

Ruth 1A **(Draft Speaker's Notes)**

1. Opening Comments (example)

What a fascinating love story we are introduced to in the book of Ruth. This is not a story that takes a long time to develop the plot line or reveal its characters. It starts with high drama and keeps unfolding a beautiful, exciting and character rich story. Some of the elements of this story are easy to discern and others are more artfully woven in. This study will give you the opportunity to delve into history and will also give you some insight into the future. We hope and pray that you are drawn closer to your Lord and Savior as you study this tender story brought to us from the Old Testament of the Bible.

We will be asking many questions as we uncover the truths of this book. It is always important to ask questions like: Who, What, When, Where, How and Why. Many of those answers are given to us directly from the text in Ruth and others we will glean in a variety of supporting scriptures.

We believe that every word in scripture is there for a purpose and that each word, verse and book is to be looked out in the context it was given.

2. Read opening verses

These verses will set the stage for the entire the story.

Ruth 1:1 ¶ Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons.

Ruth 1:2 The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there.

Ruth 1:3 Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons.

Ruth 1:4 They took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years.

Ruth 1:5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.

3. Identify the time when this story took place

What clue did we find in the text? (verse 1 - in the days when the judges governed)

What was the "time of the judges?"

The period following Joshua but before kings were appointed.

Short review of the early history of Israel

Israel began as a people descended from a man named Abraham and his sons Isaac and his grandson Jacob.

His descendants later were taken into bondage in Egypt. Later God provided an escape for them with the help of Moses and eventually they entered the Promised Land, led by Joshua.

After being brought into the land, God maintained His rule over Israel through judges – men and women whom God raised up to lead this new nation and keep law and order.

They were the Judges and the time that they led the nation of Israel is referred to as, *the days when the judges governed*.

Emphasize this was a very short review of Israel's history taken from Genesis, Exodus, Joshua and Judges.

We also need to understand what these times were like in Israel.

The time of the judges speaks more to the nature of the times than merely the time period.

What is important is to look at the heart of the people of Israel and who they were turning to for direction.

Judges 21:25 sums up this nicely.

Judg. 21:25 "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

What a perfect explanation for what we find the characters doing in the beginning of our story.

4. Ask the audience...what does it mean people were doing what was right in their own eyes?

- *Lawlessness, selfishness*
- *Not seeking God's will, disobedient to God*
- *Etc.*

5. Do men naturally choose to do what is good when they make their own choices?

Let's see what scripture tells us. (Consider reading these verses)

Prov. 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,
But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.

Luke 16:15 And Jesus said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.

Rom. 3:10 as it is written,

“ THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

Rom. 3:11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,

THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

Rom. 3:12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;

THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,

THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”

6. How did you think God responded to a people who did what was right in their own eyes?

- *God judged (disciplined) His people for their disobedience*

Look again at verse 1.

It tells us not only when the story unfolds (*in the days when the judges governed*), but it also follows with a description of God’s response (*there was a famine in the land*)

Let's look at some scriptures and see if it can shed some light on what was really at work in this time in history.

Ask the class to look up Deut. 11:13-17

Deut. 11:13 ¶ “It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul,

Deut. 11:14 that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil.

Deut. 11:15 “ He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.

Deut. 11:16 “ Beware that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them.

Deut. 11:17 “Or the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.

What did they noticed?

God appointed famine as one way He will judge Israel's disobedience.

Read Lev. 26:3-4, 14-16

Lev. 26:3 ' if you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, **Lev. 26:4** then I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit.

Lev. 26:14 ¶ ' But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, **Lev. 26:15** if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, *and* so break My covenant, **Lev. 26:16** I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that will waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you will sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it up.

Now consider what the book of Judges says about the nation of Israel in these days:

Judges 2:11-22

Judg. 2:11 ¶ Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals, **Judg. 2:12** and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from *among* the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger.

Judg. 2:13 So they forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtaroth.

Judg. 2:14 The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around *them*, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.

Judg. 2:15 Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken and as the LORD had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed.

Judg. 2:16 ¶ Then the LORD raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them.

Judg. 2:17 Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do as *their fathers*.

Judg. 2:18 When the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them.

Judg. 2:19 But it came about when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them;

they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways.

[Judg. 2:20](#) So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers and has not listened to My voice,

[Judg. 2:21](#) I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died,

[Judg. 2:22](#) in order to test Israel by them, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk in it as their fathers did, or not."

7. What are we to conclude when we see that God has allowed famine to occur, based on what these scriptures tell us?

- *God is angry at them for their sin*
- *He keeps His promise to drive them from the land (using famine to accomplish that work)*
- *And specifically, they are driven into the hands of their enemies*

8. Before we look at the characters in the story, let's consider where do they go? (*Moab*)

Look at Genesis 19:29-38

[Gen. 19:29](#) ¶ Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived.

[Gen. 19:30](#) ¶ Lot went up from Zoar, and stayed in the mountains, and his two daughters with him; for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; and he stayed in a cave, he and his two daughters.

[Gen. 19:31](#) Then the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of the earth.

[Gen. 19:32](#) "Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him that we may preserve our family through our father."

[Gen. 19:33](#) So they made their father drink wine that night, and the firstborn went in and lay with her father; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

[Gen. 19:34](#) On the following day, the firstborn said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father."

[Gen. 19:35](#) So they made their father drink wine that night also, and the younger arose and lay with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

[Gen. 19:36](#) Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father.

[Gen. 19:37](#) The firstborn bore a son, and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day.

[Gen. 19:38](#) As for the younger, she also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi; he is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day.

7. Finally, let's look at the characters of the story.

Often names have more importance in scripture than we realize. This may seem unimportant to begin with but I promise it will bring life and more depth to this story.

Let's look at the meaning of the names in the story as they are revealed to us.

- 1) Elimelech (*God of the King*)
- 2) Naomi (*Pleasant*)
- 3) Mahlon (*sick - weak - afflicted*)
- 4) Chilion (*pinning – destruction – consumption- failing*)
- 5) Orpah (*back of the neck, stubborn*)
- 6) Ruth (*friendship*)
- 7) Bethlehem (*place of bread*)
- 8) Judah (*praise*)

Do you know what your name means?

(You can use <http://babynamesearch.com/> to find meanings.)

Going back to the verse in Ruth, what did we learn about Naomi?

- *She and her family leave the promise land because there was a famine and seeking refuge in Moab.*
- *While there we see Naomi losing her husband and both of her sons in a span of only ten years.*
- *Even though we see the sons had married we find there were no children brought to these sons and so we see Naomi without sons or grandsons to turn to for support or hope.*
- *Naomi probably felt completely helpless*

Opportunity to tell story or ask question

- *When we find ourselves in these kind of circumstances, remember the story of Ruth*
- *God did not leave her in these circumstances but provided a way out through His grace.*

What did we learn about Orpah and Ruth?

*They married Naomi's sons
They were Gentile Moabites*

Let's understand the Biblical expectation for how a Jewish should marry.

Deut. 7:1 ¶ “ When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you,

Deut. 7:2 and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.

Deut. 7:3 “Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons.

Deut. 7:4 “For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you.

As Gentiles and as Moabite women they were not marry these Jewish men or take part in the assembly of the Lord.

Deut. 23:3 “ No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their *descendants*, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD,

Deut. 23:4 because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.

We can have more understanding for why Naomi would feel totally alone in this foreign land even though she has two daughter-in-laws.

Introduce the idea of an outsider being granted grace to enter into the assembling of God's people (i.e., Orpah and Ruth were outsiders, not Jews, and yet here they are attached to a Jewish family in exile)

These are the beginnings of God's grace.

Likewise, we can fellowship with God's people by the grace He has offered through our faith in Jesus Christ! This is the beautiful promise of the blessed love story found in the book of Ruth.