

Ruth and Naomi

MEMORY VERSE: "Your people will be my people and your God my God.." Ruth 1:16

SCRIPTURES: Ruth 1:1-22

It had not rained for a long, long time in the land of Judah. The crops were dead and the grass and trees were dying. And there was no food for the people to eat because a famine had spread throughout the land.

"We must go to the land of Moab," said Elimelech to his wife Naomi. "I hear that everything is green there and we will have enough food to eat. If we stay here we will starve to death." So Elimelech and Naomi with their two sons Mahlon and Chilion left for the land of Moab.

Upon their arrival, they had enough food to eat and were happy. But the new country was not like the land of Judah they had left. In this new country people worshiped an idol called Chemosh. He was called the god of fire. He was made of brass and in his outstretched hands people burned sacrifices.

But Naomi and her husband continued to worship the true God, Jehovah, and they taught their sons to worship Him, too.

Then a sad thing happened. Naomi's husband died and she was left with her two sons.

Later the sons married Moabite girls, Orpah and Ruth. The next ten years were happy~ years. Instead of teaching her husband about the false god, Ruth learned to love the true God. But then another sad thing happened in this family. Both of Naomi's sons died.

Now what was Naomi to do? Life was difficult for widows and she missed people she had left behind, people who loved the God she loved.

"I have heard that the famine is over in Bethlehem," said Naomi to Orpah and Ruth. "God has blessed His people with good crops once again, and it is time for me to go back:"

Orpah and Ruth both cried when they heard Naomi was leaving.

"We want to go with you," said her daughters-in-law.

Naomi agreed they could go with her. But after they began their journey, she changed her mind. She said to Orpah and Ruth, "Go back, my daughters, and return to your parents' home."

Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and said good-bye and started back to her gods and her home.

But Ruth said, "Don't make me leave you for I want to go wherever you go, and to live wherever you live. Your people shall be my people and **your God shall be my God.**"

Naomi could see Ruth had made up her mind.

So Naomi and Ruth walked together to the land of Judah where Naomi had once lived. They kept walking until they came to the village of Bethlehem.

"This is where I have family," said Naomi. "We will stop here."

It was good to see the purple grapes and the fields of golden corn, and she was glad to see her friends. But some of her friends noticed Naomi didn't look like she did when she left. Her eyes were sad.

"Is it really, really, you?" the women asked.

She said, "Don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara." Naomi means "pleasant" and Mara means "bitter," for much sadness had come into Naomi's life.

"I want to change my name because now I am sad and not happy like I was when I lived here before."

Her neighbors and friends probably prayed, "Please show kindness to Naomi."

Though neither Naomi nor Ruth could see how that prayer might be answered, God knew, and he had a plan to provide for both Naomi and Ruth. (tune in next week)