

Ruth

Introduction to Ruth

1) Place in biblical history

The opening verse places the events of the book during the time of **Judges**. The genealogy in chapter four places Boaz and Ruth at least three generations before David.

2) Purposes

- a. The book of Ruth shows God's loving-kindness to His people (2:20) in **redeeming** Ruth and **rescuing** a family from extinction.
- b. Ruth also provides an account of David's ancestry to establish his right to the throne of Israel. **Judah** was the promised royal tribe (**Gen 49:10**).

3) Themes

- a. Faithfulness to the **covenant**
 - (1) Ruth's commitment to God (**1:16-17**) showed her acceptance of Him (Exod 24:3, "*all the words which the Lord has said we will do*")
 - (2) Boaz's praise of Ruth's loving care of Naomi (2:12, "*a full reward be given you by the LORD*") echoed the covenant (Deut 28:2, "*All these blessings shall come upon you*")
- b. The **providence** of a sovereign God

A number of "chance" occurrences: the famine, family deaths, Ruth's choice of a field (**2:3**), Boaz's attraction to Ruth, and their eventual marriage.

4) Special Laws and Customs in Ruth

a. Law of Gleaning, Ruth 2

Gleaning in the field was God's way for Israel to care for the **poor**. God's "welfare program" involved work (**Deut 24:19-22**).

b. Custom of Spreading the Corners of a Garment, **Ruth 3:7-9**

An ancient custom of seeking **protection**. In this case, Ruth asks Boaz to protect and provide for her through marriage.

c. Custom of the Ten Elders at the Gate, **Ruth 4:2**

This was the lowest form of government for legal cases (Deut 21:19-21).

d. Custom of Sandal Removal, **Ruth 4:7**

This symbolized giving up any right to tread on the land, giving up all claims to it (Deut 25:9)

e. Law of Levirate Marriage

(1) If one had a brother who died and he was married but they had no children, the living brother was responsible to **marry** her and raise a son in his name (Deut 25:5–6). *Levir* is Latin for “husband’s brother.”

(2) This man is sometimes called a “kinsman-redeemer” (see Ruth 3:9—“close relative” translates the Hebrew word *goel*, “redeemer”). His responsibilities were—

- (a) Redeem a brother from slavery (Lev 25:47–55)
- (b) Redeem a slain brother’s blood (Num 35; Josh 20:1–9)
- (c) Redeem a brother’s property (Lev 25:23–28)
- (d) Redeem a brother’s name (Deut 25:5–6)

This important for Israel in OT:

- 1. Posterity
- 2. Land
- 3. Cf. the Abrahamic Covenant
- 4. They were God’s promised people in God’s promised land

5) Content and Message

a. The book of Ruth relates a brighter side to Israelite life during the dark time of the Judges. This book also gives us a close glimpse of everyday life of OT Hebrew people.

b. Overview

(1) A family from Bethlehem (Elimelech, Naomi, and their sons Mahlon and Chilion) leave for Moab because of famine

(2) In Moab the sons marry Orpah and Ruth, but eventually the father and sons die

(3) Naomi decides to go back to Bethlehem and Ruth goes with her, having believed in the LORD

(4) To survive, Ruth gleanes in a field and later learns that it belongs to a relative of theirs, Boaz

(5) Ruth asks Boaz to provide and protect her and Naomi by marrying her, which Boaz does

c. This book shows that Gentiles *could* **believe** in the true God

d. Though none of the people or circumstances of this book on the surface seem important or significant, the story relates that God is actively involved in life, working out His purpose and blessing those who trust Him. Thus, **this book is about God’s watch-care over His people.**

e. Key verse: **2:12**

f. Ruth is one of five women mentioned in Christ’s genealogy (Matt 1:5)

☞ *God **cares** for those who **trust** in Him.*

Outline

Basic Outline

- 1) Ruth’s Journey, 1
- 2) Ruth Gleaning, 2
- 3) Ruth’s Appeal, 3
- 4) Ruth’s Marriage, 4

More Detailed Outline

- 1) An Israelite Family in Moab, 1:1–5
- 2) Return to Judah, 1:6–22
 - a. Ruth stays with Naomi, 1:6–18
 - b. Return to Bethlehem, 1:19–22
- 3) Ruth Gleaning, 2:1–23
 - a. Boaz’s field, 2:1–3
 - b. Boaz provides for Ruth, 2:4–17
 - c. Naomi’s reaction, 2:18–23
- 4) The Marriage, 3:1–4:22
 - a. Naomi’s plan, 3:1–5
 - b. Ruth at the threshing-floor, 3:6–13
 - c. Ruth returns home, 3:14–18
 - d. Boaz redeems Ruth, 4:1–12
 - e. Marriage and birth of a son, 4:13–17
 - f. Genealogy of David, 4:18–22