

Ruth

"The Short Story of Redemption"

Background Information

Every major translation throughout history has named this book "Ruth," though the story can be read with the emphasis placed on Boaz or Naomi, as well.

Author: _____ (Not a "signed" book, but he has been named for centuries)
"Ruth" means "friendship."

Time Covered and Outlines

The book occurs "in the days when the judges ruled" (1:1). Many scholars place the bulk of the events in this book around Judges 8 and 9.

We are not told how long the journey of chapter 1 takes, but from that point on, the events seem to occur rather rapidly, so little time is covered in the majority of the text. The full story probably covers around 15 years.

Outline of major events:

- I. Naomi and daughters-in-law widowed (1:1-5)
- II. The return to Bethlehem (1:6-22)
- III. Ruth finds favor with Boaz (2:1-23)
- IV. Naomi's plan for Ruth (3:1-18)
- V. Redemption (4:1-12)
- VI. A son is born to Ruth (4:13-17)
- VII. The lineage to David (4:18-22)

Christ is Our Redeemer

A redeemer had 3 qualifications under the Old Testament Law. Jesus fulfills them all:

1. Blood relationship (Galatians 4:4-5; Hebrews 2:16-17)
2. Necessary resources (1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Peter 1:18-19)
3. Willingness to purchase back (John 10:15-18; 1 John 3:16)

Major Themes

Redemption (2:12)

Virtue (3:11)

Providence

God's rule over Gentile peoples

It is thought that Benjamin Franklin once spoke to secular, godless literary critics in Paris. For his speech, he read the book of Ruth without telling them where it was from. Following his reading, there were thunderous applause. Only then did Franklin say, "Gentleman, I have read to you the book of Ruth from the Bible." The godless critics were stunned into silence.

God's Character in Ruth

Sovereign (1:6; 4:13)

Providence (2:3)

Caring for all peoples

Jesus in Ruth

Boaz is a type of Christ, serving as a redeemer (1 Peter 1:18-19)

The end of Ruth gives the lineage to David, showing God's power to continue the family tree of Jesus, even using a foreign woman to continue the Messiah's line.

Key Words in Ruth

"Glean" (Hebrew *laqat*), "to gather together" 2:2; 2:7; 2:15; 2:17

"Redeemer" (or kinsmen-redeemer; Hebrew *go'el*) 2:1; 2:20; 3:9; 3:12-13; 4:1; 4:3

Elsewhere in the World...

Egypt faces a civil war during the reign of Pharaoh Ramses XI

Elsewhere in Scripture...

The judges are leading God's people through dark times (1:1). The life of Ruth helps to fill in a positive story during this dark time in the nation's history.

Steve Zeisler, in his book *A Conspicuous Love*, lists three major themes from Ruth for application in the life of a believer:

1. God calls us to step out in bold, risky, obedient faith.
2. The hand of God is everywhere, working out His plan and our ultimate good.
3. God's love is all-inclusive—no one is left out.

Other Information about Ruth

Along with Song of Solomon, Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations, Ruth is contained in a volume called the "Megilloth," or "five scrolls." These are read in synagogues on special occasions throughout the year. Ruth, because of its harvest theme, is read at Pentecost.

Ruth is a Moabitess. Moab was descended from Lot, who separated from Abraham. Some see the book of Ruth as a story of God bringing Abraham's family line back together.

With Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba, Ruth is one of four women listed in Matthew's account of Christ's genealogy.