

Introduction to the Book of Ruth Ruth 1

Introduction

The last few chapters in Judges are disappointing because they show the depravity of the Israelites character and morals. In contrast, the book of Ruth is a relief; it is a break from the repeated failures. It takes place during the time of Judges and is an example of how different life can be for those who love God. God's people have trials like everyone else, sometimes worse trials, but the result is quite different. There is always a purpose for trials, and the Christian is blessed to know that his trials are not pointless; the end will always glorify God in the highest.

Ruth is a favorite book of many Christians. It is a romance story about redemption. It is a great work of literature, full of **symbolism** and **imagery**. And, it is an historical account of the ancestors of King David. "It is encouraging to know that in impure times, pure lives are possible."¹

Author of the Book of Ruth

The writer of Ruth is unknown. Samuel may have written it as background history for King David's right to the throne. Perhaps Ruth wrote it looking back as David's great-grandmother. One thing is sure: the Author is the Holy Spirit breathing through an anonymous (unknown) human writer. See also 2 Timothy 3:16.

Place of Ruth in The Scripture

The Book of Ruth is placed between the lawlessness and strife of Judges and the wars and upheavals in Samuel. Ruth is a story of love and marriage, work and home, and of Jewish customs and simple faith in God. It is a bright star shining in a dark night. This is not a book of violence. It does, however,

represent the tribe of Judah and points to the promised Messiah. Also, in the book of Ruth, we meet future King David's immediate ancestors.

Significance of the Book of Ruth

Ruth and Esther are the only books of the Bible named for women. Ruth ends with the genealogy which connects Perez, Judah's son in Genesis, to David, Jesse's son in 1 Samuel. Ruth, the Moabite woman, was placed by God into the line of Christ. She is one of only five women mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1). We would not know who she was or why she was included if not for the book of Ruth. The other women mentioned in Matthew are Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba, and Mary. Four of the five women are not Jews.

Another important lesson we learn from the Book of Ruth is the Jewish custom of providing a '**kinsman redeemer**' (which we will study more in a future lesson). This beautiful story of love and honor is not only about Boaz and Ruth, but also about Jesus and Christians! Boaz was Ruth's kinsman redeemer and Jesus is our Kinsman Redeemer! Ruth is a precious book to teach us how deep the Father's love is for those who have faith in Jesus Christ.

Outlines of the Book of Ruth

The New Geneva Bible's outline of the book of Ruth can be summarized as follows:

- I. The Death of Elimelech and His Sons - Ruth 1:1-5
- II. Naomi and Ruth Return to Bethlehem in Judah - Ruth 1:6-22
- III. Ruth Gleans in the Fields of Boaz - Ruth 2
- IV. Ruth Visits Boaz at the Threshing Floor - Ruth 3
- V. Boaz Redeems Ruth - Ruth 4

¹ Pearl C. Hamilton, Judges/Ruth Lesson 18, 1991.

Outline of Ruth Chapter 1

I. Background in Moab - Ruth 1:1-18

II. Back in Bethlehem - Ruth 1:19-22

I. Background in Moab- Ruth 1:1-18

A famine in the land led Elimelech, who lived in Judah, to take his wife and two sons east across the Jordan River to the land of Moab. Famines are usually the result of a drought. When there is no water, there are no crops.

Elimelech means “My God is King.” This is interesting since he was of Judah, the tribe from which the kings would come. Elimelech died soon after reaching Moab. After this, his wife, Naomi lived with her two sons, Mahlon (meaning ‘sickly’) and Chilion (meaning ‘wasting’). The sons married local Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. After ten years, the sons also died.

Hearing the famine was over at home, Naomi had no reason to stay in Moab. *The Lord had visited His people by giving them bread.* She decided to return home.

Naomi’s daughters-in-law loved and respected her. Both wanted to go with her. The two young widows set out with her for Israel. However, Naomi knew that they would be disliked in Israel because they were from a pagan land. Naomi knew they would have a chance to remarry if they stayed in their homeland. Orpah finally was persuaded to turn back to her home, but Ruth refused to leave Naomi’s side.

Naomi tried to reason with her daughter in law, but *Ruth clung to her.* Ruth’s answer to her mother-in-law is very **moving**.

First, Ruth told Naomi to stop trying to change her mind. She had decided. She was going to go with Naomi. Secondly, Ruth adopted Naomi’s Hebrew people as her own people. She certainly knew something about the Hebrew people already. After all, her husband had been Hebrew. Third, and most important,

Ruth proclaimed Naomi’s God to be her God. Lastly, she vowed to stay and be buried in her new land, even after Naomi’s death. Ruth’s pledge and commitment to Naomi and God were clear. She would never turn back.

Both women seem to have had beautiful characters! Naomi was worthy of deep love from both of her daughters-in-law. But, it was Naomi’s God that changed Ruth’s life. God changed Ruth so much that she rejected the gods of her culture and **clung** to the God of Israel as her God.

II. Back in Bethlehem - Ruth 1:19-22

Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem. The city was buzzing at Naomi’s return. Where was her family? Who was the young Moabite woman with her? Naomi gave release to her grief. *Do not call me Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord has brought me back home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?* She mentioned God four times, using two names for Him. The Almighty is translated as “El Shaddai” and means the overshadowing or all-sufficient God. “The LORD” (notice that your Bible uses all capital letters), when used this way in Scripture, represents Israel’s covenant name for God, YHWH or Yahweh.

Naomi means “pleasant” and Mara means “bitter.” Surely Naomi felt embarrassed to return without her pride...her husband and two sons. In fact, she did not even acknowledge Ruth’s presence when she was greeted on her return.

As Ruth walked through the streets of Bethlehem, she probably received many unkind and curious glances. Moabites were excluded from the congregation of the Lord (Deuteronomy 23:3-6; Nehemiah 13:1-3). They were descendants from Abraham’s nephew, Lot, who had chosen to live in the wicked and wealthy city of Sodom (Genesis 19:36-

38). Both, the Ammonites and Moabites were Lot's descendants and lived across the Jordan River. They had refused to help the Israelites on their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. Instead, Moabite women had seduced the Israelites and introduced their strange gods to them (Numbers 25:1-4).

Ruth is proof that God gives grace to whomever he chooses! She was an outsider, but God, by His grace, chose Ruth for salvation. Christians today are accepted in the same way: by God's good grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).

It was the time of the barley harvest time and God's grace was about to be shown, both in an abundant harvest after a time of famine, and in blessing upon the afflicted Naomi and the faithful widow, Ruth. †

Prayer

Thank God for His grace to you. Acknowledge that even though you are an outsider, a sinner, without any good thing to offer, Jesus' sacrifice on the cross washes you clean and makes you acceptable to God.

Memory Verse

Joshua 24:15 *And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

Vocabulary

symbolism - the use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities in literature

imagery - language that causes people to imagine pictures in their mind

kinsman redeemer - male relative who had the privilege or responsibility to act on behalf of a relative who was in trouble, danger, or need; rescuer; deliverer

moving - having a strong emotional effect; causing feelings of sadness or sympathy

clung - held on to someone or something very tightly

QUESTIONS FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 18

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read all notes and references.

1. ? (Thought Question) What did you find in Ruth chapter 1 which illustrates the key theme of Judges that everyone did what was right in his own eyes?

2. List as many points as you can remember from Ruth's vow to Naomi.

DAY TWO: Read Ruth 2:1-4.

3. From verse 1, what do you learn about Boaz??

4. a. What did Ruth ask Naomi's permission to do?

- b. What does "glean" mean? You may look it up in a dictionary or Bible dictionary if you have one.

- c. From Leviticus 23:22 and Deuteronomy 24:19-22, how was Ruth's request connected with God's command?

5. Whose field did Ruth happen to come to?

6. a. What greeting took place between Boaz and his reapers?

- b. What do these greeting tell you about:
Boaz?

His reapers?

DAY THREE: Read Ruth 2:5-12.

7. a. What was Boaz curious to know?

b. What information did he learn from his servant?

8. What invitation and information did Boaz give Ruth? Circle "T" for true or "F" for false and give the verse where it is found.

a. T or F vs. _____ Glean in my field and stay close to my young women.

b. T or F vs. _____ Join me for dinner this evening.

c. T or F vs. _____ I have commanded the young men not to touch you.

d. T or F vs. _____ I am the richest man in Bethlehem.

e. T or F vs. _____ When you are thirsty, go and drink.

9. a. How did Ruth respond to Boaz?

b. Why was she surprised by Boaz kindness? Give verse: _____

10. What did Boaz already know about Ruth? Fill in the blanks.

a. All that she had done for _____.

b. She had left her _____ and _____ and the _____.

c. She had come to a _____ whom she _____.

11. a. What blessing did Boaz give Ruth?

b. What did Ruth appreciate about the blessing? Give two points.

DAY FOUR: Read Ruth 2:4-18.

12.a. Where did Ruth eat lunch? Be specific.

b. What special attention did Boaz show to her?

13. What instructions did Boaz give his young men about:

a. Where Ruth could glean?

b. How they were to treat Ruth?

c. Special treatment for Ruth?

14.a. How long did Ruth work that day?

b. What did Ruth take home to her mother-in-law? Be as specific as possible.

DAY FIVE: Read Ruth 2:19-23.

15.a. What did Naomi want to know?

b. What was Naomi's response when she heard the answer?

c. What new information did she give Ruth about Boaz?

16.a. What further information did Ruth give to Naomi?

b. How did Naomi respond to this?

c. How did Ruth show respect and love for her mother-in-law?

DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.**Word****Definition****symbolism**

held on to someone or something very tightly

moving

having a strong emotional effect

imagery

the use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities in literature

clung

male relative who had the privilege or responsibility to act on behalf of a relative who was in trouble, danger, or need; rescuer; deliverer

**kinsman
redeemer**

language the causes people to imagine pictures in their mind

DAY FIVE: Review previous vocabulary words. Try to work from memory.UNSCRAMBLE WORD
FROM PREVIOUS
LESSONSUSE THE WORDS DEFINITION
TO JOG YOUR MEMORY

SIESTR

10

- to fight against or oppose

TAERI

1 13

- very angry, furious

FORCNONT

7

- to face a challenge

SARNEUCAS

2

- confidence, certainty

BAHSUM

5 12

- a surprise attack by people in hiding

NIGDIH

 H I D I N G
9

- THIS IS A FREE LETTER

HACRAYN

14

- a state of lawlessness

LTBIRTYE

8

- feeling in an unpleasant way

TIHNALIEAN

6 11

- to destroy someone completely

LSREGUATH

3

- killing of a large number of people

LUMPAINAGINT

4- to change something or someone to
serve your own purpose K
1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14FIND THE CORRESPONDING NUMBER FROM THE VOCABULARY
WORDS ABOVE AND WRITE IN THE LETTER TO UNCODE THE
SECRET WORD OR PHRASE