

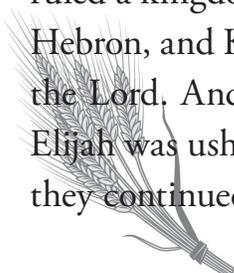
23 THE WAY OUT OF THE WILDERNESS

The wilderness is where perseverance is proven, faith is fixed, and patience is preserved in the hope of God. God carried His people through the wilderness as a father carries a son: “In the wilderness where you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place” (Deuteronomy 1:31). Would we expect any less of a deliverance with Naomi and Ruth on their wilderness experience?

Joseph, son of Jacob, began his wilderness experience cast into a pit by his brothers, sold as a slave, and carried down into Egypt (Genesis 37:22–28). David’s wilderness experience was fleeing King Saul and the army of Israel (1 Samuel 24:1–2). Elijah the prophet went through his wilderness experience fleeing Jezebel, wife of King Ahab (1 Kings 19:1–4).

Your length of stay in the wilderness may be forty days, four weeks, or forty years. Time or distance is not our concern. We are commanded to simply endure. “Run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1). Nevertheless, an extended stay in the wilderness can be brought about by our disobedience.

All of the successes below were completed on the other side of their wilderness experience. Joseph’s life saved many lives: “But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive” (Genesis 50:20). David ruled a kingdom: “Therefore all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord. And they anointed David king over Israel” (2 Samuel 5:3). Elijah was ushered to heaven in a chariot of fire: “Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared



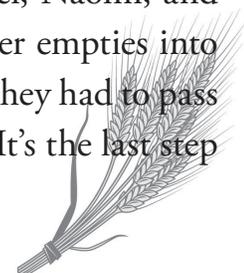
with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven” (2 Kings 2:11). Only God knows the exploits that are waiting on the other side of our wilderness experience.

Our Lord “was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil” (Luke 4:1–2). Christ both sympathized and empathized with the weakness of our humanity. He was in the wilderness wrestling with the devil and triumphed, leaving us an example. Notice the wilderness is not a place of permanent dwelling but your preparation for a work of God.

The shortest distance out of the wilderness of Moab to Bethlehem will be to travel west past Mount Nebo, where Moses viewed the Promised Land from the top of Pisgah (a cleft or division in the mountain), and died (Deuteronomy 32:48–50, 34:1–5). Pisgah is toward the Jordan River, which is north of the Dead Sea. Israel’s final days of their forty year wilderness wanderings were spent in Moab, east of the Jordan River near the city of Jericho. “Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho” (Numbers 22:1).

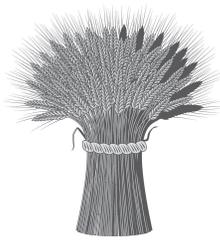
The way out of Moab will usher Naomi and Ruth into God’s Promised Land by the same path at the same time of year the nation of Israel left Moab under the direction of God in prior years. Recall when Israel as a nation crossed the Jordan River: “As those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest)” (Joshua 3:15).

Passing Mount Nebo, our travelers crossed the Jordan River, that great demarcation of the desert separating God’s promises from the wilderness. Jordan means “to descend or go down”—literally, to descend down into judgment. Jesus was baptized in this same Jordan River (Matthew 3:13), likely in the same location where Israel, Naomi, and Ruth crossed into the Promised Land. The Jordan River empties into the Dead Sea. Before entering into the Promised Land, they had to pass the junction of humility, where death and dying meet. It’s the last step in the wilderness of Moab.



Life should be lived preparing to die, which precedes the promise of eternal life. Death and life, sunrise, sunset, rain, drought, sowing, reaping, night, day, sleep, and awakenings—all are a part of the cycle of life. Although their actual crossing isn't recorded, God's record stands sure. He had already shown them the way out of Moab (Joshua 3:14–17).

The water of the wilderness met my needs.
The deluge in the desert rescued me.
The dayspring on high answered my cry,
Whereby I revived when He drew nigh.



Pick of the Crop: God has appointed a set time and path for your exodus out of the wilderness, marked by the heights of Pisgah and the depths of the Jordan River. There is a renewed, victorious life in the promises of God waiting for you on the other side of your wilderness journey.



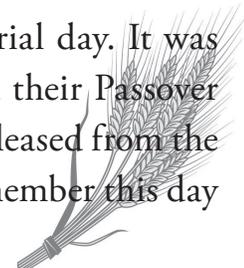
30 NEW SEASON

“So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.” Ruth 1:22

It was a new season in the life of these two. “For lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing of birds has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell...” (Song of Solomon 2:11–13). Their time in Moab had come to an end.

The day of salvation is a memorial to be celebrated, when God delivered you and saved you out of the bondage of this world. Naomi and Ruth had been delivered from Moab, entering into Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest. It was springtime in the month the ancient Hebrews called Abib. “You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty)” (Exodus 23:15). To those in the western world, this was mid-March through April.

The beginning of barley harvest is a special time for the nation of Israel, and it will be for Naomi and Ruth a memorial day. It was at this time in former years that Israel first celebrated their Passover Feast and the Feast of Unleavened Bread while being released from the bondage of Egypt. “And Moses said to the people: ‘Remember this day



in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. On this day you are going out, in the month Abib” (Exodus 13:3–4).

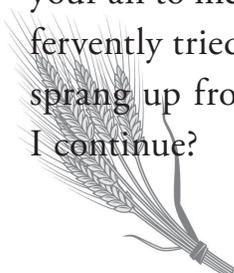
And it was at this same time of the year in their far future that our Lord was crucified. “On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Lord’s Passover” (Leviticus 23:5). The feast of unleavened bread was the Passover (Luke 22:1). Our Lord, King Jesus, was presented before His people on that day to be slain. “Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’” (John 19:14).

Can you see the crop with the eye of your imagination, those glistening, golden stocks reaching toward heaven, waving in the wind as an offering to God? It’s God who supplies the sun, rain, and earth that they might ripen and grow.

“He causes the grass to grow for the cattle,
And vegetation for the service of man,
That he may bring forth food from the earth.”
(Psalm 104:14)

Bethlehem rejoiced at this time: “They rejoice before You according to the joy of harvest” (Isaiah 9:3). There was no noticeable rejoicing in Moab between our duo. Troubled tears flowed as a mighty river. Tears were sown in the soil with little results. But behold, it was a new season, and in Bethlehem there was rejoicing.

There are many tearful times in this life under the sun as we sow into the lives of others and trust God with those things that are precious to us. There are those days you may feel as if you gave your all to mend a marriage, to save a son, or deliver a daughter. You fervently tried to foster a failing friendship, and uncontrollable tears sprang up from within. Am I sowing in vain? To what purpose do I continue?



Those who sow in tears
Shall reap in joy.
He who continually goes forth weeping,
Bearing seed for sowing,
Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
Bringing his sheaves with him.
(Psalm 126:5–6)

The day's coming when we will rejoice in what God has done. Our tears will be turned to joy, the longing of our heart will be turned to laughter. It was the beginning of barley harvest for Naomi and Ruth, and they would reap the benefits.

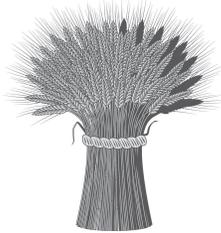
How wonderful of God to save Ruth and place her in the best place to grow, at the “beginning of barley harvest.” There was a joyful celebration unlike any she'd experienced in Moab. Celebration centered on the feasts. These events pointed to the Messiah, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ our righteousness. He willingly gave His life as a sacrificial lamb—God's perfect, spotless, acceptable lamb. “God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering” (Genesis 22:8).

Thank God for the changing of the seasons! For Naomi and Ruth, the rain and dark clouds of despair had passed and a time of celebration was at hand. As the Earth journeys through its seasons, so too does every man, woman, boy, and girl. If you understand the seasons, you'll understand the times, if you're not hypocritical of heart (Luke 12:56).

Fragrant flowers fill the air.
Winter trees no longer bare.
Shorn bark behold God's light.
It's a new season from tomb to life.



Days of gray cease to blast.
Death succumbed, colored fields contrast
the warp and woof of seasons past
and shout for joy, "It's spring at last!"



Pick of the Crop: If you've recently come forth out of Moab and have given your life to Christ, it's a new season for you. Expect to see the new fruits of righteousness sprouting within your heart as you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord.



69 HOLINESS, NOT HAPPINESS

“Put on your best garment.” Ruth 3:3

We find, as Ruth did, man’s modest means of covering ourselves in our “best garment” after a self-imposed cleansing is not sufficient to earn acceptance with God. God has His covering for us, and Boaz had his covering for Ruth.

God is holy, pure in character, unspotted by sin, perfect in wisdom and power. “No one is holy like the Lord” (1 Samuel 2:2). The angels around God’s throne call out, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:3).

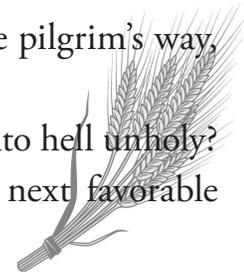
“Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness?” (Exodus 15:11).

The high priest in the temple wore a gold medallion on his head with an engraving that read, “HOLINESS TO THE LORD” (Exodus 28:36-38).

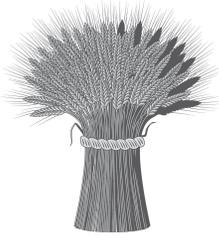
We are commanded to be holy for God is holy (1 Peter 1:16). We’re to be pure in heart, unspotted by the world, set apart for the Masters use. Happiness found in this world cannot measure up to holiness found in God.

God’s ways of purifying us differ according to our need. There are deeper cleanings with varying degrees of pain, anointing, and covering to be had throughout our journey. Every area of our lives must be cleansed. We’re called to holiness, not happiness, in the pilgrim’s way, and happiness without holiness is penniless.

What profit is happiness on Earth only to be cast into hell unholy? Happiness is a temporal pleasure supported by your next favorable



experience. Happiness is a castle made of sand washed away by the tides of life and built again by its patrons. Happiness is a transient treasure seized by disappointment.



Pick of the Crop: A life of holiness doesn't depend on the conditions of the world around. Holiness stands alone when all others fail. Holiness is a rare find. What can be like it in this world? Holiness is like a chaste virgin. Holiness is like a polished jadeite among grit. Holiness is like the number one standing alone among the infinite affections in the world.



111 NESTLED AT HER BOSOM

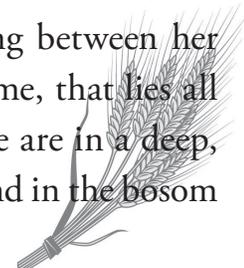
“Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him. Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, ‘There is a son born to Naomi.’ And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.” Ruth 4:16–17

In Moab, Naomi laid her husband and sons in the cold bowels of the earth. In Bethlehem, Naomi laid her grandson in the warmth of her bosom.

The bosom is the center of an intimate, affectionate union with Jehovah. The bosom is where your every breath is heard and where the sensations of the heart are understood. The weight of the ones you love is borne upon the bosom of the heart and carried before the Lord, as did Aaron, the High Priest of God. He carried the names of the twelve tribes of Israel upon his heart in the form of a breastplate. “So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart, when he goes into the holy place, as a memorial before the Lord continually” (Exodus 28:29).

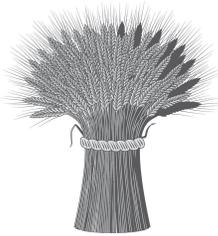
The disciple whom our Lord loved, who drank richly of the Divine, was seen leaning upon the bosom of Christ. “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23).

The young, love-sick Shulamite in the absence of her lover declared him to be as a sweet smelling bundle of perfume lying between her breasts at night. “A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, that lies all night between my breasts” (Song of Solomon 1:13). We are in a deep, safe, contemplative state of endless love when we are found in the bosom



of the Father. Has the Spirit of God placed someone upon your heart? Bear them before the Father. “The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” (John 1:18).

Imagine the joy this child brought into the bosom of the world of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. His first cries, his first smile. They experienced his first words, his first steps. They taught him the oracles of the Almighty, and he grew to become famous in Israel.



Pick of the Crop: What is the dearest desire laid upon your heart thus far in your journey? Is it the joy of the Lord or the delights of your family? For Naomi, her bitterness was replaced with the sweet pleasures of her first grandchild. Nestled in the center of our affections ought to be God and His goodness toward us. Just as Naomi did not find it in Moab, we will not reach this state living outside God’s will.



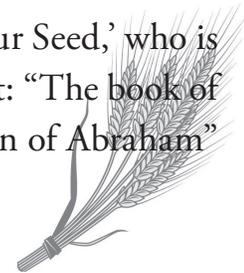
121 THE GENEALOGY: THE MERCIES OF GOD

Naomi and Ruth were noticeably silent at this phase of their development in Bethlehem. No longer agitated by the rudiments of this world, both rested in love united. Boaz's bond with Ruth bore fruit, and Naomi, beholding her grandson, bore witness of the mercies of God.

“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever” (Deuteronomy 23:3). It is believed this law applied to men not women as we clearly see here with Ruth, our proselyte, involved among the people of God. Ten generations from Perez, a breach, to David, the beloved, he moved freely within and without the congregation of the Lord. O the mercies of God in the promised seed, for through it the God gene passed down through generations of Old Testament believers and carried into the New Testament.

The pattern of bearing fruit after its own kind was given to us in the beginning (Genesis 1:11). God speaks out, and we look and listen. There's a difference between a heavenly genealogy and an earthly genealogy, a heavenly seed and an earthly seed. God said he'd put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of Satan. “He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15).

Luke's genealogy traces Christ back to Adam, “the son of God” (Luke 3:23–38), and the seed God promised Abraham was Christ. “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ” (Galatians 3:16). Matthew's account spells it out: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1; see also Hebrews 2:16; 2 Timothy 2:8).

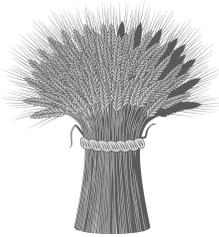


Hallelujah, the promised Messiah has come! “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). The eternal Word of God, the promised Seed, put on the form of a man and walked this earth.

“Now this is the genealogy.” Mankind violated the law of God, and a breach surrounded them like a high wall. My kinsman willingly sacrificed an enchanted covering, came swiftly in strength to serve, existing in the Beloved. That was Christ Jesus, and it’s the lovely story of redemption, the story within history, nestled in the names of the above genealogy.

“Jesse begot David.” Ruth 4:22

It’s fitting that the last *word* in this divinely breathed, God-given, glorious book of Ruth seals the book with a banner of the ever-present love of God. Ruth the Moabitess was lovely. She was loved by the Beloved and was a lover of the Beloved. O that the same might be said of us in the closing chapters of our lives.



Pick of the Crop: We find rich mercies in God. Naomi returned to His love and mercy. Ruth discovered His love and mercy, and Boaz extended His love and mercy. If you are lost in Moab—that wash pot (Psalm 60:8)—come home to the sweet love and mercies of God. He is the Father of mercies and a friend of sinners (2 Corinthians 1:3; Matthew 11:19). Only God in Christ Jesus is where you will be forever loved.

