**The Gospel According to Ruth 2**

Turning and Returning

*March 17, 2019*

Intro: Literary Devices in Ruth 1

* NOTE: Shakespeare did not invent these!
* Bookends
  + Famine
  + Harvest
* Foreshadowing
  + Bethlehem
  + “at the beginning of barley harvest”
* Judah (not Israel)
  + To direct our attention to the line of the seed
    - David
    - Jesus
* Repetition
  + Turned and returned (about 10x)
* Names
  + Elimelech (God is King)
  + Mahlon (sickly) and Chilion (pining)
    - Not likely their given names, but names given by the author of Ruth
  + Naomi (delight)
  + Mara (bitterness)
  + Ruth (friendship)
* Irony (***incongruity*** between what might be expected and what actually occurs)
  + Elimelech went to ***Moab*** seeking food and relief
    - Moab, that had denied food to Israel in their wilderness sojourn
    - Moab, that had solicited the services of Balaam to curse Israel

**Turning**

* Elimelech turned ***away*** from Yahweh
  + Because there was a famine in the land
    - I.e. Judah was being chastened by Yahweh
  + So, instead of “kissing the rod” and acknowledging God’s love in the chastening, he fled.
* Consider Yahweh’s words via Amos

(Amos 4:6–13)*6 “****I gave you cleanness of teeth*** *in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places, yet you did not return to me,” declares the Lord. 7 “****I also withheld the rain*** *from you when there were yet three months to the harvest; I would send rain on one city, and send no rain on another city; one field would have rain, and the field on which it did not rain would wither; 8 so two or three cities would wander to another city to drink water, and would not be satisfied; yet you did not return to me,” declares the Lord. 9 “****I struck you with blight and mildew****; your many gardens and your vineyards, your fig trees and your olive trees the locust devoured; yet you did not return to me,” declares the Lord. 10 “****I sent among you a pestilence*** *after the manner of Egypt****; I killed your young men with the sword, and carried away your horses, and I made the stench of your camp go up into your nostrils****; yet you did not return to me,” declares the Lord. 11 “****I overthrew some of you****, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning; yet you did not return to me,” declares the Lord. 12 “Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!” 13 For behold, he who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought, who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth— the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name!*

* Elimelech further turned away from Yahweh by intermarrying with the Moabites. Something that God had strictly forbidden His people to do.
* Recall that Yahweh was closely associated with the land, so to leave the land was to leave Yahweh, his salvation, his provision and his protection.
  + The horrible result of Elimelech’s turning from Yahweh/Judah
    - Disease (sickly and pining)
    - Death
      * Elimelech and his sons
    - Destitution and widowhood for the remaining women
* So much for avoiding the chastenings of Yahweh by turning away from Him
  + Recall the futility of Jonah
  + Recall that very often the most horrible judgments/chastenings occur when God says to us “Thy will be done”
    - Romans 1 is a series of such
    - Heaven and Hell according to Milton

**Returning**

* Naomi knows that she is completely “empty” (v21)
  + No husband or sons
  + No possessions or means to feed herself
* But, regardless, she resolves to return to the land/Yahweh
  + Even though she knows that Yahweh is the one who has brought all this calamity upon her (v21)
    - The only safe place in a hurricane is directly in its center where virtually no wind blows at all.
* Naomi returns because Yahweh has visited his people (v6)
* But somewhere along the way they reached what we might call a “crossroads”
  + And confronts Orpah and Ruth with a stark choice:
    - Earthly hope of provision and protection in Moab *without Yahweh*, or…
    - No earthly hope of provision and protection in Judah *with Yahweh*.
  + Naomi confronted them with a crisis of FAITH
    - (SF) Forsaking All I Take Him
* Orpah (much like the rich young ruler) decides to take the first option.
* Ruth decides to take the second.
  + Stop trying to talk me out of this!
  + I’m with you (geographically)
    - In life
    - And death
    - In this place (the land of Yahweh)
  + Your people will be my people
  + Your God will be my God
  + Nothing but death will ever part us
* Naomi’s testimony in Bethlehem
  + Don’t call me Naomi, call me Mara
    - She didn’t put a smiley face on her circumstance
  + Acknowledged God’s sovereignty in her distress
    - Yahweh’s testimony
    - Yahweh’s calamity
* Beautiful Conclusio (v22)
  + Naomi and Ruth returned (2x)
    - From their exile in Moab
    - To Bethlehem (the house of bread); Yahweh’s land; Yahweh Himself
  + And ends with the beautiful ***foreshadowing*** “at the beginning of the barley harvest.” (in other words, stay tuned, folks…)

**Application**

* Note the horrific consequences of turning away from Yahweh.
* Husbands/Fathers
  + Where are you leading your wives and children?
    - To the Land/the Lord Jesus Christ
    - Or away from him?
    - Leadership matters: Elimelech lead Naomi and his sons into Moab, and they, with him, suffered the consequences of his ungodly leadership.
    - Leadership matters.
  + Are you kissing the rod?
    - Are you yielding faithfully to the Lord’s chastenings?
* Note the utter impossibility of the “lone Christian”
  + Ruth got it right (your people)
  + E.e. Jim Lasich
* The Events that Precipitated Ruth’s conversion
  + Naomi’s witness of “returning to the Lord”
    - Voddie Baucham: “Our apologetic is our demeanor in suffering.”
  + Naomi’s testimony of God’s sovereignty and the cost of yielding to Him.
    - NOTE: This was, at best, an imperfect presentation of the Gospel.
    - But the LORD used it anyways. Got that?
  + Bread had come to Bethlehem.