

Topic: The Book of Ruth

Historical Context (From Zondervan Study Bible)

- Author: Unknown
- Audience: God's chosen people, the Israelites
- Setting: A time of peace between Israel and Moab. The book is silent about the possible underlying hostility between the Judahites and the Moabites. Moab encompassed the expansive plateau between the Dead Sea and the Eastern Desert on both sides of the Arnon River Gorge (see map provided at Bible Study).
- Date: Ruth lived during the time of the judges; this book was written sometime after David became king circa 1010 BC.
- Theme: Ruth, a Moabite woman, proves to be a model of faithfulness in Israel during the period of the judges.

Reading Outline

- Read the entire book of Ruth, chapters 1-4.
- Don't lose sight of the overall purpose of the book, the "big picture" themes.
- Have fun and see how this book can edify and teach women regarding the unity of the faith.

Post Reading Summary Points (from Dr. Herbert Lockyer's *All the Women of The Bible*)

- Ruth, from *reuth*, means "something worth seeing", or could also mean "a female friend".
- Ruth is from the land of Moab, where idolatry was prevalent. In marrying women of Moab, Mahlon (Ruth's husband) and Kilion (Orpah's husband) sinned against the Mosaic Law, which prohibited any association with the Moabites (Deu 7:3; 23:3).
- Ruth is *A Young Widow*
 - Ruth and her sister, Orpah, followed in their mother-in-law's footsteps of widowhood at a young age. We are not told if these women had been influenced towards God by their marriage into a Hebrew family.
 - Newly widowed, Ruth did not seek for self-pity, nor is any bitterness manifested in her heart, unlike her mother-in-law, Naomi. Naomi's self-confessed bitterness over the loss of her husband and sons spoke of her lack of faith in God's providence. When Naomi decides to return to her land of Bethlehem, Orpah turns back to remain in Moab while Ruth loved Naomi and was willing to leave her own land to share the unknown future with Naomi. She "...revealed a quiet fidelity so characteristic of her association with the embittered woman..." (Lockyer, p. 146).
 - Ruth exhibits an unselfish form of devotion as can be seen when she cries out, "Don't urge me to leave you" (Ruth 1:16).

- Ruth is A Determined Convert
 - In spite of her background and association with the Moabites, she became a devout worshiper of God.
 - She must have seen that Naomi's God was completely different from the gods she worshipped.
 - She states "Thy God shall be my God and thy people my people" (Ruth 1:16) - her firm decision to follow Jehovah, and identify herself with His people, brought her rich reward, including becoming ancestress of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- Ruth is A *Humble Gleaner*
 - Ruth was not ashamed of the low order of her work as she took her place as a gleaner with the poor and outcast (p 147).
 - She was grateful for the kindness that had been shown to her by a stranger in a strange land.
- Ruth is An *Honored Mother*
 - "God smiled upon the marriage of honorable Boaz and virtuous Ruth, and blessed them with a son whom they named Obed which means 'a servant who worships'. As Ruth was a servant who came to worship Jehovah, we can imagine her son's name as being expressive of her own conversion from idolatry" (148).
 - Ruth, a Gentile by birth, became a part of the chosen line through which the Savior of the world appeared.

Post-reading Questions

Chapter 1

- v1:6 What motivates Naomi to return to Bethlehem? Is it a "push" from her emotions/circumstance, a "pull" from the Lord, or a combination of both? How does our Lord use both to accomplish His will in our lives?
- v1:8-13 What do these verses reveal about Naomi's relationship with her Lord? What is the significance of her sharing that "...The Lord's hand has turned against me!?" How would this strike you if someone very near and dear to you said such words? How would you respond? (Job 1:21)
- v1:14 Why does Ruth cling to Naomi? What is she clinging to? Where are her eyes and why is this important? (Heb 12:2)
- v1:15 Why does Naomi encourage Ruth to go back to her gods and be with her sister? What does this reveal about her state of mind?
- v1:16-18 Why is Ruth willing to leave her own land and share an unknown future with her aging mother-in-law? What is noteworthy about Ruth's devotion? How is this contrasted to women of today's society? Why are such relationships so rare? Which of Ruth's words most likely convinced Naomi to stop urging Ruth to return to her people?

- v1:19-22 What is the irony between verse 21 and verse 22? How often are we blinded by blessings when we focus on misfortune?

Chapter 2

- v2:2 What does this verse tell us about Ruth's character? Where is her focus? Why does she seem so comfortable in such a new circumstance? How can we apply this to our lives?
- v2:3 Ruth "as it turned out...found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz..." What does this verse say about the plan of God and Divine timing? How do we know when we are in His plan? (Psalm 37:3-16, Isaiah 40:31)
- v2:4 When Boaz greets the harvesters, how must his words impact Ruth? What does the communication between Boaz and his harvesters say about his character?
- v2:6-9 Why does Boaz ask Ruth to remain in his field? What parallels can we see between Boaz and a shepherd? Why is such care, as demonstrated by Boaz, so important to a woman's soul in man/woman relationships/friendships?
- v2: 11-12 How does God use people to act as His "wings of refuge"? Why is this important in the Body of Christ? (1 Cor 12:27-31, 1 Cor 13:1-7)
- v2:13-16 How is Ruth's humility revealed in verse 13? What a picture of grace Boaz portrays! How can we apply this dynamic to our spiritual walk? What do we need before we can be true receivers of grace? (Luke 6:38)
- v2:17-18 What might we be able to say about Ruth's motivation in this verse? What happens to our motivation in our spiritual walk when we stray from grace? How does this happen?
- v2:20 Boaz is described as a "family guardian." The Hebrew word for family guardian is *goel*, and is a legal term for one who has legal obligation to redeem a relative in serious difficulty. What is the significance of this part of Jewish tradition?
- v2:21-23 Why does Naomi say to Ruth "It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with the women who work for [Boaz]"? What type of fellowship do you suppose these women experienced? What fostered and allowed for such relationships?

Chapter 3

- V3:1 What type of home does Naomi want for Ruth? What comes to mind to when you think of "home?" As women, how do we make others feel "at home"? How do we feel "at home" with God? What possible barriers can get between being "at home" with God (Isa 32:18, Pro 24:3-4)?
- V3:2 What is the significance of Ruth meeting Boaz on the threshing floor (Num 18:30, Mat 3:12)?
- V3:3 Why does Naomi instruct Ruth to wash and put on her best clothes? How does God use beauty to invite us (SoS 4:7-9)?
- V3:4 What is the significance of uncovering Boaz's feet (Psa 8:6, 1Sa 23-24)?

- V3:5-6 What do you think is going on in Ruth's mind as she is demonstrating such obedience to Naomi's guidance? Why do you think Ruth appears to be so comfortable following such guidance?
- V3:7-9 Where does Ruth's boldness come from? What type of example is she in terms of how we should approach our Redeemer?
- V3:10 What about Ruth's character impresses Boaz? Why is this so important?
- V3:11-12 Ruth's "noble" character is essential in bringing honor to her family redeemer. How does this mirror God's design for love between husband and wife, and our eternal marriage with Jesus Christ (Eph 5:21-28)?
- V3:15 -17 How does Boaz illustrate God's blessing and grace?
- V3:18 Why is Naomi convinced that "the man will not rest until the matter is settled"? What does this verse say about manhood, and how a woman can respond to a man who is being a true man of God?

Chapter 4

- V4:11 Why do the elders and the witnesses say "May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home be like Rachel and Leah" (Gen 30)? Note: Rachel is the mother of Joseph, Israel's savior. "He stands out as the most perfect type in the Bible of Him who was born of a woman to become the Savior of the world" (Lockyer, 129). Leah became the mother of six sons who were to become the representatives of six of the twelve tribes of Israel (Lockyer, 83).
- V4:14 Why are the woman so happy for Naomi that the Lord has given her a family guardian? Why is the family guardian an important role under Jewish Law?
- V4:15 How does the first part of this verse portray their coming Messiah? What is revealed about Ruth's character in the second part of this verse? What does this say about the impact a woman can have in His Divine plan?
- V4:16-17 What does the birth of Obed mean to Naomi? Why does Naomi seem to be "in the spotlight" as it relates to the coming of Ruth's son?
- V4:16-17 (continued): Obed means "a servant who worships". "As Ruth was the servant who came to worship Jehovah, we can imagine her son's name as being expressive of her own conversion from idolatry" (Lockyer, 148). What kind of mother do you think God has prepared Ruth to be (Psa 127:3)? What does the Bible say about Motherhood (Pro 31:25-30, Pro 6:20, Isa 66:13, Mat 12:48-50)?
- V4:18-22 What is the significance of Ruth, a Gentile by birth, being a part of the lineage of Christ?