



Book
OF
Ruth

Contents

Lesson 1: Introduction and Overview	3
Lesson 2: Ruth and Boaz Meet	7
Lesson 3: Ruth's Request and Boaz's Promise	10
Lesson 4: Ruth's Redemption and Lineage.....	12

Lesson 1: Introduction and Overview

“Ruth and Esther are the only two books in the Bible named for women. Esther was a Hebrew woman who married a Gentile king. God used Esther in a strategic time in the history of Israel to help preserve the nation from destruction. Ruth, on the other hand, was a Gentile woman who married a Hebrew man. God used Ruth to perpetuate the line of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹

Author: The author of the Book of Ruth is not definitively known. Traditionally, it is attributed to the prophet Samuel, but there is no conclusive evidence to support this. The writing style and theological themes suggest it could have been written during the period of the monarchy in Israel, perhaps during the reign of David. *“The latest datable event in the book is the birth of David, which occurred in 1041 BC. (2 Sam. 5:4; see also 1 Kings 6:1). David’s significance was not in his birth, however, but in his selection by the Lord to be king, a selection ratified by his anointing by Samuel about 1025 BC. A date of 1020 or so for the book’s final form is quite reasonable and even compatible with authorship by Samuel (see 1 Sam. 25:1).”²*

Time Frame: The story of Ruth is set during the time of the judges, a period of Israel’s history spanning approximately 400 years between the death of Joshua and the establishment of the monarchy under Saul (around 1400–1020 BCE). This was a time marked by social and religious upheaval, as “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25, NKJV).

Characters:

- **Naomi:** A Jewish woman who moves to Moab with her husband and sons due to a famine in Israel. She experiences profound loss but remains faithful to God.
- **Ruth:** A Moabite woman, Naomi’s daughter-in-law, who shows great loyalty to Naomi and converts to the Jewish faith.
- **Boaz:** A wealthy relative of Naomi’s deceased husband, who becomes Ruth’s second husband and acts as a kinsman-redeemer.

Summary Message: The Book of Ruth is a story of loyalty, love, and redemption. It illustrates God’s providence and the inclusion of a Gentile into the lineage of King David and ultimately Jesus Christ. The story underscores themes of kindness, faithfulness, and the redemptive power of love and loyalty.

Purpose of the Book: There are several different ideas regarding the purpose of the book, including the following.

1. The book is designed to give the lineage of David along with David’s connection to the tribe of Judah, through whom God had promised a ruler would come. (Ruth 4:11-2, 18; Cf. Gen 46:12; 49:10)
2. The book is designed to counteract the influence of Ezra and Nehemiah who opposed marriage to Gentiles³ (Note on why some push for a later post exile date of writing: *“Critics of the Liberal school insist on a date later than the reign of Josiah, inasmuch as Ruth seems to betray a knowledge of Deut. 25, and Deuteronomy was (according to them) composed just before Josiah’s reform. Most critics date it about 550 BC during the time of the Exile, but others have looked to a period some one hundred years later, feeling that it was intended as a counterblast to Nehemiah’s strict enforcement of the laws against*

¹ John W. Reed, [“Ruth.”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 415.

² Charles Dyer et al., [Nelson’s Old Testament Survey: Discover the Background, Theology and Meaning of Every Book in the Old Testament](#) (Nashville, TN: Word, 2001), 198.

³ This interpretation of the book is followed by modernists who date the book after Ezra and Nehemiah. The modernist’s view of the Bible asserts that totally different doctrines are taught in the Bible and undermines the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible.

marrying foreign wives... ”⁴

3. The book is designed to teach that men should trust in the providence of God. David’s kingship was a “*matter of divine origin by relating an episode in his ancestry involving God’s providential care for his great-grandmother Ruth the Moabitess.*”⁵; “*God’s marvelous and unexpected providence is exhibited also by the inclusion of a Gentile in the royal lineage of the Messiah (cf. Matt. 1:5)*”.⁶

Many of the religious features of other Old Testament books do not appear in Ruth. The book of Ruth has no priests or prophets, no sacrifices or messianic prophecies, and no temple or direct citation fo the Law of the Law. God did not appear or speak to Ruth. He worked in his invisible ways to accomplish His will. Ruth illustrates the biblical doctrine of providence.”⁷

4. The Book is designed to teach the significance of the kinsman redeemer that is a messianic type of the true Redeemer Jesus Christ. “*The kinsman-redeemer serves as a Messianic type, the gō’ēl who fulfills the following qualifications and functions of his kinsmen: (a) he must be a blood relative (even as Christ became a blood relative of man by the Virgin Birth); (b) he must have the money to purchase the forfeited inheritance (4:10—even as Christ alone had the merit to pay the price for sinners); (c) he must be willing to buy back that forfeited inheritance (4:9—even as Christ laid down His life on His own volition); (d) he must be willing to marry the wife of a deceased kinsman (4:10—typical of the bride and groom relationship between Christ and His Church)*”⁸

The comments in Kiel & Delitzsch seem appropriate to reproduce here as well. “*But there is also a Messianic trait in the fact that Ruth, a heathen woman, of a nation so hostile to the Israelites as that of Moab was, should have been thought worthy to be made the tribe-mother of the great and pious king David, on account of her faithful love to the people of Israel, and her entire confidence in Jehovah, the God of Israel. As Judah begat Perez from Tamar and Canaanitish woman (Gen. 38), and as Rahab was adopted into the congregation of Israel (Josh. 6:25), and according to ancient tradition was married to Salmon (Matt. 1:5), so the Moabitess Ruth was taken by Boaz as his wife, and incorporated in the family of Judah, from which Christ was to spring according to the flesh (see Matt. 1:3, 5, where these three women are distinctly mentioned by name in the genealogy of Jesus).*”⁹

Certainly, the book accomplishes both the purposes of (1) giving the lineage of David and (3) showing that righteous people who fulfill their obligation to obey God will be protected by the providence of God.¹⁰¹¹

The Historicity of the Narrative: This is not a fictional story provided to bring comfort to a nation in turmoil but “*...it should be noted that the book purports to be history. We read the opening words, ‘Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land’ (1:1). This is the language of simple, historical narrative. It points to a certain time and to certain conditions in history. We are prepared by these words for the narration of a historical event...*”¹²

⁴ Gleason Archer Jr., [A Survey of Old Testament Introduction](#), 3rd. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 307.

⁵ David Dann, Overview of the Bible, Ruth

⁶ Gleason Archer Jr., [A Survey of Old Testament Introduction](#), 3rd. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 309.

⁷ Harold Shank, Ph.D., Truth for Today Commentary, Judges and Ruth, 522-523

⁸ Gleason Archer Jr., [A Survey of Old Testament Introduction](#), 3rd. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 309.

⁹ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, [Commentary on the Old Testament](#), vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 339-340.

¹⁰ *Interpreter’s Bible* (831).

¹¹ The Books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, By Mike Willis

¹² Edward J. Young, [An Introduction to the Old Testament](#). (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 339.

Summary of Verses (Ruth 1:1-22)

Ruth 1:1-5

- The famine in Israel prompts Elimelech to take his family to Moab, a decision driven by desperation and a search for sustenance. Moab, located east of the Dead Sea, was often in conflict with Israel, making this move unusual and significant (Ruth 1:1-2).
- The deaths of Elimelech and his sons leave Naomi without male support in a foreign land, emphasizing her vulnerability and the dire situation for widows in ancient times (Ruth 1:3-5).

Ruth 1:6-14

- Naomi hears that the famine in Israel is over and decides to return to Bethlehem. This reflects the theme of returning to God and His provision (Ruth 1:6).
- She urges Orpah and Ruth to remain in Moab for better prospects of remarriage, highlighting the difficult choice between staying in familiar territory with better prospects or joining Naomi in an uncertain future (Ruth 1:8-9).
- Orpah eventually stays, but Ruth refuses to leave Naomi, showcasing her extraordinary loyalty and faithfulness (Ruth 1:14).

Ruth 1:15-22

- Ruth's loyalty is expressed in her famous speech, "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God" (Ruth 1:16-17). This declaration marks Ruth's conversion and commitment to Naomi and to the God of Israel.
- Naomi and Ruth's return to Bethlehem marks a turning point and sets the stage for the rest of the narrative. Naomi's change of name to Mara, meaning "bitter," reflects her perception of her life's hardships (Ruth 1:19-22).

Textual Questions

1. When did the story of Ruth take place and what were the conditions of this time (1:1)?
2. What happened to Naomi's husband and two sons (1:2-5)?
3. Why did Naomi desire to return to Judah from the land of Moab (1:6-7)?
4. What advice did Naomi give her two daughters-in-law (1:8-14)?

5. What decision did Ruth and her sister-in-law make with regard to Naomi's advice (1:15-18)?
6. How did Naomi view the Lord with regard to her circumstances in life (1:19-22)?

Deeper Thought Questions

1. What does "Bethlehem" mean and what irony is found in verse 1?
2. Where is the land of Moab located with reference to Judah (1:1)?
3. What may have been the cause of the famine in verse 1 according to Leviticus 26:14-20 ?
4. 4. What is the connection between the "Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah" and Jesus Christ (1:2; Mic. 5:2)?
5. What do the names "Naomi" and "Mara" mean and how do these names relate to what happened in the story (1:20)?

Application Thoughts for Today

1. Like Ruth, we need to be lights shining in the midst of darkness. Ruth is an example of individual faithfulness in a time national faithlessness (1:1; Phil. 2:15).
2. Bad times can often bring out the best in people (1:1; Rom. 5:3-4; Jas. 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 1:6-7).
3. When hardships enter our life we must continue to rely upon the Lord (1:1-5; Phil. 4:19; Heb. 13:5; 1 Pet. 5:7).
4. The Lord deals kindly with his people (1:6-9; Mt. 5:45; Acts 14:17; Jas. 1:17).
5. The one true God needs to be our God (1:16; Acts 17:23-24; Eph. 4:4-6).
6. "Generations gaps" need not occur between the young and old (1:16-17; 1 Tim. 5:1-2; 1 Pet. 5:5).
7. We must remain faithful to the Lord regardless of the circumstances he gives us (1:19-21; Job 1:20-22; 2:7-10; Heb. 12:7-13).

Lesson 2: Ruth and Boaz Meet

Summary of Verses (Ruth 2:1-23)

Ruth 2:1-3

- Ruth's initiative to glean in the fields demonstrates her willingness to work hard to support Naomi and herself, highlighting her strong character and resourcefulness (Ruth 2:2).
- The mention of Boaz as a "man of great wealth" and a "relative of Naomi's husband" sets up his role as a potential kinsman-redeemer, introducing an element of hope and divine providence in the narrative (Ruth 2:1). Boaz's field is not chosen by accident but seen as a divine appointment (Ruth 2:3).

Ruth 2:4-7

- Boaz's greeting to his workers, "The Lord be with you," reflects his godly character and the mutual respect between him and his workers, suggesting a harmonious and faith-centered workplace (Ruth 2:4).
- The overseer's description of Ruth emphasizes her dedication and hard work, noting her early arrival and continuous labor, which impresses Boaz and sets the stage for his favorable treatment of her (Ruth 2:6-7).

Ruth 2:8-13

- Boaz's offer of protection and sustenance to Ruth underscores his generosity and the cultural practice of providing for the poor and foreigners. His instructions for Ruth to stay in his fields and to drink from the water jars meant for his workers ensure her safety and well-being (Ruth 2:8-9).
- Ruth's humility in response to Boaz's kindness is evident in her words and actions. She expresses gratitude and wonder at Boaz's favor despite her foreign status, which highlights her humility and Boaz's extraordinary kindness (Ruth 2:10).
- Boaz acknowledges Ruth's reputation for loyalty to Naomi and blesses her, expressing a prayer that God would reward her for her actions. This conversation reveals mutual respect and sets a foundation for their future relationship (Ruth 2:11-13).

Ruth 2:14-18

- Boaz's invitation for Ruth to eat with his workers and his provision of extra grain highlight his compassion and generosity. Sharing a meal is a sign of acceptance and fellowship, further integrating Ruth into the community (Ruth 2:14-16).
- Ruth's return to Naomi with an abundance of grain indicates God's provision and sets up the unfolding of God's plan. The quantity of grain Ruth brings home is significant, showing the extent of Boaz's generosity and care (Ruth 2:17-18).

Ruth 2:19-23

- Naomi's reaction to Ruth's encounter with Boaz reveals her recognition of God's hand in their situation and the potential for redemption through Boaz. Naomi sees Boaz's kindness as a sign of God's continued faithfulness and provision for her family (Ruth 2:20-23).
- The mention of the barley and wheat harvests provides a time frame for the events and suggests a period of continued provision and hope for Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 2:23).

Textual Questions

1. What did Ruth request of Naomi and in whose field was she found (2:1-7)?
2. How did Boaz greet his workers? (Ruth 2:4)
3. What kindness did Boaz show Ruth (2:8-16)?
4. Define the meaning (sense) of the Hebrew word *kenaphaim* (“wings”) that commonly appears in the OT? (2:12)
5. What is the significance of the word “kinsman” (KJV) Hebrew word *gō'ēl* as used in this context (2:1,20; 3:9)
6. What advice did Naomi offer after Ruth returned from gleaning in the field (2:17-23)?

Deeper Thought Questions

1. Where in the OT is the law of gleaning found and what was the purpose of the law (2:2)?
2. How much is an “ephah” of barley (2:17)?
3. What good characteristics of Ruth are brought out in chapters 1-2? How could she have reacted negatively to her situation? How did she react? What kind of a woman did she show herself to be? How can we be like this woman today in similar circumstances?
4. What good characteristics of Boaz are brought out in chapter 2? How could he have reacted negatively to his situation? How did he react to Ruth? What kind of man did he show himself to be? How can we be like this man today in similar circumstances?

Application Thoughts for Today

1. Employers and employees who serve the Lord make good businesses (2:4; Eph. 6:5-9).
2. A good reputation is the best kind of introduction (2:11; Mt. 5:13-16; 1 Pet. 2:12).
3. We learn to show kindness after receiving kindness (2:18; Mt. 5:7; 6:14).
4. The Lord blesses his people, rewards his people, protects his people, and shows kindness to his people (2:4,12,20; Gen. 15:1; Psa. 34:7; Prov. 30:5; Rom. 8:28).
5. 12. Steadfast commitment, faith, love, loyalty, self-sacrifice, and hard work are all qualities that are much needed today (1:16-18; 2:2,11,23; Mt. 6:33; 1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:9; Rev. 2:10).

Lesson 3: Ruth's Request and Boaz's Promise

Summary of Verses (Ruth 3:1-18)

Ruth 3:1-5

- Naomi's plan for Ruth to seek Boaz's protection reflects her hope for Ruth's future and her understanding of the role of the kinsman-redeemer. This role involves a relative who marries the widow of a deceased relative to maintain the family lineage (Ruth 3:1-2). Naomi's instructions to Ruth include washing, anointing, and dressing well, which signify preparation for a significant encounter (Ruth 3:3).
- Ruth's obedience to Naomi's instructions demonstrates her trust in Naomi's wisdom and willingness to follow cultural norms. This act also signifies Ruth's proactive role in seeking redemption and security for herself and Naomi (Ruth 3:5).

Ruth 3:6-9

- Ruth's approach to Boaz at the threshing floor is a culturally significant act, symbolizing her request for marriage and protection. The act of uncovering Boaz's feet and lying down is a humble request for his protection and indicates her submission to his authority as a kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 3:7-9).
- Boaz's initial reaction shows his respect and appreciation for Ruth's kindness and loyalty. He acknowledges her noble character, highlighting the virtue of Ruth choosing him, an older man, over younger suitors (Ruth 3:10).

Ruth 3:10-13

- Boaz's promise to Ruth reveals his integrity and willingness to fulfill the role of the kinsman-redeemer, despite the potential obstacles. He assures her of his commitment while also respecting the legal procedure by mentioning the closer relative who has the first right of redemption (Ruth 3:11-13). This demonstrates Boaz's adherence to the law and his honorable nature.
- Boaz's blessing upon Ruth and his promise to resolve the matter quickly reflect his respect for Ruth and his eagerness to ensure her protection and well-being (Ruth 3:13).

Ruth 3:14-18

- Boaz's provision of grain for Ruth to take back to Naomi shows his generosity and care. The six measures of barley given to Ruth signify Boaz's intention to care for both women and his commitment to their well-being (Ruth 3:15-17).
- Naomi's counsel for Ruth to wait for Boaz's action highlights her wisdom and trust in God's providence. Naomi's faith in Boaz's integrity and swift action underscores the importance of patience and trust in God's timing (Ruth 3:18).

Textual Questions

1. What did Naomi tell Ruth to do regarding Boaz (3:1-5)?
2. What request did Ruth make to Boaz (3:6-9)?

3. What did Boaz know about Ruth and what oath did he make concerning her request (3:10-13)?
4. What act of kindness did Boaz show to Ruth and Naomi (3:14-18)?

Deeper Thought Questions

1. What is “winnowing” and a “threshing-floor” (3:2)?
2. What is the significance of spreading the skirt over Ruth (3:9; see Ezek. 16:8)?

Application Thoughts for Today

1. A good name (reputation) is better than great riches (3:10-11; Prov. 22:1).
2. A worthy woman who can find? Her price is far above rubies (3:11; Prov. 31:10ff). A woman’s inward character is more impressive to a godly man than outward beauty (3:11; 1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:1-6).
3. Steadfast commitment, faith, love, loyalty, self-sacrifice, and hard work are all qualities that are much needed today (3:5,10-11; 4:15; Mt. 6:33; 1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:9; Rev. 2:10).
4. Men of character are much needed today in the world and in the Lord’s church (3:10-18; 4:9-10; 1 Tim. 2:8; 3:1-13; 4:12; Tit. 1:5-9; 2:2,6-8).

Lesson 4: Ruth's Redemption and Lineage

Summary of Verses (Ruth 4:1-22)

Ruth 4:1-6

- Boaz's approach to the closer relative at the city gate reflects the legal procedures of the time for resolving matters of inheritance and redemption. The city gate was a place where official business and legal matters were conducted publicly (Ruth 4:1-2).
- The closer relative's initial willingness to redeem the land changes when he learns that marrying Ruth is part of the deal. His concern that it would jeopardize his own inheritance highlights the complexities of the redemption laws and the potential implications for family inheritance (Ruth 4:5-6).

Ruth 4:7-12

- The public transaction and the exchange of a sandal symbolize the transfer of rights and responsibilities. This custom served as a legal confirmation of the agreement and was witnessed by the elders, ensuring its validity and transparency (Ruth 4:7-8).
- Boaz's declaration and the blessing of the elders highlight the community's support and the significance of Ruth's inclusion in the Israelite community. The elders' blessing for Ruth to be like Rachel and Leah, who built the house of Israel, underscores the importance of her role and the community's recognition of God's hand in the events (Ruth 4:9-12).

Ruth 4:13-17

- The birth of Obed is seen as a blessing from the Lord, bringing joy and restoration to Naomi. This birth signifies the continuation of Elimelech's lineage and the fulfillment of God's providence (Ruth 4:13-14).
- Obed's role as the grandfather of David underscores the importance of Ruth and Boaz's union in the messianic lineage. This connection highlights the broader significance of the story, pointing to the future King David and ultimately to Jesus Christ (Ruth 4:17).

Ruth 4:18-22

- The genealogy from Perez to David connects Ruth's story to the broader narrative of God's plan for Israel and the coming of the Messiah. This lineage emphasizes the inclusiveness of God's redemptive plan, incorporating a Moabite woman into the ancestry of Israel's greatest king and the Savior of the world (Ruth 4:18-22).

Textual Questions

1. What matter did Boaz bring to the attention of the near-kinsman and what decision did the near-kinsman make about the matter (4:1-6)?
2. What commitment did Boaz make concerning Naomi and Ruth that the near-kinsman would not make (4:7-10)?

3. What blessing did the people make concerning Ruth (4:11-12)?
- 4.
5. What blessing did Ruth make concerning Naomi (4:13-15)?
- 6.
7. What did Naomi do for Ruth's child and what did the women name the child (4:16-17)?
8. Who was the great-grandson of Boaz and Ruth that was also in the lineage of Jesus Christ (4:18-22)?

Deeper Thought Questions

1. Where is the OT reference concerning the redemption of land that has been sold (4:3-6)?
2. Where is the OT reference concerning the responsibilities of a near-kinsman in marriage (4:5,10)?
3. Where in the OT is the story of Rachel and Leah and the sons of Jacob (4:11)?
4. Where in the OT is the story of Perez, Tamar and Judah (4:12)?
5. Where in the NT is the genealogy of Boaz and Ruth listed (4:18-22)?

Application Thoughts for Today

1. We must not be slothful to carry out God's law and to do what is right (4:1,9; Rom. 12:11).
2. The Lord deals kindly with his people (4:11,14; Mt. 5:45; Acts 14:17; Jas. 1:17).
3. Men and women who seem unimportant by the world's standards can play an important role in God's plan (4:11-12,18-22; Mt. 1:3-6, 18-25).