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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

Lesson for July 16
 Golden Text—Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.—Ruth 1:16

THE LESSON AS A WHOLE

Approach to the Lesson
 There is a charm about the inspired Hebrew idyl, the Book of Ruth, that cannot fail to appeal to anyone of literary taste, whether its divine inspiration is recognized or not. But when we receive it as a part of the God-breathed Word, we see added beauties, which the natural mind cannot discern. It portrays something of the inward conditions prevailing among what we might call the ordinary people of Israel, during the troubled years of the Judges. Typically, it sets forth in a very remarkable manner the story of redemption. Through Boaz, the goel, or Kinsman-Redeemer (Lev. 25:25), Ruth, (the Moabitish stranger, is brought into the family of God and given a place among the Covenant People. The great grandmother of King David, she has a place in the ancestral line of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:5, 6). By natural birth the Moabites were barred from the congregation of the Lord unto the tenth generation because of their hostility to the Children of Israel when they were journeying toward the Promised Land (Deut. 23:3). But, by grace, Ruth found an honored place in the Chosen Nation. Her loyalty to her mother-in-law, Naomi, and her decision stand as a convert to the God of Israel mark her out as a young woman of exceptional devotedness and decision of character.

Naomi's record is not very creditable at first. She actually typifies the backslider, leaving the place of privilege, Bethlehem, the house of bread, to go with her husband and sons to the land of Moab. But after severe chastening, her faith is rekindled, and in the closing two chapters she shines forth as a woman of faith.

The Historical Setting

We have no definite date for the events of this book. We are only told that they all took place in the days when the Judges ruled. Elimelech with his wife Naomi and two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, left Bethlehem and went to the land of Moab to escape the rigors of a famine. In Moab, the sons married women of that country, Orpah and Ruth. Elimelech and the sons all died there whereupon Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem. Ruth insisted on going with her, but Orpah remained in Moab. Verse by Verse
 Ruth 1:8—"Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother's house." We may think of Naomi as a typical backslider. She had been one with her husband in going down from

Bethlehem to Moab, thus manifesting lack of faith in God's ability to provide even in time of famine. The ten years spent in Moab had proved bitterly disappointing. She was bereft of her husband and her two sons. Now, in her affliction, word came that "the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread." So she determined to retrace her steps and go back to the place she should never have left. But she did not have faith enough to consider taking her daughters-in-law with her, so urged them to go back to their former homes. She expressed deep appreciation of their kindness and devotion and with strange inconsistency commended them to God, while sending them back to their idols.

Verse 14—"Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her." Like Pliable in the "Pilgrim's Progress," Orpah turned back, discouraged by the words of Naomi. But Ruth had determined to go on to her husband's former home, and so refused to be separated from her mother-in-law. There was deep affection in her heart for the older woman, and a sincere desire to know the God of Israel, as her future story makes evident.

Verse 15—"Thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law." It is clear that Naomi realized to the full what a return to the former life would mean. Orpah had gone back "unto her gods!" Let Ruth do the same! It is sad, indeed, to think that a woman of Israel should have had no more concern for their souls than this. What will Naomi's feelings be in the day of judgment if she there meets Orpah, a lost idolater, who had been turned from the road to life and salvation by her lack of faith and concern for her soul?

Verse 16—"Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Ruth's decision is definite. She had settled the matter in her own heart. She was determined to remain with Naomi at all costs. Her faith already was placed in the God of whom her husband and his mother must often have told her. For her there could be no going back to idolatry.

Verse 17—"The Lord do so to me, and more also, if I ought but death part thee and me." It is blessed to contemplate Ruth's settled decision. She had counted the cost and was prepared to accept all the consequences of separation from her own family and its pagan religion. She was not merely going to experiment along new lines, but she had made up her mind to be true until death, both to Naomi and to God. It is a delightful example of loyalty of heart and devotion of spirit.

Verse 18—"When she saw that she was steadfastly minded..... she left speaking unto her." At first Naomi had sought to dissuade both Ruth and Orpah from going to Bethlehem with her. She could not tell what kind of reception they would receive as strangers from the idolatrous nation of Moab. Moreover, their very presence would be the evidence of the family failure, for God had forbidden intermarriage with the heathen nations. But Ruth's determination and loyalty convinced her that she should take her with her to the home she had left so long before.

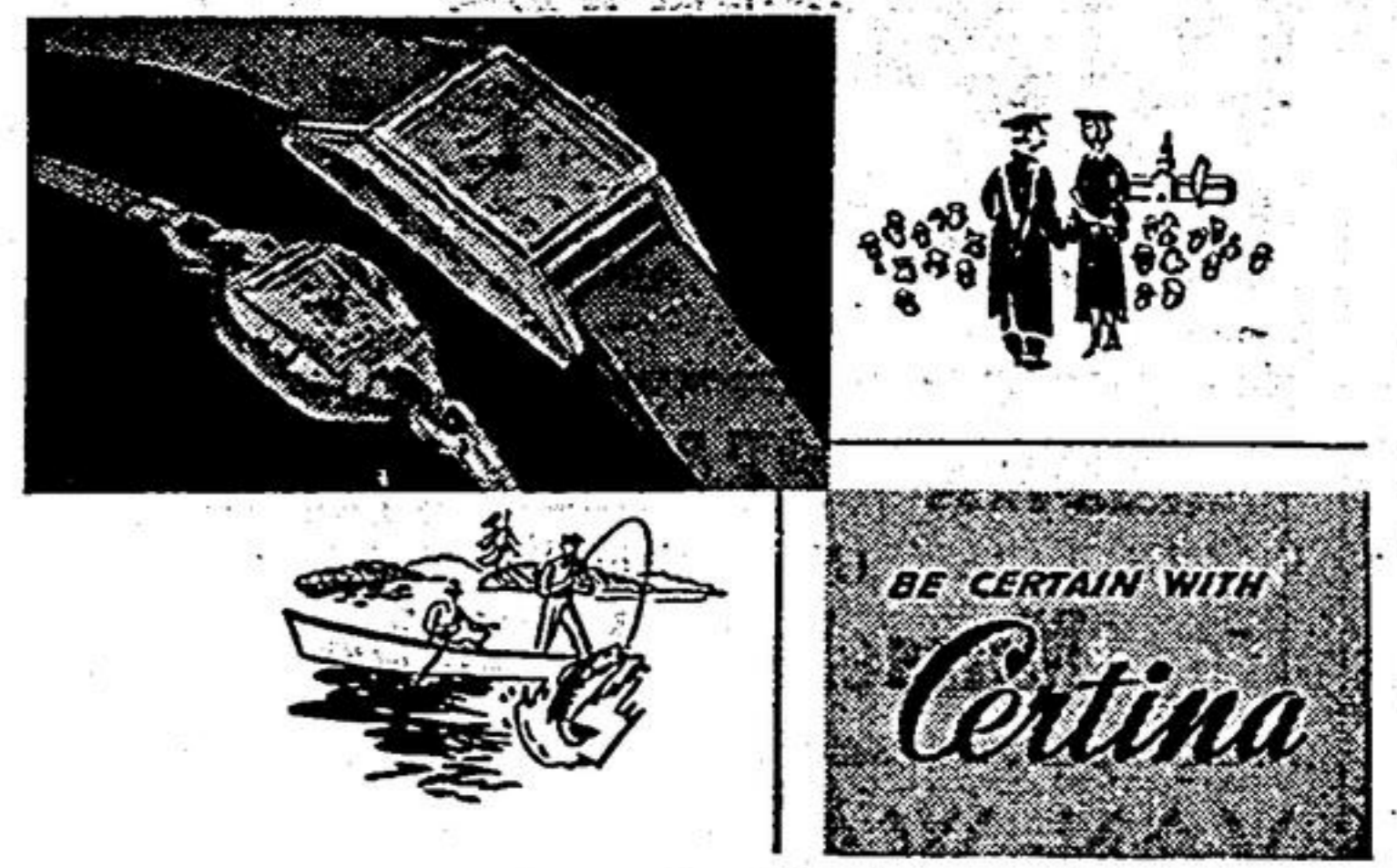
Verse 19—"When they were come to Bethlehem..... all the city was moved about them." Reaching their destination, they received a most cordial welcome from Naomi's old friends. Apparently Ruth shared in this to the full; at least, we have no hint of any coldness toward her.

Verse 20—"Call me not Naomi, call me Mara." As the two entered the city, the people exclaimed with gladness, "It is Naomi?" which means "pleasantness;" but she declared that she might better be called "Mara," which means "bitterness," for she testified that God had dealt very bitterly with her.

Verse 21—"I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty." She had not realized the blessings that had been hers until she forfeited them by going to the land of the stranger. This is always the confession of the restored backslider.

The Heart of the Lesson

Ruth's decision illustrates the stand that every exercised soul should take in regard to the present offer of the Gospel. God has now revealed Himself in the person of His Son. It is a great moment in one's spiritual history when the choice is made to receive Christ and for His name's sake to turn from the world that has rejected Him. Ruth gives us a blessed example of what Barnabas meant, in a later day, when he sought the young Gentile converts at Antioch to cleave to the Lord "with purpose of heart" (Acts 11:



J. L. SMITH

Phone Stouffville 83w1

End Seven-Year Divorce Case

With a stroke of the pen at 11.32 a.m. Wednesday, Mr. Justice King finally got one of Canada's most celebrated and certainly the country's longest divorce case cleared off the court records.

Mrs. Alfred C. Mowder of Clare-

mont was granted an absolute divorce decree from her husband. But it has taken seven years.

Probably as famous in Canada as the Daddy-Peaches Browning case in the United States, the divorce action saw three co-respondents named by Mrs. Mowder. The Mowders also were connected with a \$10,000 heart-balm suit which is still hanging fire.

—The Telegram

23). Naomi, when restored to fellowship with the Lord, was able to guide Ruth aright, and her faith was rewarded in a wonderful way.

Physicians are agreed that the first year of life should be the year of immunization. Otherwise, many children will die needlessly of the preventable diseases of infancy and childhood.

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