

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

BIBLE SURVEY Lesson 16: The Book of Ruth

INTRODUCTION & OUTLINE--THE BOOK OF RUTH

Introduction:

What a contrast! From wandering and waste, from weeping and warfare we move to peace, romance, integrity, and piety. This is a great little book of FAITH.

This pleasant book had such an impact on the poet Keats that he even referred to it in his lonely "Ode to a Nightingale,"

*"Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft times hath Charmed magical casements,
opening on the form Of perilous seas, in fairy lands forlorn."*

The Book of Ruth gets its name from its heroine, Ruth, the Moabite. Her devotion to God and love for her family has made her a favorite among all the many characters in Scripture. In the Hebrew Bible, Ruth appears in the third section of books known as the "Writings" (Hagiographa). It is traditionally read at the Feasts of Weeks, or Pentecost, which is the harvest celebration, much like our Thanksgiving.

The link of Ruth with Judges is obvious from the opening verse: *"Now it came about in the days when judges governed . . ."*

Ruth is the story of a family from Bethlehem that left the Promised Land, crossed over to the East side of the Jordan to live.

Elimelech took his wife **Naomi** and their two sons **Mahlon** and **Chilion** and lived in the land of Moab, perhaps because of the terrible conditions at home. Elimelech died leaving Naomi a widow with two sons to raise. Naomi's sons married Moabite woman and they all lived in Moab for about ten years. Then Mahlon and Chilion also died leaving three widows to fend for themselves when women alone had little chance of survival with out a husband or sons.

Naomi decided that her only chance was to return home to her own people undoubtedly to find support from family as provided by the law. There may have also been a drought because she mentions hearing, "the Lord had visited His people in giving them food. " Maybe this happened right after Gideon delivered his people from the droughts caused by the Midianites.

This sets the scene for the story of Ruth as Naomi encourages her daughters in-law to stay with their own families since she has no way to support them and her family would have no responsibility to include them either.

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I. RUTH'S CHOICE OF FAITH (Chapter 1)

A. Ruth's Dilemma (1:1-18)

1. Naomi sees her only hope for survival is to go back to her family in Bethlehem. She also knows there is food (v. 6). Ruth and her sister Orpah insist on going with her. They are family.

Naomi encourages them to go back to their mother in Moab (v. 8) and find rest (v9), which means find a home, since there is no way Naomi can provide sons to marry them and provide a seed for their dead husbands. (Deut. 25:5-10--Provision for widows and protection of family lands.)

2. The girls made a choice. Orpah went back to her mother, her people, and their gods. But, Ruth chose to stay with Naomi. What a great expression of love this is. Naomi must have been a great mother-in-law.

I think it was more than that. I believe Ruth had caught Naomi's contagious faith. When she explains what she intends to do she makes it clear where her heart now lies.

READ vv. 16 and 17

B. Ruth's Destiny {1:19-22}

1. Arriving in Bethlehem Ruth finds herself in a strange land among strange people with strange ideas and strange customs.

Good news: (vs. 19) *"Is this Naomi?"* Great, she is recognized.

Bad news: (w. 20 and 21) *"Don't call me Naomi (sweet), call me Mara (bitter)."* Gee thanks, mom."

2. So with little hope Ruth meets her new people. But, the chapter ends on an up note. They came at "First Fruits," just as the first crop of the year was being harvested. This will play a big part in future, and the future of Israel, and the world

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II. RUTH'S CHALLENGE IN FAITH (Chapter 2)

A. Ruth's "Chance" Meeting (2:1-3)

1. Naomi needed to find family- so that she could come under their protection. She knew of one, a kinsman (relative) of Elimelech, who was a man of power and wealth. If he was a good man he could protect them and help meet their needs.

But, before she finds him, Ruth spies a field being harvested and asks if she may take advantage of the Mosaic law which allows the poor to glean the fields of the rich. In fact, it demands it.

Permission is granted. **She just "happens" to come to the land owned by Boaz.** In Hebrew it literally says: "her chance, chanced, or she happening happened to come." When the words are duplicated in Hebrew it is for great emphasis. Intentional exaggeration generally points to God's intervention.

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B. Ruth's Care Managed (1:4-23)

1. **Boaz** came to check out his workers, **spotted Ruth** resting in his workhouse and ask his men who she was. **He invited her to glean** exclusively in his fields and instructed his workers to protect her and leave plenty of grain for her. When she asked why, he explained that the story of her treatment of Naomi had spread and he prayed that god:

(vs. 12)-- *"May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge."* **Boaz is a man of the Word and knows God** makes Himself the husband of the widows. We should not be surprised latter to find out he also knows the law of the Kinsman-Redeemer (Deut. 25:5-10).

2. Boaz then puts feet to his own prayer. (Great example for us.) He invites her to lunch and makes sure she would have an easy afternoon and get all the grain she needs to meet Naomi's needs.

When she shares with Naomi all that has happened, Naomi knows Boaz is the close relative she sought and encourages Ruth to stay in his fields.

III. RUTH'S CLAIM BY FAITH (Chapter 3)

A. Ruth's Obedience (3:1-12)

1. Naomi, knowing that Boaz is a kinsman, therefore a potential

A Kinsman-Redeemer, instructs Ruth in the protocol of courting.

It's a little more complicated that asking him over to dinner, but it does obviously put the ball in his court.

2. Rubens Naomi and goes through the ritual as described in verses 3 through 9. Boaz is willing to be her Kinsman Redeemer, but there is a snag. There is another man who is an even closer relative and so must have the first chance.

B. Ruth's Trust (3:13-18)

1. Boaz promised Ruth he would marry her if the other man failed, offered her protection for the night and, in the morning, gave her an earnest payment of his pledge.

2. Trusting both Naomi and Boaz, Ruth stayed the night and then patiently waited as Naomi assured her that he would settle the matter quickly.

IV. RUTH'S REWARD FOR HER FAITH (Chapter 4)

A. Ruth's Redemption (4:1-12)

1. Chapter four is an account of the legal negotiations of Boaz and an unnamed kinsman. The other man would love to have Naomi's fields, but can't or does not want to marry Ruth to have an heir for her dead son.

2. Boaz happily agrees to take her off his hands and legally seals the deal before the Elders.

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B. Ruth's Rest (4: 13-22)

1. Remember in chapter one we found out that finding rest meant finding a home. So Naomi's desire that her daughter find a home is fulfilled in an fantastic way. God has provided a fine home for Ruth and Naomi. But what about the heir, the carrying on of the name and the inheritance? God gave Boaz and Ruth Obed.

2. Ruth became more valuable to Naomi than seven sons. She brought her a grandson in the Promised Land, not only an heir but one that was in the line of David and the Messiah.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH

1. The story of Ruth shows the sovereignty of God.

God achieves His purposes by controlling events and "chance" meetings.

2. The story of Ruth shows that God use people of faith.

God works through people who are people of prayer and obedience.

3. The story of Ruth shows that God works through the ordinary.

God does not always work through miracles and revelations, nor priests and Tabernacles, but through everyday people and affairs.

4. The story of Ruth shows that there is always a remnant.

Despite the prevailing apostasy of the nation of Israel during this period of history, there were individuals of character, conviction, piety, and faith.