

Foreword

A passage of particular importance for children of God is given by Jesus in John 8:31–32: “If ye continue in my word, then ye are my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” It means that few things are more important for Christians than to *continue* in the word of God—that is, to study the word of God, to know it, and to live according to it.

For this the studies of Rev. Haak are most valuable. Carefully and thoroughly they carry one through the primary thought of scripture, laying out its meaning by means of careful comparisons with multiple parallel passages, comparing scripture with scripture in a way that good Bible study should always be done.

There is something appealing about the book of Ruth—if for no other reason than its simplicity. A small book, it appears quite unpretentiously after the book of Judges and before the books of Samuel. Judges is important in its history, carrying us through the first four hundred years following Israel’s entrance into Canaan; while Samuel records the establishment of Israel’s kings. And there, nestled between them, is the account of this simple peasant girl, Ruth, an immigrant from Moab, hardly a noble distinction in a land of people who boasted in their genealogies and birth.

But that is its beauty, its attractiveness to us; for we are all Ruths at heart, foreigners and strangers brought into the covenant kingdom by the overwhelming grace of God. How readily we can identify with her.

We find in Ruth an example of true continuing in God’s word, that is, we find this simple peasant girl listening to the word of God as she had learned it from her husband and from her mother-in-law, doing whatever the scriptures required of her, until at last she found her rest with godly Boaz, the

great-grandfather of David. Her story could only anticipate that glorious song one of her descendants would sing in what we now know as the *Magnificat*:

1. My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
2. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
3. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.
4. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. (Luke 1:47–50)

All of this was anticipated and provided for in that beautiful confession that expressed Ruth's deepest commitment so well: "I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

May all who engage in these studies find this same truth echoed in their souls, so that her God is our God as well.

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Lesson 1

Overview of Ruth

Introduction

The story of Ruth took place at the time “the judges ruled” (1:1), the time between Joshua and the conquest of Canaan (1450 BC) and Israel’s cry for a king, the first of which was Saul (1050 BC). Exactly when did the history of Ruth take place? There are two major views. Some say that Ruth lived during the days of the Midianite invasions, and thus she was a contemporary of Gideon (Judges 6). The Midianites would invade Israel during the harvest season, and this would explain the famine that caused Elimelech to leave the country. Others place Ruth near the end of the period of the judges because of the genealogy given in chapter 4:18–22. If there are no missing links, Boaz would be David’s great-grandfather, and thus Ruth would have lived at the end of the time of the judges. This is probably correct.

The human instrument or author (unknown) evidently lived and wrote this history sometime during the reign of David. It appears that David was well known, and the book could conceivably have been written to fill in the history of David’s genealogy. That the book was actually written sometime after the life of Ruth is also indicated in the author’s explanation of the custom of ratifying a legal transaction by giving up one’s shoe (4:7). This custom must have been unknown to the readers of the author’s time.

Significances of the Book

The book of Ruth traces the line of Christ, specifically the line of David, showing David’s descent from Ruth the Moabitess.

Repeatedly the Old Testament scriptures show the marvel of God's preserving the line of Christ (seed of the woman, Gen. 3:15) in humanly impossible ways. The Savior comes from God's grace.

Ruth shows the universality of Christ's church. Ruth was a type of the gathering of the Gentiles in due time to Christ, even as we are grafted in (Rom. 11).

Ruth gives us lessons in true faith, love of God, trust and sincere regard for our Christian duties. That is, it gives us lessons in godliness as those lessons are written by grace in Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz.

Ruth teaches us the working of God's providence as he works all things together for good to those who love him. Careful study will give us eyes to see God's fatherly providence in our private concerns and to acknowledge God in all our ways (1 Sam. 2:7-8; Ps. 113:7-9).

Ruth also teaches us the beautiful idea of redemption. Boaz was the redeemer, the one who acted as a kinsman. The whole idea of redemption seen in Boaz, who redeemed Elimelech's inheritance and Ruth, was a picture of our redemption by Jesus Christ.

Outline

Chapter 1: Ruth comes to Bethlehem

Verses 1-7: Introduction to and setting of the book

Verses 8-18: Ruth's determination to stay with Naomi

Verses 19-22: The return to Bethlehem

Chapter 2: Ruth meets Boaz

Verses 1-7: Ruth gleans in the fields

Verses 8-16: The kindness of Boaz

Verses 17-23: Ruth returns to Naomi

Chapter 3: Ruth's appeal to Boaz

Verses 1-5: Naomi's advice

Verses 6-13: Ruth speaks to Boaz

Verses 14-18: Ruth returns to Naomi

Chapter 4: The marriage of Boaz and Ruth

Verses 1-8: The kinsman

Verses 9-12: Boaz takes Ruth

Verses 13-17: Ruth bears a son

Verses 18-22: The ancestry of David

Study Questions and Activities

1. Read the entire book of Ruth.
2. Do you see in the book of Ruth the five points under significances of the book?
3. Do you find other major themes in the book?
4. Why did the Holy Spirit include the book of Ruth in the Bible?
5. Compare the account of Ruth (the spiritual climate of Boaz, Naomi, and Ruth) with the account of Samson (Judges 13–16) and with the story of Micah's image (Judges 17–18). Both give us a glimpse of life during the time of the judges. How do they differ?
6. History and geography
 - a. What are the distinguishing characteristics of the period of the judges?
 - b. Where is Moab?
 - c. Where is Bethlehem?

- d. What is an Ephrathite?

- e. When did the barley harvest take place?

- f. What were the Old Testament laws on gleaning (Deut. 24:19–21; Lev. 19:10)?

- g. Research the idea of a kinsman or a redeemer (Deut. 25:5–10; Lev. 25:25–34).

- h. Research the idea of one’s inheritance in Canaan.

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