

RUTH

Author: uncertain

Date: 1100-1000 B.C.

The book of Ruth is easily one of the most familiar and popular in the Bible. It is a charming, short story and a great example of simple narrative with a happy ending. This historical account has heroines and a hero but no villain. There is friendship, romance, suspense and redemption. In addition to these, there is also tragedy, but it is overcome by courage, kindness, love and loyalty. In this story, Naomi and Ruth's relationship is a beautiful example of faithfulness and commitment – to God and to each other. Ruth's name in Hebrew means "friend." There also is a loving relationship that develops between Boaz and Ruth. This relationship foreshadows Christ and his gentile bride, the church.

This story takes place during the time of the judges—a period of disobedience, idolatry, and violence. These were for the most part dark days when *"everyone did what was right in his own eyes"* (Judges 17:6), yet in the story of Ruth, we see a faithful remnant of God's people.

This brief yet beautiful story of Ruth is crafted with care by its unknown author. The narrative is symmetrical with a structure of parallel elements that meet in the middle of the book. The literary structure serves to highlight several important themes. Most prominent is the theme of redemption. The Hebrew word for kinsman (goel) appears thirteen times in Ruth and basically means *"kinsman who redeems."* Boaz acts as the kinsman-redeemer for Ruth, the Moabite widow of one of his relatives. This temporal redemption by Boaz points to God's redeeming work, which reaches its climax in Christ's giving Himself *"that He might redeem us"* (Titus 2:14).

Another key term in the story is "kindness" from the Hebrew word *"hesed"* meaning covenant loyalty. This loyalty is expressed in the same terms as those describing God's covenant relationship with His people. The providential care of God is also highlighted. Although the book describes common people in common settings, they were being guided by the sovereign hand of God, who was using their uncommon faith to prepare the way for Israel's greatest king, David. This story reminds us that no event in the life of God's people is insignificant, because He is constantly involved.

Key verses: ***"Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you,"*** Ruth 1: 16-17 (ESV).

Ruth 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)
- 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)

The Book of Ruth Discussion Questions

Throughout hard times, Naomi, trusted in God. She shared her faith with Ruth, and both were blessed. How can we find blessings in the midst of adversity and demonstrate our trust in God to those around us?

Discuss how Boaz's redeeming of Ruth is a typology of Christ redeeming us

Do we recognize the people God puts in our lives as a blessing equal to or above being blessed with prosperity?

Have there been times when unlikely relationships have produced the greatest blessings?

What must we "remove" from our life today to confirm our faith and obedience to God? (v4:7-8)

Share a verse that is meaningful to you regarding your heart, your friends, love of those who lift you up in Christ.