

Ruth

“Redemption”

I. Introduction to Ruth

- A. Ruth is the eighth book in the Bible and the 3rd in the historical section of the Old Testament, which extends from Joshua to Esther.
 - 1. One of only two books bearing the name of a woman.
 - a. The other is Esther.
 - 2. Ruth gets its name from the key figure of the book. A young Moabite widow.
 - 3. The book consists of 4 chapters and 85 verses
- B. Tradition holds that Ruth was written by Samuel', the Prophet who also compiled judges.
 - 1. It was clearly written during the time of David's early reign.
 - 2. In many ways, Ruth serves as an appendix to the book of Judges.
- C. In our previous study the book of Judges, we saw that Israel was in a particularly dark period in their history.
 - 1. Ruth stands out as a beacon of light amidst that darkness.
 - 2. Ruth tells the beautiful story of redemption.
 - a. “redeem” and other derivations of the word are used 7 times
 - b. “goel”, translated kinsmen or redeemer used 22 times in 85 verses.

II. Why Study Ruth

- A. The key to understanding Ruth is its place in history.
 - 1. Ruth 1:1 “It came to pass in the days when the Judges ruled . . .”
 - 2. Judges 17 – 21 Describes the condition of Israel when the Judges ruled
 - a. An existential world view; doing what was right in their own eyes led to:
 - i. Spiritual confusion – idolatry ran rampant
 - ii. Moral decay – sexual immorality
 - iii. Social disorder – murder, injustice, civil war
- B. Today, as in Ruth's day, everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes
 - 1. Today's slogan could be, “everyone is doing it”; to justify bad behavior
 - 2. Morality is determined by popular vote.
- C. Ruth shines as a beacon of light in the midst of great darkness.
 - 1. Ruth tells another story of life during the reign of the Judges
 - a. Ruth gives insight into what happens with those who rise above and live committed to the LORD and His ways.
 - 2. We see in Ruth that amidst the moral depravity and spiritual confusion that God is still at work:
 - a. First, in the lives of those who choose Him.
 - i. The book follows the story of one family as they seek to walk through the journey of life
 - ii. One of the main themes is the marvelous grace of God.
 - b. Second, to fulfill His ultimate purpose
 - i. The salvation of humanity
 - c. Ruth plays a pivotal role in Scripture
 - i. It spans the gap between the Judges and the Kings

- ii. God's plan of salvation involved a savior coming through the line of David.
 - d. Ruth plays a critical role in that drama
 - i. Ruth 4: 21-22 ". . . ; Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed; Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David."
 - ii. Ruth may not have lived to see the reign of her great-grandson, David Probably 150 years in her future.
 - iii. Her godliness paved the way for Israel's greatest king and the line of the Messiah.
 - e. Alexander McClaren wrote: "The blackest times were not so dismal in reality as they look in history."
 - i. In other words, God has a plan
 - ii. Those who live godly lives serve as crucial players in that plan.
 - 1. Little did Ruth know that when she chose YHWH, He was choosing her to bring salvation to all humanity.
- D. Ruth also had much value in its insights into the purpose of marriage.
- 1. Ruth is a love story between Ruth and Boaz.
 - a. We see the example of an unwed couple living pure and doing all things in accordance with the Word of God.
 - b. We see a person who seeks God to find a spouse.
 - 2. We see the purpose of marriage in Naomi's exhortation to her daughters-in-law:
 - a. Ruth 1:9 "The Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband."
 - b. Ancient tradition: the groom would cast his garment over his bride to show the protection he offered her.
 - 3. Just as we take shelter in the Lord
 - a. Marriage should be a place of safety and rest for both the husband and wife.
 - b. A place where the love of Christ is poured out upon one another, Psalm 61:4.

III. Ruth Outline

A. Ruth divides naturally into sections by its 4 chapters

- 1. Chapter 1 - Sets the scene
- 2. Chapter 2 - Boaz
- 3. Chapter 3 - Kinsman redeemer; Ruth's redemption assured
- 4. Chapter 4 - Boaz redeems Ruth; King David a descendent; the Messianic line.

B. Section 1 Chapter 1

- 1. Ruth 1:1-5 Famine in Israel drove Elimelech and his family to Moab
- 2. While author doesn't expound on the actions, other scripture does.
 - a. Famine was the result of sin
 - i. Leviticus 26:3-4 "If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them, then I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit."
 - ii. Leviticus 26:18-20 "And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. And your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit.
 - b. Keep in mind the repeated cycle in Judges:
 - i. Sin, suffering, supplication, salvation
 - c. We will see this silently at work in the drama of Ruth
 - i. Israel's sin led to famine

- ii. Only those who looked at life through the lens of the Word of God would understand the famine.
 - iii. Elimelech chose to depart from Israel in search of God
- 3. His journey led him to Moab
 - a. Moab was a border nation to Israel
 - b. Moab sat across the Jordan from Israel
 - c. Moab descended from Lot, the nephew of Abraham
 - d. Moab had a sorted history with Israel
 - i. While traveling through the wilderness, Balak, King of Moab, hired Balaam to curse Israel.
 - ii. Balaam's counsel led Israel into idolatry and sexual sin; costing many lives
 - iii. As a result, Israel was forbidden to have relations with Moab
 - 1. Deuteronomy 23:3-4 "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, because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you."
- 4. While in Moab, three events transpire
 - a. Elimelech dies
 - b. Mahlon and Chilion marry
 - i. It is not hard to see compromise; both married women of Moab
 - c. Mahlon and Chilion die
- 5. Ruth 1:6-22 A new course is set.
 - a. Elimelech's family went in search of bread and found the grave.
 - b. Something changed in Bethlehem
 - i. Verse 6 The Lord visit His people
 - ii. No doubt this was connected with their supplication
 - c. Naomi and her daughters-in-law depart for Bethlehem.
 - d. It is here where we come to the most well-known part of the story: Ruth's decision to follow the Lord
 - e. Naomi sends the girls away, but Ruth refuses to go back, accepting Naomi's God as her own.
 - f. This is a wonderful picture of salvation.
 - i. Verses 16-17 "But Ruth said: '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. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me.'"
- 6. What influenced this decision?
 - a. Your people – my people; your God – my God
 - b. Naomi lived above the culture of Moab
 - c. Ruth watched how Naomi lived and knew her life was different because her God was different.
 - i. Matthew 5:13 – 16 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."
- 7. Upon arriving in Bethlehem, Naomi breaks down; Verses 19-21

- a. Blames the Lord for her circumstances
- b. Expresses her bitterness; asks to be called Mara (bitter), not Naomi (pleasant).
- c. We will see as the chapters unfold how God's grace melts her bitterness.
 - i. She is never called Mara

C. Section 2 Chapter 2

1. If Chapter 1 revealed the compromise of Elimelech, Chapter 2 shows the godliness of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz.
2. Ruth goes to the field to:
 - a. Glean grain
 - i. Gleaning was the Old Testament way of helping the poor
 - ii. Leviticus 23:22 "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God."
 - b. Find favor
 - i. It was while she is obeying the Word of God that she finds the favor of God.
 - c. She "happened" into the field of Boaz
3. Boaz, also obeying the Word allowing the poor to glean.
 - a. While obeying God's Word, he "happens" to find a godly wife.
 - b. He would play a role in ministering to Ruth and Naomi and bringing salvation to mankind.
4. God does not do coincidences. People are in particular places at particular times to play their role in God's divine plan.
 - a. Upon returning home, Ruth will come to realize how divine her meeting actually was
5. Boaz is a kinsman of relative of Elimelech.
6. In Deuteronomy 25:5-6 the law states: "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. "And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel."
 - a. The closest blood relative bore this responsibility.

D. Section 3 Chapter 3

1. At end of harvest, Naomi saw it as the proper time to let their intentions be known.
2. Ruth reveals her desire to Boaz
 - a. That he perform the duty of the kinsman redeemer
3. Boaz reveals his love to Ruth
4. Verse 12 draws our attention to the problem, "Now it is true that I [am] a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I."
 - a. Someone else owns the right to redeem Naomi's land and Ruth

E. Section 4 Chapter 4

1. Boaz takes the matter to the highest court, the Elders in the city gate.
 - a. He presents the case to the nearer kinsman who refuses because the stakes are too high.
 - i. Verse 6 "... lest I ruin my own inheritance"
 - ii. Maybe he was married or unwilling to accept a Moabitess
2. Naomi who was once backslidden and bitter is celebrating the grace of God.
3. Ruth who was once cursed (as a Moabite) becomes the 3rd woman in the genealogy of Christ.

IV. Types of Christ

John 5:39 "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."

A. The Kinsman Redeemer or Goel

1. It is not difficult to see the parallel between the work of Boaz and the work of Christ.
 - a. We, like Ruth, sat under the curse.
 - b. Boaz, like Christ, out of love, redeemed her
2. Illustrates the parable of Matthew 13:44, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."
3. Illustrated in the verses in Revelation 5, where Jesus opens the scroll and redeems mankind.