

Bright Faith in A Dark Hour

**Lessons From
The Book of Ruth**

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Lesson 1 - General Introduction

Overview

The book of Ruth is a short narrative account that has its setting “in the days when the judges governed” in Israel (1:1). A glimpse of the Old Testament reveals that the period known as “The Judges” was not one of Israel’s brighter moments spiritually. The contemptuous cycle of sin, punishment, crying to God, repentance, deliverance, and return to sin dominates about 350 years of Israel’s history. That is why the study of Ruth is so refreshing. Boaz illustrates that it is possible to live faithfully amidst unfaithfulness and immorality. Ruth also demonstrates this quality. Though a pagan, she stands in such stark contrast with the prevailing attitude of God’s people during these days.

The story of Ruth provides the reader positive glimpses in two main areas:

- ♦ true, marital love based on honorable intentions and faithfulness
- ♦ spiritual fidelity to Jehovah in some of Israel’s darkest days as God’s people

Ruth was a young Moabitess (1:4) who married a Hebrew named Mahlon (4:10). She was a young woman who would know both joy and pain. Out of the experiences of her life she would mold a character that is exemplary for any to follow. God is able to change us through His care into faithful servants.

In capsule form, this short book tells us how Ruth came to love a Jew, then her mother-in-law, and at last their God. We are reminded that God’s love is for all mankind, and He has ample room for any and all who would come to know Him based on obedience to His covenant requirements. Though not stated, we rightly infer that Ruth was converted from her idolatrous ways into the religion of the Jews (cp. 1:15-16).

The book of Ruth also teaches us about the providence of God in the lives of those who determine to follow Him. Notice these instances where God made provision:

- ♦ Ruth came to know Him (1:1-4)
- ♦ Ruth supported herself and Naomi and came into contact with Boaz (1:22 – 2:3)
- ♦ Boaz redeeming Ruth (3:1-5)
- ♦ The origin of the lineage of David and eventually Christ (4:17; cp. Mt. 1:5)

Purpose

While it is true that a purpose of the book of Ruth could be the example of those who were faithful to God despite living in cruel and idolatrous times, it is likely that the main purpose of this book is revealed to us in its last chapter. We are given divine information of the origin and lineage of the family of David (4:17-22). As already noted, this is especially important given its Messianic implications.

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Lesson 1

Date of Writing

The book of Ruth follows the book of Judges in our Bibles because its setting was in that time period. It is unlikely that it was written before the time of David (**cp. 4:17**). Obviously, the author was familiar with Israel's greatest king. Since Boaz was the great-grandfather of David (**4:21**), the book recounts events that took place some three generations before his time (approx. 1000 BC).

Outline

- A) The Sojourn In Moab (**1:1-13**)
- B) Ruth's Loyalty And Commitment (**1:14-22**)
- C) Gleaning In The Field Of Boaz (**2:1-23**)
- D) Boaz Accepts The Role Of A Kinsman (**3:1-18**)
- E) Boaz Redeems Ruth (**4:1-12**)
- F) The Marriage Of Boaz And Ruth (**4:13-22**)

Naomi Returns To Bethlehem

Ruth 1

Introduction

The setting of Ruth is in the days of the judges (1:1). However, we do not know which judge was governing Israel at the time. The author of the book apparently wishes to illustrate that though the nation as a whole was estranged from God, there were some who still clung to Jehovah in faith.

The focus of **ch. 1** is the family of Elimelech, an Ephrathite from Bethlehem Judah. His wife, Naomi, is one of the book's principal characters. We are also introduced the book's main heroine, Ruth the Moabitess.

The Sojourn In Moab (1:1-13)

1. When did the events of this story take place? What else is said about this period? (1:1)
2. Describe the family who was driven into the land of Moab by the famine. (1:1-2) Identify each member. Given Israel's spiritual condition at the time, what might explain the famine? (cp. Deut. 28:15, 22-24)
3. How long did they live in Moab and what tragedies struck them? (1:3-5)
4. What moved Naomi to return with her daughters-in-law to her homeland in Judah? (1:6)
5. What counsel did Naomi give to Ruth and Orpah? (1:8-9) What was their initial response? (1:10) How did Naomi seek to convince them otherwise? (1:11-13)
6. Was Naomi successful? (1:14) To what else besides family would the young widows have returned? (1:15)
7. How did Naomi view the tragedies that had befallen her in Moab? (1:13, 20-21) Do you think there was any truth in this or was it just Naomi's grief talking?

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Lesson 2

Ruth's Loyalty & Commitment (1:14-22)

8. Both Orpah and Ruth obviously loved Naomi but do you think Ruth's decision was only a matter of personal loyalty to her mother-in-law? **(1:16-17)**

9. How was Naomi received in Bethlehem? **(1:19-21)**

10. What was it that Naomi in her grief could not see? **(cp. 4:16-17)** Do we sometimes have a similar problem? **(cp. 2 Cor. 4:17)**

11. When did Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem? **(1:22)** In what month by our calendar did that occur?

Ruth and Boaz

Ruth 2-3

Introduction

Having returned to Jerusalem with Naomi, we begin to see God's providential plan for Ruth set in motion. She will come in contact with Boaz **(2:3)** and eventually their initial contact will blossom into a beautiful relationship, due in large part to Boaz's willingness to play the role of the near kinsman **(3:11-13)**.

In this lesson, we are introduced to the hero, Boaz. We are also reminded of God's providence, being reassured that He is in complete control of events that shape our lives. No doubt, God desires that we choose rightly, and that the results of our choices will lead us into His will being done.

Gleaning In The Field of Boaz (2:1-23)

1. What was one of the ways God provided for the poor under the law of Moses? (**cp. Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19**) What was "gleaning"?
2. Who was Boaz? **(2:1)**
3. Why did Ruth propose to glean in the grain fields? **(2:2)** What in her words might indicate that not everyone kept the law in the matter of the poor? [*Another indication of the spiritual depravity in Israel*] How did she happen to come onto the field of Boaz? **(2:3)**
4. What sort of man did Boaz reveal himself to be with his workers? **(2:4)** What special kindness did he show to Ruth and why? **(2:5-16)** What does Boaz especially note about Ruth? **(2:12)**
5. What spirit does Ruth manifest in all of this? **(2:10, 13)**
6. Why do you think this meeting came about in just this way? Consider all the factors.
7. What did Ruth bring home that day to Naomi? **(2:17-18)**

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Lesson 3

8. How did Naomi identify Boaz to Ruth, and what advice did she give her daughter-in-law? **(2:20-23)**
Based on her words in **2:20**, do you think Naomi is already beginning to think ahead for Ruth?

Boaz Accepts The Role of A Kinsman (3:1-18)

9. What was the role of the kinsman/redeemer? **(cp. Lev. 25:23-25, 47-49; Deut. 25:5-10; Job 19:25)**
10. What did Naomi want to do for Ruth and how was this to be accomplished? **(3:1-5)**
11. What was Ruth requesting of Boaz by what she did at the threshing floor? **(3:6-9; cp. Ezek. 16:8)**
12. What was it about Ruth that so impressed Boaz? **(3:10-11)**
13. What problem had to be first worked out before Boaz was free to act as the near kinsman? **(3:12)**
14. How did Boaz seek to protect the good reputation of Ruth? **(3:14-15, 17)**
15. What did Naomi know about Boaz in her efforts to reassure Ruth? **(3:18)**

The Marriage Of Ruth and Boaz

Ruth 4

Introduction

This chapter opens with Boaz going to the city gate in order to make contact with a relative of Naomi's who was even closer than himself **(4:1-2)**. The gate of a city was the place of gathering and judgment and the place where the legal matter of the redemption of the field of Elimelech and raising up descendants to him had to be settled. Naomi had either sold or was being forced by want to sell the inheritance of her husband and now there was a need to keep it or bring it back into his family **(cp. Lev. 25:23-28)**.

The book concludes with historical information about the genealogical beginning of David, who was the great-grandson of Ruth and Boaz **(4:18-22)**.

Boaz Redeems Ruth (4:1-12)

1. Who did Boaz call to be witnesses to the procedure between himself and another near kinsman of Naomi? **(4:2)**
2. What caused the near kinsman who at first was perfectly willing to redeem the field of Elimelech to change his mind? **(4:5-6)** How might such a transaction have "marred" *[KJV]*, "ruined" *[NKJV]*, or "jeopardized" *[NASV]* his own inheritance?
3. How was Ruth destined to become the owner of the property of her dead father-in-law?
4. By what custom did a near kinsman in Israel relinquish his right to redeem family property to another? **(4:7-8)**
5. What did Boaz agree to do before the elders and people of the city? **(4:9-10)**
6. What blessing did they pronounce upon Ruth? **(4:11-12)** Why do you think they especially mentioned Perez? **(4:12; cp. 4:18; 1 Chron. 2:5)**

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Lesson 4

7. Why does Ruth not come under the prohibition of Israelites marrying foreign women? (**cp. Deut. 7:1-5**)

The Marriage of Ruth and Boaz (4:13-22)

8. What blessing did Ruth's marriage and the birth of a son bring to Naomi? (**4:14-15,17**)

9. What did the women of Bethlehem say of Ruth? (**4:15**)

10. What well-known Bible character was descended from Boaz and Ruth? (**4:22**) Who was their most important descendent? (**cp. Mt. 1:1-16, esp. vv. 2-6a**)

11. In summary, how does this book add to our understanding of the period of The Judges, and what do you think is its major purpose?

12. *Special study: Compare Boaz and Jesus as kinsman/redeemers and see how many points of similarity there are.*