. 4:16-17 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward *man* is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For Our Light Affliction, which is but for a moment, Is Working For Us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory,