



Ruth

Survey Of The Book Of Ruth

A Review of Ruth's Bright Day Of Salvation!

Storing Up Treasures:

Discovering The Rich Teaching Of Scripture



The Book Of Ruth

Two books in the Bible bear the names of women: Ruth and Esther. Both of these heroines were great and good women. Here, however, the similarity ends. Ruth was a young Moabite girl who came to live with the Israelites. Esther was a Jewess who lived in faraway Persia. A marriage figures prominently in both books. Ruth married a wealthy Israelite farmer and became part of the royal line of David. Esther married a foreign king and became a queen. Ruth knew the discipline of field work. Esther was pampered with beauty treatments in the royal harem. The books named for these women are a contrast as well. They differ in size (four chapters vs. ten) and the degree to which the heroine is involved in the story.

The Outline Of Ruth

Warren Wiersbe presents a memorable outline to the book of Ruth. Please do note that the Biblical principle announced in James 4:10 is illustrated in the outline of Ruth, *"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."* (James 4:10). Humility precedes exaltation (Philippians 2:1-11)! Surrender precedes satisfaction!

I. Ruth's Sorrow (1)

- A. Naomi's wrong decision (1:1-5)
- B. Naomi's wrong counsel (1:6-18)
- C. Naomi's wrong attitude (1:19-22)

II. Ruth's Service (2)

- A. God guides Ruth (2:1-3)
- B. Boaz shows kindness to Ruth (2:4-16)
- C. Naomi encourages Ruth (2:17-23)

III. Ruth's Surrender (3)

- A. She obeys Naomi's counsel (3:1-5)
- B. She submits to Boaz (3:6-13)
- C. She waits for Boaz to work (3:14-18)

IV. Ruth's Satisfaction (4)

- A. Boaz redeems Ruth (4:1-12)
- B. Boaz marries Ruth (4:13)
- C. Boaz and Ruth have a son (4:14-21)

An Interlude Of Love

One author called the book of Ruth, “an interlude of love,” and it is. It is a beautiful melody that can be heard over the caustic sounds emanating from the Judges. The book of Ruth is set against the backdrop of some of the darkest days in the history of Israel—the days of the Judges (Ruth 1:1). The very last verse in the book of Judges that sets up the book of Ruth says, *“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”* (Judges 21:25). These were dark days for Israel when there was no national fervor to seek after God and His way. Rather, everybody was doing their own thing. And there was apostasy. There was idolatry, and there was a lot of sin in the land. And, it’s during these dark days that the light of love was made manifest. Ruth is a love story, and a love story on several planes.



Love Between In-Laws. It’s first of all, a love story between a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law. In fact, you could even say that one of the main points of the book of Ruth is that we need to learn to get along with our in-laws. Ruth’s love, and especially, her loyalty to her mother-in-law is one of the most powerful love stories you’ll ever read about and we’ll talk more about that in our next lesson.

Love Between A Man & A Woman. On another level, this is a love story that Hollywood would salivate over. A love story between a powerful, rich, esteemed man and a poor, peasant girl, that catches his eye! Ruth becomes to Boaz a precious wife.

Love Between God & Man. Underneath both those love stories there is another love story. It is a love story between a great God and little people. You see, the book of Ruth is essentially about the theme of *redemption*. In fact, in the Hebrew language, the verb for *“redeem”* is found 23 times in four chapters! In Ruth the student learns about *why* and *how* God redeems people. Most of the time when people talk about redemption they do word studies and the etymologies and they’ll tell you that redemption is a transaction where someone wants something and he has to pay a price and pay the debt and the property is switched. But, the book of Ruth says that redemption is not essentially a business transaction. It is essentially a love story! A love story about a great God and little people.



Whosoever Will, May Come

For the second time in the historical books the principle is established that those who were far off from the covenant promises could become part of the family of God through obedient faith. Rahab the Canaanite and Ruth the Moabite demonstrate that those who cried out to Yahweh for refuge found a loving welcome.

It is possible to live for God in the darkest circumstances. Boaz was loyal to God while surrounded by immorality and idolatry. Materially and socially speaking, Ruth had everything to lose and nothing to gain by casting her lot with the people of God. Yet she chose Jehovah. Although God's grace is free and open to all, it can save only those who make it theirs by an act of deliberate choice.



Seeing The Savior

Hearing The Message Of The Bible



Our Kinsman Redeemer!

One of the most valuable things about the story of Ruth is how it pictures our salvation in Christ. There are two terms one must understand to appreciate the book of Ruth. One of these is the Hebrew word "**Levir.**" The story of Ruth contains one of only two examples in the Old Testament of Levirate marriage.

Levirate Marriage

Levirate marriage was a practice among the Hebrews of a brother or near-relative marrying the widow of a deceased family member so that the name of the deceased could be continued. And the Hebrews took this quite seriously (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

The Mosaic economy depended on the decentralized control of land and the continuation of the family line. The land that was given to a family was to stay in that family, so that the future heirs would have just that, a future! In fact, they even had a practice called Jubilee, where every 50 years, regardless of what had happened to the land, it went back to the original family that owned it. This is how the economy of the Hebrews was to continue. And so, under their system a man's name became a bad name of he would not perpetuate his brother's name. That is, if he wouldn't see to it that family land stayed with the family and that the brother's name continued so that the heirs would have a future.

It is important to note that Levirate marriage existed among the Hebrews before the Law of Moses was given. The other example is in Genesis 38. The story is of Judah, the son of Jacob, who had three sons. The first son marries a woman named Tamar. But the Bible says he was wicked so the Lord took his life. His brother was to perpetuate the dead brother's name, but Onan didn't want to do that. So, the Lord took his life also. Now, at this point Judah doesn't want to give the third boy to Tamar because he figures,

“She is very bad luck.” So, Judah keeps the third son from her. Yet, Tamar eventually tricks Judah. There is an incestuous union, and the result is a child who actually becomes a part of the Davidic line through which Jesus was born.

The Hebrews have this in their background and they know how important it is to perpetuate the line of the family. That’s why Naomi tried to talk the two Moabite daughters-in-law out of coming back to Judah with her (Ruth 1:11-13). She says to them, “If you come back with me you’ve got no future. If you come back with me you’re looking at perhaps perpetual widowhood and a life of poverty. I’ve got no family that you can marry.” So Ruth left Moab and come with Naomi with the very real prospect that she would live her life in poverty.

But, Boaz became that near-relative for Ruth, and secured for her an inheritance that far exceeded anything she could have on her own. On her own, she gleaned the scraps on the side of a field. Through her marriage Boaz she could take the best from fields in the middle of the field.

The other word that we need to know to understand Ruth is the Hebrew word **“Goel.”** The primary idea of “goel” is of a kinsman who rescues or redeems a relative from trouble. And the law of Moses spells out several things that a “goel” was supposed to do. He was to buy back property that a family member had to sell. If you got so poor you had to sell yourself into slavery, the “goel,” the near-kinsmen, would come and he could redeem you, thereby purchasing your freedom. The “goel” had a very important role in Hebrew culture. The significance of the “goel” was that, by his covenant loyalty to his family, he was demonstrating to Israel something of the character of their covenant with God.

Goel

The kinsman redeemer (*goel*), and the Levirate marriage in Ruth is taken to be a type of Christ. Ruth demonstrates that the coming *goel* must (1) be a blood relative; (2) have the wherewithal to purchase the forfeited inheritance; (3) be willing to buy back that inheritance; and (4) be willing to marry the wife of a deceased kinsman. All these shadows are fulfilled in Christ. To redeem us He had to **“partake of flesh and blood”** (Hebrews 2:14). He willingly paid the price that we could not pay to buy our freedom and give us our inheritance we lost by fleeing from the will of God. And then He became our husband, loving us, providing for us, purifying us, as a husband loves a wife (Ephesians 5:22-33). The book of Ruth teaches us that Redemption is not a business transaction, it is a love story!

My Redeemer Lives!

The Family Tree

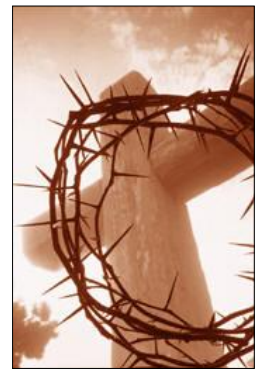
The genealogy at the end of Ruth deserves special attention. Such genealogies in Scripture remind the reader of “the continuity of God’s purpose through the ages.” Behind the romantic short story is the genealogy of Messiah. Thus the author relates to his readers the long-range consequence of Ruth’s devotion to Naomi and her God. Her faith and love put her into the direct line of the Messiah.

“Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, ²²Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.” (Ruth 4:21-22). **“Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh”** (Romans 1:3).



What It Takes To Redeem

The story has a happy ending for Naomi and for Ruth, but it has an even happier ending for us, because we can see the big picture they could not see. Out of this *simple* union of these two *ordinary* people comes a child that will be the grandfather of David. Behind the *ordinary* events in the lives of *ordinary* people of God is working His purposes out. And those purposes center in another Baby Redeemer that is going to be born in Bethlehem. The story of Ruth as one of the purest and clearest illustrations in all of the Old Testament of what it means to have a redeemer. There are some things about Boaz that shed light on who Jesus Christ is in our lives.



A Redeemer Must Be Related. A study of Ruth reveals the significance of the incarnation. By birth, Jesus became a kinsman. We could not be redeemed if Jesus was unwilling or unable to join the human family. God knew this, and that's why very first prophecy in the Old Testament is of a Seed that would be born to woman (Genesis 3:15; see also Galatians 4:4-5). The reason Jesus Christ could redeem was because Jesus became apart of the human family.

“For *there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,*⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all.” (1 Timothy 2:5-6)
“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise *shared* in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Hebrews 2:14-15)

The initiation of the work of redemption involved Jesus taking on the likeness of man. And that is why the story of the birth of Jesus is so important. Because in that birth He received a name that He could never worn if He had stayed in heaven. A name He had to come to earth to get, the name, Redeemer! A Redeemer must be related.

A Redeemer Must Be Willing. No law could force a kinsman to do what love did not prompt. If a kinsman decided it wasn't worth the risk. If a kinsman decided, “I just don't love these people enough to put up with what I'm going to have to put up with.” Then you could not force a kinsman to redeem. And just like Boaz, the Lord Jesus did not redeem because He had to. He redeemed because He chose to.

“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.¹⁸ “No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of *Myself*. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” (John 10:17-18)

From a Biblical perspective, we are all a race of Moabites! We're all Gentiles, outside of communion and the community of God. Why in the world would Jesus take the risk? I'm sure when the plan from heaven was announced there must have been some angels thinking to themselves, “It's not worth it. The risk is too great. You're going to go down there and pay the awful price of redemption and they are going to turn their backs on You. They're going to curse You. Even many who say they accept You will be only nominal in their faith. They're going to live for their own selfish agendas. They're not going to put You first. It's not worth the risk!! So, why?”

And the answer would have come back, “Because I so passionately love the ones that need redeeming” (Hebrews 12:2).

A Redeemer Must Be Just. Boaz could not redeem until the rightful claim of another was legally met. That's why he had to have 10 witnesses. Because under Jewish law, if there weren't 10 witnesses it wasn't legal. There was a claim on you that had to be met too! Sin had a claim on you and me and the claim had to be paid. And the claim was simple and awful. Romans 6:23 says plainly, "*The wages of sin is death.*" There's got to be a penalty for sin, or God is not the moral ruler of the universe. You cannot ask God to divert His justice to show you His love. He could not do that and still be God. God cannot dismiss your debt. He can only transfer it to someone else. So the Bible says in Romans 3,

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the *redemption* that is in Christ Jesus,²⁵ whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,²⁶ to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be **just** and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." Romans 3:23-26

God had a dilemma. His love wanted to reach out to sinners. His justice demanded that the penalty of death be paid. God could not push His justice aside to give us His love. And so, God said, "In order to demonstrate my justice I will offer redemption through the death and the blood of My Son."

A Redeemer Must Be Free. And number four, a Redeemer must be free. You see, a redeemer cannot pay a debt if He is in debt. He cannot free if He is enslaved. Boaz could not redeem Ruth and Naomi if he was in debt. He could not free them if He was in bondage. That's why no man could be our redeemer. The Bible says in Psalm 49:7 says, "*None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him.*" A man in debt cannot pay someone else's debt.

The reason Jesus could redeem was because He is not implicated in man's sin in any way! One of the most powerful things Jesus ever said is found in John 8:46, when He was being criticized by the Pharisees. He looked them right in the eye and said, "*Can any of you convict, prove Me guilty of sin?*"

Just as Boaz had to have 10 witnesses so did Christ, and these 10 witnesses were the 10 commandments of God. And they were called on to testify. And one by one the witnesses all said, "He is without guilt." "*And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin.*" (1 John 3:5). "*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*" (2 Cor. 5:21).

A Redeemer Must Be Able. A redeemer can be willing, he can be related, he can have the very best of intentions, but if He doesn't have what it takes to meet the debt He cannot redeem. What it was going to take to redeem you was not gold and silver. What it was going to take to redeem you was not hard work and effort. What it was going to take to redeem you was not countless petitions and prayers. What it was going to take was innocent life!

"knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,*¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

The thing that matters is "Are you in Christ or not?" Ruth's story had a happy ending because she found rest in her redeemer. In many ways, Ruth's story is our story.