

Naomi and the House of Bread
08-14-16 AM

1 Corinthians 10:11 *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*

Ruth one records the story of a family that left Israel for Moab. Elimelech, Naomi and their sons, Mahlon and Chilion left when a famine came to Bethlehem. They lived in Moab for about ten years; Elimelech died there, as did Mahlon and Chilion. All that was left was Naomi and her two daughters in law, Ruth and Orpah. When Naomi regarded her situation, she declared that “the LORD has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me”. She even changed her name to Mara to reflect her grief. It can be presumed that her view was that she was being punished for having left the commonwealth of Israel.

What is the lesson in this message? We might consider that we are told in the New Testament that we are the spiritual Israel (Romans 2:28-29, 9:4-16, 11:13-26; Galatians 4:22-31; Hebrews 12:22-24), which was fore-shadowed by the fleshly nation of Israel. The church was God’s eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:11), not merely a replacement for Israel. We are told that the lessons of the Old Testament are for us to observe and learn (1 Cor. 10:11, Romans 15:3-4). Thus this is about us and our covenant.

Beth-Lehem means “*House of Bread*”. The Bread we seek today is the word of God, the Bread of Life. The church is the pillar (support) of the Word (! Tim. 3:15), and thus it is the House of Bread today. When a Christian leaves the covenant of Christ, and leave the church of Christ in the same action, they are like Elimelech and Naomi leaving the commonwealth and the House of Bread. They forfeit their inheritance and need a redeemer to return to it.

Why do people leave the inheritance of God? Perhaps it is because they see that there are things they desire more in the world. Paul said that Demas, his associate, had forsaken him for the world in 2 Timothy 4. We think that when times are tough in the Lord’s inheritance (as it often can be), that we should look for somewhere easier to be. Not esteeming our inheritance (as Esau, Hebrews 12) causes us to look away for something else.

What happens when we leave? Very simply seen here, we die; we lose our inheritance; we hurt those we love. Elimelech lost his life, his sons’ lives, and left destitute his wife. As she said when she returned “I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty”. This is the consequence of departing from the Way of Christ. Our lives and the lives of those we love are devastated.

What happens when we return? While leaving is a devastating decision, it can be hard to return to the House of Bread. Consider the prodigal son of Luke 15; when he consider his return to his father’s house, Scriptures say “*But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you' (Luke 15:17). He felt that his return would be humiliating and hurtful. But it was not; “when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him” (Luke 15:20). This is what it is like to return to the way; to be embraced and loved. Naomi was received by her kinsmen, and ultimately redeemed by them. She received again that which was lost in a fashion (Ruth 4:14-15). We need but confess our sins to our Father, and He will cleanse us of all unrighteousness. It is EASY to return to the House of Bread!*