

# Ruth

## Title:

The Book of Ruth introduces us to an Israelite family that had to leave Judah because of a famine in the land. They came to the nearby land of Moab to stay there. After a short time the father dies, leaving his wife, Naomi, and two sons. These two sons married Moabite women by the name of Orpah and Ruth. Then we are told that after ten years of living in Moab, **“both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband. Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had visited His people by giving them bread” (1:5-6).**

The book is named after the woman who now becomes the central figure in the book, a foreigner by the name of Ruth. The name *Ruth* means *friendship*, which fits her, as we will see. When Naomi set out to return to the land of Israel, she encouraged the young women to return to their homes in Moab instead of make the long trip to Bethlehem. One of the daughters-in-law decided to remain in Moab, but Ruth chose to return with Naomi saying, **“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” (1:17-18).** As we will see, throughout her life, Ruth was continually confirmed in her faith in the true God of Israel.

## Purpose:

It would seem that the purpose of Ruth is to give us a glimpse of the life of one of the ancestors of David, Ruth being his great grandmother (4:17-22). This information becomes even more important when we remember that the genealogy of David is also the genealogy of Jesus Christ (cf. Matthew 1:5). This book reveals the

universal grace of God in Old Testament times and shows that even Gentiles are included in the people of God when they receive the promises of God through faith. Regarding this Paul writes, **“Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’ So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham” (Galatians 3:7-9).** It is also a testimony of God’s providential care for those who wait upon Him, even in such dark times as those.

Throughout the book we see ordinary heroes of the faith, sincere Christians living their faith. They are an example of godly living in ungodly times and a description of Christian love in action.

- In **Naomi** we find a faithful wife, mother, and mother-in-law, whose faith shows itself in all that she does.
- In **Boaz** we find a kind and thoughtful man and with every act and word he shows his deep faith in God (2:4; 2:11f; 3:11ff; 4:1-12).
- In **Ruth** we have a very modest and patient woman, remarkable in her faith in the true God.

## Date:

The opening verse gives us the approximate time of the events described in the book, saying, **“Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled...” (1:1).** So the date of the events recorded in Ruth occurred sometime in the three-hundred-fifty years of the dark period of the Judges, likely in the latter half, given her close relation to David (4:17, 22) and the years of peace with Moab (cf. Judges 3:30). This gives us a date of around 1180 B.C.

Since the genealogy of Boaz ends with David, the book must have been written after David had become king. Ruth 4:7 further indicates a date of writing some time after the era of the Judges, because the holy writer explains a custom that was apparently no longer in use at the time of writing: **“Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging...”**

## **Content:**

Ruth is a story of faith, love, devotion, and redemption set in the dark days of the Judges. Yet it is a stark contrast to the final chapters of Judges and opening chapters of Samuel! Instead of rebellion against the LORD, there is faith and trust in the LORD. Instead of war and bloodshed, there is love, marriage and the working of the land – the common customs of ordinary people as they live and die among the turbulence of their time. It is the story of a Moabitess who forsakes her pagan heritage in order to cling to the people of Israel and to the God of Israel. Because of her faithfulness to her LORD and to her mother-in-law, the LORD God blesses her with a new husband (Boaz), a son (Obed), and a privileged position in the lineage of David and, more importantly, Jesus Christ.

## **The Holy Writer and Authenticity:**

The writer is not named in the book, though the writer was evidently a contemporary of David (4:22), if not David himself, since Solomon is not mentioned in the genealogy. But again, the identity of the writer is not revealed in Ruth, nor in any other passage of Scripture. Jewish tradition holds that Samuel was the inspired writer, though this is unlikely since Samuel died before David had become king (Ruth 4:17,22; 1 Samuel 25:1 and 2 Samuel 2:4). The evidence, both internal and external, would seem to point to David as the inspired writer.

Despite the uncertainty of the identity of the writer, the authenticity of the book is unquestionable, since it was handed down as part of the Old Testament canon and was received as such by the New Testament Church (2 Timothy 3:16).

In addition to its place among the Old Testament Scriptures, there are other evidences to its authenticity as well. Most importantly, Ruth is named (along with three other women who are mentioned in other Old Testament books) in the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:5).

The customs mentioned in the Book of Ruth are ones that fulfill the laws which were established by the LORD before the

people of Israel entered the promised land of Canaan. For example:

- The laws regarding leaving food in the field for the poor and the stranger mentioned in Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:19-22 have their purpose realized in Ruth 2:2-3,15-16.
- The concept of the kinsman-redeemer has its foundation in Leviticus 25:25 and Deuteronomy 25:5-6 and its fulfillment in Ruth 4:4-6. This is an account of real people in real times who's lives show why such laws from the time of Moses were created.

## **Christ in Ruth:**

Although Scripture names nothing in the book of Ruth as a *type* of Christ, the concept of the kinsman-redeemer (3:9) is an important picture of the work of Christ that we must not overlook. The redeemer must be related by blood to those he redeems (cf. Deut. 25:5-10; Ruth 2:1; John 1:14; Rom. 1:3; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:14f); be able to pay the price of redemption (2:1; 1 Peter 1:18f); be willing to redeem (3:11; Mt. 20:28; John 10:15; Heb. 10:7); and be free himself (Christ was free from the curse of sin - Heb. 4:15, 1 Peter 2:21-22). Thus, in Boaz as kinsman-redeemer we have a wonderful picture of the redeeming work of Christ. Christ is also pictured in the book as the descendant of David.

## **Outline:**

### **I. Ruth's Love Is Demonstrated (1:1-2:23)**

- A. Ruth's Decision to Remain with Naomi (1:1-18)
- B. Ruth's Devotion to Care for Naomi (1:19-2:23)
  1. Ruth and Naomi Return to Bethlehem (1:19-22)
  2. Ruth gleans for Food to Support her Mother-in-Law (2:1-23)

### **II. Ruth's Love Is Rewarded (3:1-4:22)**

- A. Ruth's Request for Redemption by Boaz (3:1-18)
- B. Ruth's Reward of Redemption by Boaz (4:1-22)