

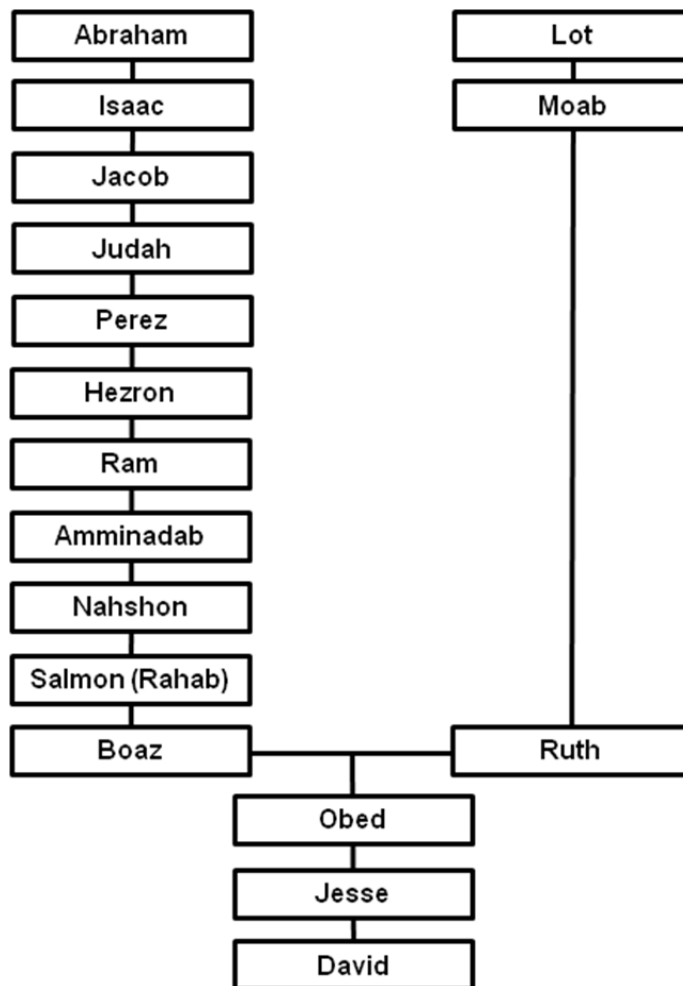
Old Testament Survey
Lesson 9 – Ruth
Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School
www.valleybible.net

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. 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". It is traditionally read at the Feasts of Weeks, or Pentecost, which is the Spring harvest celebration.

The author of Ruth is unknown. Since the book was probably written during the time of David (4:17-22) it is reasonable to assume that Samuel is the author. Apparently, there is no need to establish the exact historical perspective of this book beyond stating the general period of the Judges (1:1). However, by looking at the genealogies we can determine the approximate time of when Boaz lived.

¹Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, Judg 1:1a



The period of the Judges is among the worst in Israel's history. The book of Judges (particularly the last five chapters) contains some of the ugliest stories in the Bible – tales of homosexual assault, idolatry, civil war, thievery, rape and murder. No enemy does all this; Israelites do it to each other. The book of Ruth is set against this bleak background.

I. Ruth's Choice of Faith (Chapter 1)

A. The Setting (1:1-5)

In the time of the Judges there was a famine in the land. The text does not place this famine, but it would have occurred during a time of rebellion. A man named Elimelech (God is king) from Bethlehem (city of bread) took his wife and two sons to live (sojourn) in the land of Moab. At the end of Judges we also see Bethlehem: the home of the apostate Levite (Judg 17-18) and the home of the unfaithful concubine (Judg 19).

Moab was not the friend of Israel.

³No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD, ⁴because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. ⁵Nevertheless, the LORD your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the LORD your God loves you. ⁶You shall never seek their peace or their prosperity all your days. Deut 23:3-6

Elimelech apparently disobeyed God by seeking the prosperity of the Moabites. Perhaps God's punishment was his death. Apparently, the man whose name is "God is king" did not trust in Him as King and passed on this lack of faith to his sons. His sons then take wives (Orpah and Ruth) from among the Moabites. Ten years later, both sons died leaving their widows and mother destitute and their mother alone in a foreign land. This was a time when women alone had little chance of survival without a husband or sons.

B. Ruth's Dilemma (1:6-18)

1. Naomi sees her only hope for survival is to go back to her family in Bethlehem undoubtedly to find support from family as provided by the law. She also knows there is food (v6). Ruth and her sister Orpah insist on going with her. They are family. Naomi encourages them to go back to their mother in Moab (v8) 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.
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. It was probably more than that. Ruth had caught Naomi's contagious faith. When she explains what she intends to do she makes it clear where her heart now lies. This was a spiritual commitment to the true God and rejection of the heathen environment of Moab.

¹⁶But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back 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 I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me." Ruth 1:16-17

C. 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. Here Naomi blames God for the situations in her life.

Ultimately the purpose of trials in a believer's life is that the works of God may be displayed in us (John 9:1-3). Specifically (from <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/sg59-5.htm>):

- a. Trials test the strength of our faith (Job 42:5-6)
 - b. Trials humble us (2 Cor 12:7)
 - c. Trials wean us from worldly things (Heb 11:26)
 - d. Trials call us to an eternal hope (Rom 8: 16-19, 21-24)
 - e. Trails reveal what we really love (Luke 14:26-27)
 - f. Trails teach us to value God's blessings (Psa 63:3; Heb 5:7-9)
 - g. Trials enable us to help others in their suffering (2 Cor 1:3-4)
 - h. Trails produce endurance and strength (James 1:2-4)
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 her future, and the future of Israel, and the world.

II. Ruth's Challenge in Faith (Chapter 2)

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

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.

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

1. Boaz came to check out his workers, spotted Ruth resting in his workhouse, and asked 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 he treatment of Naomi had spread and he prayed that God would (v12) "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 (v14). (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 (3:1-11)

1. Naomi, knowing that Boaz is a kinsman, therefore a potential Kinsman-Redeemer, instructs Ruth in the protocol of courting. It's a little more complicated than asking him over to dinner, but it does obviously put the ball in his court.

- Ruth goes through the ritual as described in verses 3 through 9. Boaz is impressed by Ruth in not going after young men (he must have been advanced in years). 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 (3:12-18)

- 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.
- 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)

- 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 cannot or does not want to marry Ruth to have an heir for her dead son. Read MacArthur Bible Handbook page 76

⁴⁷Now if the means of a stranger or of a sojourner with you becomes sufficient, and a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to him as to sell himself to a stranger who is sojourning with you, or to the descendants of a stranger's family, ⁴⁸then he shall have redemption right after he has been sold. One of his brothers may redeem him, ⁴⁹or his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or one of his blood relatives from his family may redeem him; or if he prospers, he may redeem himself. ⁵⁰He then with his purchaser shall calculate from the year when he sold himself to him up to the year of jubilee; and the price of his sale shall correspond to the number of years. It is like the days of a hired man that he shall be with him. ⁵¹If there are still many years, he shall refund part of his purchase price in proportion to them for his own redemption; ⁵²and if few years remain until the year of jubilee, he shall so calculate with him. In proportion to his years he is to refund the amount for his redemption. ⁵³Like a man hired year by year he shall be with him; he shall not rule over him with severity in your sight. ⁵⁴Even if he is not redeemed by these means, he shall still go out in the year of jubilee, he and his sons with him. ⁵⁵For the sons of Israel are My servants; they are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God. Lev 25:47-55

⁵When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. ⁶It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. ⁷But if the man does not desire to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to establish a name for his brother in Israel; he is not willing to perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.' ⁸Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak to him. And if he persists and says, 'I do not desire to take her,' ⁹then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, 'Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' ¹⁰In Israel his name shall be called, 'The house of him whose sandal is removed.' Deut 25:5-10

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

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

- 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.

Parallels Between Ruth and the Excellent (Virtuous) Woman of Prov 31 (From the MacArthur Study Bible)

¹⁰An **excellent** wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. Prov 31:10

¹¹"Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of **excellence**. Ruth 3:11

1. Devoted to her family.

¹⁶But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back 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 I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me." Ruth 1:16-17

¹⁰An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. ¹¹The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain. ¹²She does him good and not evil All the days of her life. ... ²³Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land. Prov 31:10-12, 23

2. Delighting in her work

²And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." Ruth 2:2

¹³She looks for wool and flax And works with her hands in delight. Prov 31:13

3. Diligent in her labor

⁷"And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while." ... ¹⁷So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. ... ²³So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law. Ruth 2:7, 17, 23

¹⁴She is like merchant ships; She brings her food from afar. ¹⁵She rises also while it is still night And gives food to her household And portions to her maidens. ¹⁶She considers a field and buys it; From her earnings she plants a vineyard. ¹⁷She girds herself with strength And makes her arms strong. ¹⁸She senses that her gain is good; Her lamp does not go out at night. ¹⁹She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hands grasp the spindle. ²⁰She extends her hand to the poor, And she stretches out her hands to the needy. ²¹She is not afraid of the snow for her household, For all her household are clothed with scarlet. ... ²⁴She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies belts to the tradesmen. ... ²⁷She looks well to the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness. Prov 31:14-21, 24, 27

4. Dedicated to godly speech.

¹⁰Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?" ... ¹³Then she said, "I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants." Ruth 2:10, 13

²⁶She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. Prov 31:26

5. Dependent on God.

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." Ruth 2:12

^{25b}And she smiles at the future. . . . ³⁰Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. Prov 31:25, 30

6. Dressed with care.

³"Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. Ruth 3:3

²²She makes coverings for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple. . . . ²⁵Strength and dignity are her clothing, Prov 31: 22, 25a

7. Discreet with men.

⁶So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her. ⁷When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁸It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet. ⁹He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative." ¹⁰Then he said, "May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich. ¹¹"Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence. ¹²"Now it is true I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. ¹³"Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning." Ruth 3:6-13

¹⁰An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. ¹¹The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain. ¹²She does him good and not evil All the days of her life. . . . ²³Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land. Prov 31:10-12, 23

8. Delivering blessings.

¹⁴Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. ¹⁵"May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." Ruth 4:14-15

²⁸Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her, saying: ²⁹"Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all." ³⁰Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. ³¹Give her the product of her hands, And let her works praise her in the gates. Prov 31:28-31

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 uses 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.

Homework

1. Reread Ruth.
2. Read 1 and 2 Samuel
3. Answer the following questions:
 - What are David's character traits (good or bad)?
 - In what way is he a "man after God's own heart"?