

Study Questions for Ruth Chapter 1

Please read Chapter 1 in Ruth. Then consider the following discussion questions:

1) Right away in *Ruth*, the problem of famine presents itself (see Ruth 1:1). Struggle with famine occurs repeatedly in the Old Testament. We meet it first right after The Fall of Man, when God curses the land (see Gen.3:17-19). Read what God says about famine in the Covenant with Israel (see Deut.28:12-19). What does God specify as one of the punishments for idolatry (read Deut.32:21-22)? How does famine figure in the choice that David is forced to make for the sin of his pride (see 2Sam. 24:10-13)? So, when you read about famine in the Old Testament, what is that supposed to represent?

2) Since many scholars believe Ruth was written about the time Josiah was King of Judah (639-608 BC), it’s important to understand what was going on in the Kingdom at that point. Read 2Kings 23:10-14. Wow!! Josiah wasn’t kidding around, was he? Why do you think he was so aggressive in destroying what had existed in Judah before his reign? When Naomi and Elimelech fled to Moab to escape the famine, why was this so significant?



Ruth as famously depicted by the French painter James Tissot (1836-1902)

3) Look back over Chapter 1 of Ruth, and count the number of times that words and phrases like “return” and “go back” are used. Why do you think this is?

4) Re-read Ruth’s promise in Ruth 1:16-18. Remind you of anything? Go back and read what God says in Ex 6:6-8; Lev.26:9-12; Jer. 30:20-22. So what does Ruth’s promise really represent here? Why is this such a pivotal change of direction in the story?

5) The “resting-place” which Naomi envisions for her daughters-in-law in *Ruth* 1:9 is interesting. Could Naomi be talking about more than just a physical resting place? Read Joshua 21:43-44; Psalm 132:13-14; Isaiah 65:10-11; Isaiah 66:1. Any observations?

6) When Ruth and Naomi finally arrive back in Bethlehem, Naomi changes her name from *Naomi* (meaning “pleasant”) to “*Marah*” (see Ruth 1:20). On the surface, Naomi is claiming that her life is now bitter, which is what “*marrah*” means in Hebrew, rather than the pleasant life identified in “*Naomi*.” But things are destined to change. How does this relate to another point at which we encounter the word “*marrah*” (see Ex.16:22-23)?