

NAOMI AND RUTH ... who came home to Bethlehem  
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(Ruth 1:19)

They stood together on the road, two lonely, determined women, whose hearts had been united by the common bond of sorrow. Far back across the years, Naomi still saw the failing crops, the prolonged droughts, and the distressing seasons which had suggested the removal of her family from Bethlehem. Her husband, Elimelech, had been driven almost to the point of despair, and had been fully convinced that Moab alone offered relief from the famine which threatened the home. The little family had moved to the new land, only to discover that hardship knew no frontiers. Her husband and her two sons had died before the resolve to return home had triumphed. Orpah, the other daughter-in-law, had been persuaded to rejoin her people; but Ruth had steadfastly refused to follow her example. In reply to Naomi's suggestion, she answered, "Intreat me not to leave thee . . . thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (Ruth 1:16, 17), And so, hand in hand, they came home to Bethlehem

The World Needs to Walk that Pathway in Order to Find Peace

It is worthy of note that these two women were very different. Racially and religiously, they once had nothing in common. Naomi was a Jewess, steeped in the traditions of her people; Ruth was a Gentile, a maiden of Moab, and one of a people who were classed as Israel's enemies. The power of love had overcome their scruples, and any feelings of animosity had been banished by their mutual affection. They were no longer Jew and Gentile—they were mother and daughter, united in sorrow, in fellowship, and in the common purpose to allow nothing to separate them. And so they came to Bethlehem. The world needs to follow their sublime example. When Jew and Gentile, European and Asiatic, East and West, can forget their differences and join hands in friendship and love; when all can tread the path to the holy place, then the problems of a world will be solved.

The Backslider Needs to Walk That Pathway in Order to find Peace

Bethlehem was known as "the place of bread," but God had permitted famine to threaten the securities of the district, and alas, one family at least had been unequal to the time of testing. The prosperity of Moab had appeared to be more desirable than the difficulties of the promised land. So they moved to Moab, where attendance at the sanctuary of God was impossible; where the songs of Zion were seldom heard. Probably they made money, for they felt equal to the task of supporting two daughters-in-law; yet disaster overtook them. This story seems to be very modern. Every backslider journeys to Moab, where the famine is of another type, and where the grave-diggers are always busy. Wise men realize that a loaf of bread in Bethlehem is far more satisfying than a sumptuous repast in Moab.

The Sinner Needs to Walk that Pathway in Order to Find Peace

Naomi had known the fellowship of Bethlehem, but Ruth was a complete stranger to its charms. Naomi was

NAOMI AND RUTH ... who came home to Bethlehem a child of Israel, Ruth was a child of heathenism. Probably some lessons concerning the true God had been taught her by her mother-in-law. The daughter's admiring eyes had recognised fortitude in sorrow, and had come to appreciate that divine help was a reality in the experience of her lonely relative. Happy indeed must be every Naomi who can attract others to her God. When Ruth exclaimed, "Thy God shall be my God," her testimony provided the greatest compliment ever paid to the value of Naomi's influence. Naomi had won a convert, and "they two went until they came to Bethlehem." Soon everything came right, for God worked on their behalf in an amazing fashion. Wedding bells filled their souls with gladness, and the laughing eyes of a baby boy removed all sorrow from their hearts. And probably even God smiled, for in the fullness of time Ruth became the great-grandmother of David (Ruth 4:21-22).

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