

The God of the Ordinary  
**RUTH**

## Introduction to Ruth

### A. Historical Context

- it takes place during the spiritually dark period of the Judges – remarkable!
- it provides an intended, hopeful contrast with the end of Judges

## Introduction to Ruth

### B. Purpose

- “the author’s aim is to explain how, in the providence of God, the divinely chosen King David could emerge from the dark period of the Judges” (*D. Block*)

## Introduction to Ruth

### C. Themes

- (1) God’s providence in the sphere of ordinary human affairs (“God of the Ordinary”)
- (2) A description of “*hesed*” – covenant, loyal love or kindness displayed both by Yahweh and His people

Ruth 1:1-5

## A Bitter Providence

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.

<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>3</sup>Then Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died; and she was left with her two sons.

<sup>4</sup>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.

<sup>5</sup>Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.

(Ruth 1:1-5)

## A Bitter Providence

### 1. An ominous beginning

- “famine in the land” – sign of God’s judgment
- “sojourn in the land of Moab” – the response of unbelief (?)

## A Bitter Providence

### 1. An ominous beginning

- reversal of names:
  - *Bethlehem* – “house of bread”
  - *Elimelech* – “my God is King”
  - *Naomi* – “pleasant one”

## A Bitter Providence

### 2. A hopeless condition

- As an aged widow Naomi had...
  - no provision or protection
  - no prospect of remarriage
  - no children or grandchildren
  - no survival of the family line/inheritance

## A Bitter Providence

### 3. A recognition of God’s providence

- *right view* – she knew that ultimately Yahweh was the cause of her bitter circumstances
- *limited view* – she could not see or begin to imagine the good that Yahweh was beginning to work in her circumstances

## A Bitter Providence

### Lesson:

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.*

(William Cowper, 1774)