

Ruth 1:1-5

Today's passage is the introduction, the first part of the Book of Ruth. It tells the story of a woman named Naomi, who encounters a series of significant hardships.

In Ruth 1:1, we learn about the temporal and geographical background of the book. The period of Ruth is the time of the Judges. What kind of era was the time of the Judges? It was one of the darkest periods in Israel's history. The Bible describes the era of the Judges as a time when "there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). Some biblical scholars argue that the last five chapters of Judges display the most vile and depraved human sins, including believers treating priests as their servants, priests chasing after money, and stories of gang rape, murder, and war.

The geographical background is the land of Moab. Naomi and her husband Elimelech, who were Jews, moved to Moab because there was a famine in their land. The Hebrew word used for famine in verse 1 is "ra'av," which is employed in its most severe sense. In the ancient Near East, famine meant standing at the crossroads of life and death. They decided to immigrate to Moab with all their strength to survive.

We can infer from the names of Elimelech and Naomi's sons that life in Canaan and Moab was not easy. In verse 2, they name their sons Mahlon and Kilion. Mahlon means "to be sick" or "to mourn," and Kilion means "to be weak" or "to fail."

In verse 3, we learn that not long after arriving in Moab, Naomi's husband Elimelech dies. Then, Naomi faces the most shocking pain: her two married sons die before her. The story of Ruth begins in this context.

In today's passage, there is an irony. Naomi's name means "joy," but she experiences no joy. Elimelech's name means "God is king," yet the era was one where people did not recognize God as king and lived according to their own beliefs.

Moreover, the Bible describes the region afflicted by famine in verse 1 as "the land," which is Canaan. The Bible calls this land the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Yet, there was no food in this land. More specifically, Elimelech and Naomi lived in Bethlehem. The name Bethlehem is a combination of "beit," meaning house, and "lechem," meaning bread. So, what does Bethlehem mean? It means "house of bread." Yet, there was no bread there.

Neither in this passage nor anywhere in the Bible is it said that Elimelech, Mahlon, or Kilion sinned. It does not portray their departure from Canaan as a sin either. They made the best choice they could for their survival. So, what is the real issue?

The real issue is that there was no food in the land flowing with milk and honey. Specifically, there was no bread in Bethlehem, the house of bread. Therefore, Elimelech and Naomi had no choice but to leave.

We need to take a step further and think about what the bread that should have been in the house of bread represents. In his book "God Chasers," Pastor Tommy Tenney explains the significance of bread in today's passage. Both in the Old and New Testaments, there is a key passage about the bread that must be present: the showbread in the Old Testament and Jesus Christ, the bread of life, in the New Testament. In these passages, the bread symbolizes God's presence and Jesus Christ (see Numbers 4:7 and John 6:35).

With this understanding, we see that the real problem was that there was no bread in the land known as the house of bread, a land flowing with milk and honey. There was no bread in the house of God, which symbolizes the church. The real issue was that there was no presence of God and no Jesus, the essence of God, in the church.

Today, we must reflect on whether our church and our lives merely bear God's name without feeling His presence, living without God.

Let us seek the true presence of God and Jesus Christ, the true bread of life. Our Lord will hear our plea and come as the bread of life. Therefore, let us seek God again. Let us seek His presence. Let us hope for, long for, and eagerly anticipate the day He comes. Let us seek Him again and come before Him.

**Bible
Memorization**

A VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God."
(Psalm 42:1)

**Bible
Reading**

6/17(Mon)	6/18(Tue)	6/19(Wed)	6/20(Thur)	6/21(Fri)	6/22(Sat)	6/23(Sun)
Job 16-20	Job 21-27	Job 28-31	Job 32-35	Job 36-40	Job 41-42 Psalms 1-5	Psalms 6-12

QT

Quiet Time Passage

6/17(Mon)	6/18(Tue)	6/19(Wed)	6/20(Thur)	6/21(Fri)	6/22(Sat)	6/23(Sun)
Obadiah 1:1-14	Obadiah 1:15-21	2 Kings 1:1-8	2 Kings 1:9-18	2 Kings 2:1-14	2 Kings 2:15-25	2 Kings 3:1-12

**Sharing
Questions**

1. Share any new insights or grace you received through today's message.
2. Discuss whether you are experiencing the fullness of God's presence in your church and personal life.
3. Pray together with your small group to fully experience the presence of God.