

her husband had in bringing her to this decision we cannot tell, and we are not informed what instruction Naomi may have given her. She may have told her much of the wonder-laden history of the Jewish nation; and this may partly account for Naomi's ardent wish that her daughters-in-law should remain in Moab as witnesses for the true God—a light shining in darkness. In whatever way Ruth was enlightened, whether by the uniformly godly, pure, gentle, consistent, loving conduct of Naomi, or by her words, her daily lessons, we are safe in concluding, (c) That she was so deeply impressed, that she announced her decision in the form of a solemn oath, v. 17. This is the same form of asseveration employed by Jonathan in declaring his attachment to David (1 Sam. 20:13), and by Solomon, 1 Kings 2:23. We may learn from all this, the controlling, lasting influence for good which one life exerts upon another. Believers in God are the good seed (Matt. 13:38), a sort of incarnation of the gospel.

3. *The arrival of Naomi and Ruth at Bethlehem.* (a) The whole town was in commotion (v. 19), and, we may assume, especially the female inhabitants, and they said, "Is this Naomi?" so sorrowful, so changed did she appear. (b) Her answer revealed her bitterness of heart, and her recognition of the sovereignty of Providence, v. 21. Her condition was one of deep affliction, but not hopeless, for faith in God never fails of reward, and this in her case was clearly shown by the sequel.

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

By the Associate Editor

The Book of Ruth opens by relating the fortunes of a Hebrew household, whose home at first was at Bethlehem. Here it was that Rachel died, Gen. 35:19. Here Jesse and David lived; and here, at last, the Saviour was born. "House of Bread," the name means; and situated on two heights reached by ascending terraces of vineyards and gardens, and surrounded by rich fields, the place deserved to be so-called. But famine came to this place of plenty. Draw out by question from the class how Elimelech, with Naomi, his wife, and his sons, Mahlon and

Chilion, were forced to leave their home, and go to Moab; the death of the husband, and then of the two sons who had married Moabite wives, Ruth and Orpah; Naomi's resolve to return to her own land, and that of Ruth to go with her, while Orpah was persuaded to stay in Moab. Before the tale closes, we see Naomi and Ruth returning to Bethlehem, where Ruth becomes the wife of Boaz. Make these three points stand out clearly:

1. *Ruth's choice of God.* She had learned to love, not only Naomi, but, better, Naomi's God. Because of this new love she was willing to leave her home and friends and country. It made her strong to stand out against Naomi's persuasion and Orpah's example. It kept her up during the long toilsome journey.

2. *God's choice of Ruth.* The hand of God was in the move of Elimelech's family from Judah to Moab. He used the instruction of Naomi and Ruth's love for her mother-in-law, to bring this young Gentile woman to a home among His own people.

Although there was enmity between the Hebrews and the Moabites, God loved both nations. Impress the thought of God's love for all the heathen nations, and His desire that we should send them the gospel.

3. *The Result.* Ruth seemed to be losing a great deal when she left Moab. Even Naomi thought it a foolish move for her to make. But she followed her conscience and heart, and God rewarded her by giving her a home of peace and joy, and a place among the ancestors of the Messiah. God is calling us, as He called Ruth. Who will make choice of Him to-day?

Some Test Questions

- The date of this story? (v. 1.)
- Where is Bethlehem?
- Tell of the emigration to Moab.
- Where is Moab?
- Wherefore the enmity between Israel and Moab? (Deut. 23:3-6.)
- Describe the sad plight of Naomi and her daughters-in-law.
- Why did she advise them to remain?
- What was Orpah's choice? Ruth's?
- Repeat Ruth's words.
- What was the reception at Bethlehem?
- Naomi's sad reply?