

RUTH

INTRODUCTION

A wholesome love story which is an excellent illustration of the grace of God at working in the Old Testament.

This is the story of Ruth, the Moabitess. Her story is one of godly faithfulness and true love. Ruth is one of the books in the Old Testament which is named after a woman—Esther being the other.

The author of the book is unknown. Some have suggested that Samuel may have been the author. There are at least four purposes for the writing of this book.

1. To exhibit faith and godliness in the time of apostasy.
2. To illustrate a concept of a kinsman redeemer.
3. To show that the scope of God's grace included the Gentiles.
4. To trace the ancestors of David back to Judah.

In addition to Ruth the following women appear in these genealogies connected with the line of Christ: Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba.

The early part of the story takes place in the land of Moab. Moab was the son by an incestuous union with Lot's oldest daughter. When Ruth married Boaz, she became a proselyte in the Jewish religion. There are two kinds of proselytes.

1. Proselyte of the Gate—obedient to the Law, not circumcised, temple worship limited.
Example: Cornelius (Acts 10:2), Lydia at the riverside (Acts 16:14).
2. Proselyte of Righteousness—Responsible to the Law, circumcised, full temple worship.

Ruth was probably written about 1015 B.C. just prior to David becoming King, 1010 B.C.

CHAPTER 1

The famine mentioned in verse 1 may have been the famine connected with the devastation of the land by the Midians. (Judges 6) The danger of Elimelech's move was taking his family into a pagan country. In the ten years that Elimelech's family was in a pagan country, they married, and their husbands died. These tragedies caused Naomi to say that God had dealt bitterly with and afflicted her.

Naomi ask Orpah and Ruth to return to their families because they would need maternal protection since their husbands had died. Orpah and Ruth had been kind, good, and loving.

Orpah decides to return to her family but Ruth insists in staying with Naomi. Ruth seems to have had a leaning of her heart towards God and His laws. It was barley harvest time, the first crop harvested by the people of the land.

The book of Ruth was read as the people celebrated the Feast of Pentecost.

CHAPTER 2

Provision was made in Israel for the poor and widowed to glean the fields for their sustenance. The corners were not reaped. Fallen fruit was to be left for the poor and the sojourner.

Boaz is described as a man of wealth who treated the poor mercifully. Ruth joined the poor in their gleanings. Boaz also instructed Ruth to drink from the water jugs.

In verse 13 Ruth says she is not like Boaz's maidservants. She had different facial features and different social customs. But Boaz did not withhold his kindness from Ruth.

Boaz even invited Ruth to eat with him. In verse 14, we learn that he even served Ruth as she sat beside the reapers. Roasted grain was a delicacy. Boaz instructed his reapers to drop little bundles of grain for her.

CHAPTER 3

Verses 7 and 8 are a proposal of marriage on Ruth's part to Boaz. She was reminding him of the duty of a near kinsman who had the right to redeem a deceased kinsman's land and marry his widow.

Boaz was a righteous man and reminded Ruth there was a kinsman nearer than him. He told Ruth to remain there for her own protection and in the morning he would check to see if this relative would redeem her and if not he would redeem her.

Naomi was pleased with what transpired and she said that Boaz would not rest until a decision was arrived at.

Chapter 4

Boaz went to the gate of the city and met with his kinsman. The kinsman was ready to redeem the land but declined his responsibility to marry Ruth. The kinsman gave Boaz the right of redemption. Boaz immediately called the elders of the city to witness the kinsman's refusal.

The men of the city gave Boaz their blessing and the women of the city rejoiced for Naomi because she was not left without descendants.

To Boaz and Ruth was born a son, Obed, who became David's grandfather.

The closing verses (18-22) are proof that the book of Ruth was intended to give a family picture of the great and godly King of Israel, David.