

**Carl J. Haak**

*Studies in*  
**RUTH**

Second Edition



**REFORMED**  
FREE PUBLISHING  
*ASSOCIATION*  
Jenison, Michigan



©1993, 2014 Reformed Free Publishing Association

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews

Scripture cited is taken from the Authorized (King James) Version

Second edition 2014

Reformed Free Publishing Association  
1894 Georgetown Center Drive  
Jenison, Michigan 49428-7137  
[www.rfpa.org](http://www.rfpa.org)  
[mail@rfpa.org](mailto:mail@rfpa.org)

Book design and typesetting by Erika Kiel

ISBN 978-1-936054-49-7

# 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.

**Bernard J. Woudenberg**

# 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.

## References

- Cruden, Alexander. *Cruden’s Complete Concordance*.
- Douglas, J. D. *New Bible Dictionary*.
- Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*.
- Heys, John A. 1983. “Our Sure Salvation.” *Standard Bearer* 59 (16): 371–73.
- . 1987. “A Certain Failure.” *Standard Bearer* 63 (16): 381–82, 368, 380.
- . 1987. “Turned in God’s Mercy.” *Standard Bearer* 63 (17): 402–4.
- . 1987. “The Choice of Faith.” *Standard Bearer* 63 (20): 469–71.
- . 1987. “True Faith Manifested by a Work of Love.” *Standard Bearer* 63 (21): 489–91.



- . 1987. “Brought Home by a Sanctifying Grace.” *Standard Bearer* 64 (1): 14–16.
- . 1987. “Saving Grace Breaking through the Clouds.” *Standard Bearer* 64 (2): 58–60.
- . 1987. “A Search for Rest.” *Standard Bearer* 64 (4): 85–87.
- . 1988. “Assurance for a Virtuous Woman.” *Standard Bearer* 64 (7): 152–54.
- . 1988. “A Nameless and Shoeless Kinsman.” *Standard Bearer* 64 (8): 177–80.
- . 1988. “A Wife Taken and Salvation Given.” *Standard Bearer* 64 (9): 206–9.
- . 1988. “God’s Promise Faithfully Kept.” *Standard Bearer* 64 (10): 233–36.

Smith, William. *Smith’s Bible Dictionary*.

Young, Robert. *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*.

# **Trust and Obey**

## **Ruth 1:1–18**

### **Introduction**

Under Joshua’s guidance the land of Canaan had been divided among the twelve tribes (Josh. 13–19). Every family had its own inheritance, within which the family was to continue to live in its generations (Num. 36:7; 1 Kings 21:3). This represented the Lord’s gracious care for them, and their inclusion in the covenantal rest of God (Ps. 16:5–6). Yet sometimes the faith of the Israelites grew weak, especially when outward circumstances of famine and apostasy were heavy, and when they severed that link with their inheritance. This was unbelief, a lack of steadfastness, and an unwillingness to bow under the judgment upon the land and to await the time of deliverance.

The book of Ruth opens with the history of Elimelech and his family. These were true, believing children of God who had never shared in the idolatry and wickedness that had become so predominant in the nation as a whole. But this does not mean that the wickedness of the day did not have its effect upon them. In the midst of a famine, Elimelech moved his family to Moab. Did he believe it was only a temporary move? No doubt he did. Yet under the distress of the famine upon his family (Mahlon—“sickness” and Chilion—“wasting”), he severed his tie with his holy inheritance. This was sin.

The Lord is faithful to chasten and to work in all of this his own gracious purpose, namely, the bringing in of Ruth as a mother in the line of Christ. This did not excuse Elimelech, but showed God’s power and grace. Elimelech died in Moab. His sons, after marrying Moabite women, also died. Thus

after ten or more years, Naomi was left a poor widow, living with her two daughters-in-law (Isa. 47:9).

Naomi decided to return to Judah, for she had heard that the Lord had granted deliverance and bread to his people. She urged her daughters-in-law to turn back. But Ruth revealed the work of God's love in her heart, implanted by the faith-testimony of her mother-in-law. She was bound to Israel's God and desired to live with God's people. She returned with Naomi.

### **Study Questions and Activities**

1. Why did Elimelech take his family to Moab?
2. What did the famine indicate (Deut. 28:15–18)?
3. Was Elimelech's action justifiable? Why or why not?
4. Are there similar examples of this same thing in the Old Testament (Gen. 12)?
5. In what ways do we show that we are more concerned about the needs of our earthly life than with what we need spiritually?
6. How do we sometimes attempt to escape the cross laid in our way by changing our place rather than to take up that cross as we ought?

7. Was the death of Naomi's husband and sons a punishment?
  
8. Should Naomi have encouraged her daughters-in-law to return with her so they could be with believers?
  
9. Explain why she handled the situation the way she did.
  
10. Give a character sketch of Naomi. Did she have self-pity, bitterness, godliness, a loving heart?
  
11. Study in names

Name	Meaning	Significance
Elimelech (1:2)		
Naomi (1:2)		
Mahlon (1:2)		
Chilion (1:2)		
Ruth (1:4)		
Mara (1:20)		

12. Ruth's beautiful confession (1:16–17)
  - a. Give the main points of her confession.

- b. Find other powerful confessions in scripture, such as of Peter, Joshua, and others.
  
  - c. Is Ruth's confession appropriate for weddings? Why or why not?
  
  - d. What does Ruth's confession teach us about the bonds between us as Christian sisters and brothers?
13. Write your profession. Thinking and writing can strengthen faith. Using scripture's pattern and words is helpful.

---

“And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.”—Ruth 1:16–17

## Lesson 3

# Naomi-Mara: Jehovah, Plenteous in Mercy

**Ruth 1:19–2:17**

### **Introduction**

In a sense we can call Naomi a prodigal daughter (Luke 15:11–32). She left her spiritual Father’s house and lived for ten years in a place where he did not reveal himself in his love in Christ. And she did return to Bethlehem-Judah, even as the prodigal son returned to his father’s house. She returned because she realized there was no other place on earth where she could find blessedness. By God’s grace her return was in the way of acknowledging her sin and her Lord’s faithful chastening of her (Ruth 1:20–21). Naomi’s bitterness was not resentment toward God. Nor when she said, “The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me,” did she accuse God of cruelty. Rather her bitterness was the knowledge of sin and its effects. She saw her afflictions as the loving rod of God (Heb. 12:6). In all her actions and words she showed a spirit of humbleness before God and of submission to the afflictions she had received (1 Pet. 5:5–6). This contains many lessons for us.

Jehovah is plenteous in mercy (Ps. 86:5, 15; Ps. 103:8). Already in Naomi’s return, and then in the material provisions God supplied, we begin to see the hand of God’s grace. This was not a bitter deed of God, but a most pleasant work of God, and both Ruth and Naomi began to see that God was taking care of them in his grace. The Lord had not forsaken Elimelech’s family because of their unbelief but in his mercy would restore. What if there were no mercy with God? We would all lose our portion in his covenant due to our faithlessness. But God maintains our lot and inheritance (Ps. 16).

Rev. J. Heys makes an important observation.

What is striking is the fact that Naomi with her husband and sons left Bethlehem-Judah, for earthly bread during a famine, and came back with a Moabitess who was seeking spiritual bread. This daughter-in-law, Ruth, sought the bread of life. Ruth came for spiritual reasons.

Ruth displayed that indeed she was a true child of God in her care for her mother-in-law, her humility (to glean was to beg, Luke 16:1–12), her industry, and in her trust in God’s providence to lead her. Boaz recognized this in words of blessing to her in chapter 2:12: “Under whose wings thou art come to trust.”

Boaz honored the covenant of God. His faith in God hallowed his life as a master toward his servants and as a man among God’s people. Ruth’s love for God’s covenant touched Boaz, and he promised her freedom and protection in his fields.

Truly, those who wait upon the Lord shall not be ashamed. Bitterness over sin leads to the wondrous joy in the covenantal mercy of God, who not only puts away our sin and restores us again but also gives us to trust in his mercy to make straight our way.

### **Study Questions and Activities**

1. Why did Naomi’s return cause such a stir in the city?
2. What do you think is meant by the question, “Is this Naomi?” (Lack of recognition, surprise, contempt, compassion on her poverty, or \_\_\_\_\_?)
3. Though Naomi called herself Mara, she did not express bitterness. What spirit did she express toward God and her present condition?

4. Note in verses 20–21 that Naomi referred to God twice as Almighty and twice as Lord (Jehovah). What is the significance?
5. When Naomi spoke of being full and empty, was she speaking in earthly or spiritual terms?
6. Is it often the case when earthly needs are abundantly satisfied that we are spiritually lacking and vice versa?
  - a. Why?
  - b. Give examples from scripture or your own life.
7. Naomi was a picture of the child of God under affliction and patience under it (Rom. 5:3–5; Phil. 4:11). Discuss this statement: It is not affliction itself, but how affliction is borne, that does us good.
8. Give the meaning and significance of the name Boaz.
9. Much can be learned in Ruth regarding practical godliness. Identify, explain, and apply these virtues in Ruth.
  - a. Humility



- b. Industry
  
  - c. Devotion to parents
  
  - d. Trust in God's providence
10. How are we to depend upon, and live in the light of, God's providence?
11. Boaz and his servants exchanged salutations (Ps. 129:7–8).
- a. What salutations did they exchange?
  
  - b. What is the significance?
  
  - c. Should we use such salutations?
12. Boaz showed kindness to Ruth.
- a. Why did he show kindness?

b. In what ways did he show kindness?

c. What does this tell us?

---

“The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.”  
—Ruth 2:12