

**LECTURE 9**  
**RUTH OVERVIEW**  
**REDEEMER'S HISTORY**

**INTRODUCTION**

**1. Name**

The book receives its name from its principal character, Ruth, a Moabite woman who showed remarkable loyalty to her Israelite mother-in-law. Ruth's name is not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament. It may mean "refreshment" or "comfort" which would fit her character well.

Two books in the Bible are named after women: Ruth and Esther. Although both are portrayed as heroines, their characters and circumstances are contrasting.

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 Book of Ruth is the only instance in the Bible in which an entire book is devoted to a woman.<sup>1</sup>

**2. Theme**

Redemption and rest. Gareth Crossley states the theme as, "A stranger brought into the family of God."<sup>2</sup>

**3. Purpose**

To demonstrate the legitimacy of David's kingship despite his Moabite ancestress, Ruth.<sup>3</sup>

**4. Key verses**

*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).*

*And the women and her neighbors gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David (Ruth 4:17).*

**5. Key truths**

- God's providence is sometimes harsh, but in the end he works for the blessing of his people.
- Familial love and devotion that are guided by God's law bring joy and happiness.
- David's family was God's chosen, honorable, royal line<sup>4</sup>

**I. AUTHOR**

The book is anonymous. The Talmud identifies Samuel as the author, but he probably lived too early since King David appears in 4:17,22 and Samuel died before David's coronation. We assume the writer was a prophet of the Lord. He interpreted providence (1:6; 4:13) and promoted covenant values. His work climaxes in the genealogy which led to the Davidic monarchy, thus pointing towards the Messiah.

<sup>1</sup> J E Smith, *The Books of History* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), Electronic Edition.

<sup>2</sup> G Crossley, *The Old Testament Explained and Applied* (England: Evangelical Press, 2002), 217.

<sup>3</sup> *Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 380.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 380.

## II. DATE

### A. CRITICAL VIEW

Critical scholars view the book as a post-exilic polemic which argues against Nehemiah's marriage reforms, forbidding the marriage of foreign wives. However the book does not have a polemical tone and the kinsman who refuses to marry Ruth is presented as an unworthy character who ought to be ashamed of himself.

Critics also allege significant Aramaic influence in the book which would fit 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC. However, recent research into Aramaic has undermined this view with evidence suggesting that there were Aramaic influences on Hebrew from the beginning.

Critical scholars point to the "kinsman-redeemer" procedure as something which belonged to "earlier times" (4:7) as implying a substantial time lapse between the events and the composition of the book. However, the time lapse need not be hundreds of years. Critical scholars are bound to a post-exilic composition for Deuteronomy which lays down the laws for the kinsman-redeemer. As Ruth is dependent on Deuteronomy, this necessitates post-exilic authorship of Ruth for them.

Finally, the fact that Ruth appears in the Hebrew canon under "The Writings" does not prove post-exilic authorship since these five books (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther) are grouped for practical not chronological purposes.

These books are read by the Jews at annual feasts or holidays of the Jewish calendar. The harvest field setting of Ruth makes it an appropriate liturgy for the harvest festival (Pentecost).<sup>5</sup>

### B. EVANGELICAL VIEW

#### 1. The Events

The book's events took place during the time of the Judges (1:1). Since Boaz was the great grandfather of David we might estimate a date around 1130 BC. Many scholars date the events to the judgeship of Jair (c. 1148-1126 BC).

#### 2. The Composition

As the book refers to the time of the Judges, and as there are literary connections to the book of Judges (see below), it may be deduced that it was written at the same time as Judges, early in the Davidic monarchy.

##### a. Earliest date

The genealogies at the end of the book trace Ruth's ancestry to David (Ruth 4:17b, 22) and so it must be assumed that David was well-known. Therefore, the earliest likely date for final composition is around about the beginning of David's reign.

##### b. Latest date

It seems most likely that the genealogies in Ruth extended to the king who reigned in the time of final composition. If this is so, the book came to its final form during David's reign. There was certainly a need for the book during David's reign.

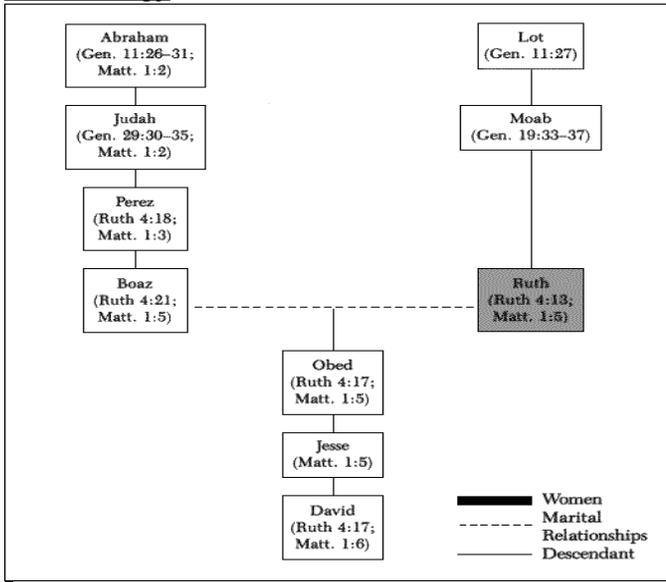
First, supporters of the house of Saul likely viewed David as a royal interloper and so his kingship needed "legitimation." Second, foreigners were a large part of David's power base. Ruth, a paradigm of a foreigner's commitment to Israel and Yahweh, would serve such a situation well. Foreigners who adopt Yahweh and outdo the Israelites in *hesed* merit acceptance as full-fledged Israelites.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> I L Jensen, *Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 164.

<sup>6</sup> R Dillard and T Longman III, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 131.

**III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS**

**1. Genealogy**



Gathering the facts from Ruth 4:18-22 and 1 Chron.2:1-15 we might tabulate the Davidic genealogy as follows:

<b>Patriarchs</b>	Abraham – Isaac – Jacob – Judah
<b>Egypt</b>	Perez – Hezron – Ram – Amminadab – Nahshon
<b>Conquest and Judges</b>	Salmon – Boaz – Obed – Jesse – David

The genealogy lends legitimacy to King David’s rule by linking Obed with David. It begins with Perez (Gen.38:27-30), the son of Judah by Tamar (who also had to overcome obstacles in order to continue the family line).

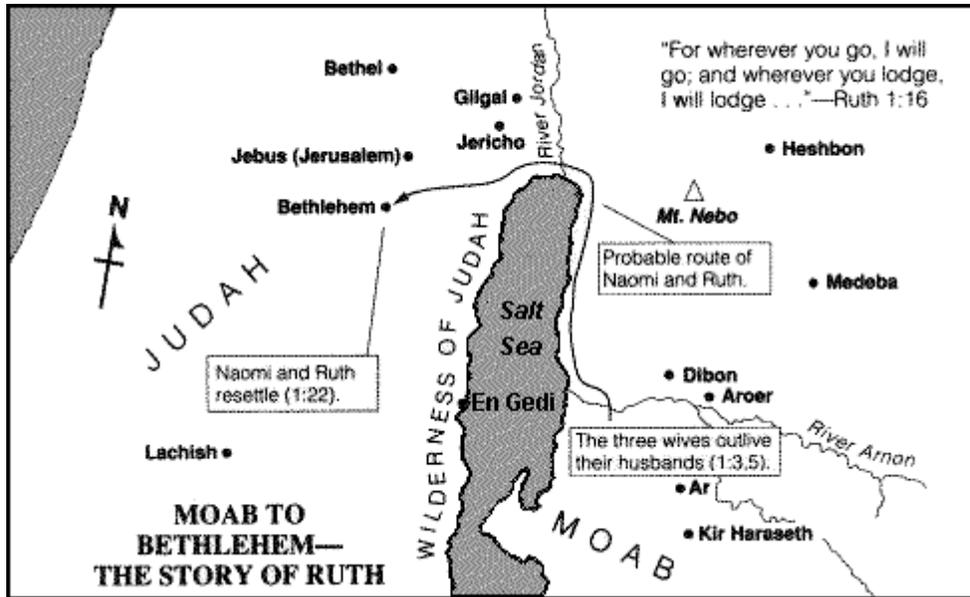
Although sometimes seen as a later addition to the book, this genealogy fits the immediate literary and theological context. It balances the “family history” of the introduction (1:1-5), it confirms the blessings of 4:11b-12, and it shows how the characters are rewarded for their faithfulness.

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.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Nelson’s complete book of Bible maps and charts (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), Electronic Edition.

<sup>8</sup> J E Smith, *The Books of History* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), Electronic Edition.

## 2. Geography



The book of Ruth begins in the land of Moab, a pastoral area east of the Dead Sea, where the family of Elimelech had moved to escape famine in their native Judah. The Moabites were descended from Lot and so they were distantly related to the Israelites. However, at times it was hostile to the Israelites. It was also idolatrous with its major god being Chemosh.

## 3. Legal customs

The author of Ruth seems to assume knowledge of the laws and customs of the book of Ruth. Especially prominent is the institution of "Levirate" marriage and the related laws of redemption.

### a. Levirate Marriage

Ruth and Boaz are brought together through the law of levirate marriage as found in Deuteronomy 25:5–10, where a widow's brother-in-law is obligated to marry her and father a son for her, in order for his dead brother's name to continue. In Ruth, this law seems to be extended beyond the brother-in-law to requiring the next of kin to marry the widow. Any children resulting carried the name and received the inheritance of the former husband. Since Naomi was beyond childbearing years, her daughter-in-law Ruth became her substitute in marriage and bore a son to perpetuate the family name. The question arises as to why the nearest kinsman refused.

Acquiring the field would have been a significant expansion of the closer relative's own property. Marriage to Naomi would have been no problem, since she was beyond child-bearing years and the estate for his own children would not be further divided. But when Boaz substituted Ruth for Naomi, thus fulfilling the spirit of the law, the closer relative was unwilling to act as kinsman (4:6). An additional wife of child-bearing years would fragment his estate and jeopardize his own family. We may assume he was not a man of unlimited resources.<sup>9</sup>

Mention is made of the custom of taking off a shoe to symbolize the renunciation of one's claims. Obviously, this custom no longer applied when the book was written (Ruth.4:7). It did apply, however, in the period of the Judges, and also, in the earlier Mosaic period (Deut.25:9,10).

### b. Redemption

The Levirate marriage in Ruth seems also to involve the laws of redemption found in Leviticus 25:25-28 where people or property that had been lost temporarily through poverty could be recovered by payment of a fee,

<sup>9</sup> B Arnold and B Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 191.

usually by a relative. In Ruth the aim is recovery of family fields. However, again, this law seems to be extended to include marriage.

The way that the application of the two laws differ from their Pentateuchal institution shows that “ancient law codes were **not** exhaustive or comprehensive. They gave general principles with flexibility as they are applied to specific situations.”<sup>10</sup>

**4. Moabite marriage**

Naomi’s sons married Moabite women. This seems to cause a problem, because Mosaic law forbade this: “An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD forever” (Dt.23:3). However, Ruth’s children are from an Israelite male. Moreover, Moses did not prohibit all foreign marriages. Foreign wives who are faithful to their Israelite husbands are commended in Scripture (e.g., Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba) by placing them all in David’s lineage.

During the early period there was friendly intercourse between Israel and Moab (cf. I Sam. 22:3, 4). At this time marriage with a Moabitess was not forbidden. From the book of Ruth we may see how it was that David at a later time sought asylum with the king of Moab.<sup>11</sup>

**IV. LITERARY ANALYSIS**

**1. Comparative Outline**

The book follows a simple outline forming a five-part narrative of resolution and an appendix:

<b>Tischler</b>	<b>Nelson’s Bible Charts</b>	<b>Pratt</b>
Introduction (1:1-5)	Death of family (1:1-18)	Naomi’s Bitterness (1:1-22)
Act 1: The Exodus (1:6-18)		
Act 2: Bethlehem (1:19-22)	Ruth cares for Naomi (1:19-2:23)	
Act 3: Boaz Introduced (2:1-23)		Ruth Discovers Potential Kinsman Redeemer (2:1-23)
Act 4: The Plan (3:1-18)	Boaz cares for Ruth (3:1-18)	Boaz Agrees to be Kinsman Redeemer (3:1-18)
Act 5: The Public Pronouncement (4:1-12)	Birth of a family (4:1-4:22)	Boaz Acquires Right to be Kinsman Redeemer (4:1-12)
		Naomi’s Blessing (4:13-17)
Postlude (4:13-22)		Genealogical Appendix (4:18-21)

<sup>10</sup> R Dillard and T Longman III, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 132.

<sup>11</sup> E J Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale Press, 1953), 331.

## **2. Overall Structure**

### **a Naomi's Bitterness (1:1-22)**

#### **b Ruth Discovers Potential Kinsman Redeemer (2:1-23)**

#### **c Boaz Agrees to be Kinsman Redeemer (3:1-18)**

#### **b' Boaz Acquires Right to be Kinsman Redeemer (4:1-12)**

### **a' Naomi's Blessing (4:13-17)**

### **Epilogue (4:18-22)**

*What a son! Grandfather of King David*

An alternative structure is proposed in Nelson's Bible Charts:

#### **Ruth's love is revealed (1:1-2:23)**

*Ruth's Decision to Remain with Naomi (1:1–18)*

*Ruth's Devotion to Care for Naomi (1:19–2:23)*

#### **Ruth's love is rewarded (3:1–4:22)**

*Ruth's Request for Redemption by Boaz (3:1–18)*

*Ruth's Reward of Redemption by Boaz (4:1–22)*<sup>12</sup>

## **3. Genre**

Ruth has been called a novella, meaning "a short, well-constructed story, with carefully developed plot and characters, extensive use of dialogue, which moves to a climax and denouement, put together by one author."

However, the historical nature of the book must be maintained. From its opening words the book purports to be simple historical narrative pointing to a certain time and certain conditions in history (1:1).

We are prepared by these words for the narration of an historical event. The narrative proceeds throughout with this same simplicity and straightforwardness. In other words it purports to be the account of something that actually happened. Again, we may note that in so far as the book of Ruth speaks upon the customs of the time, it shows itself to be accurate and true to fact.<sup>13</sup>

Genre considerations should hold both the historical nature of the text and the dramatic story of the text together.

The book of Ruth is a literary and spiritual gem. Alexander Schroder declares: 'No poet in the world has written a more beautiful short story.' In the eighteenth century Dr Samuel Johnson read this book to his friends in a literary club in London. In his introduction he did not disclose its title or origins but simply read through its pages. The people who listened responded with high praise. They thought it a recent composition and were outspoken in their appreciation and acclaim. Dr Johnson then informed them that it was the book of Ruth which he had read to them from a book which they all despised — the Bible.<sup>14</sup>

## **4. Canonical Context**

Its place in the Hebrew canon has varied. The English Bible follows the Septuagint order of placing it after Judges, probably because the book opens with the line "In the days when the judges ruled." There are also several other links between Judges and Ruth. Idolatry in Dan (Judges 17-18) and immorality in Benjamin (Judges 19-20) is followed by an example of fidelity in Judah (Ruth 1-4). This has been called "The Bethlehemite

<sup>12</sup> *Nelson's complete book of Bible maps and charts : Old and New Testaments*. 1997, c1996 (electronic ed.). Thomas Nelson: Nashville

<sup>13</sup> E J Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale Press, 1953), 330.

<sup>14</sup> G Crossley, *The Old Testament Explained and Applied* (England: Evangelical Press, 2002), 105.

Trilogy because of the prominence of Bethlehem in them.

As in the previous two stories there is a man who departed from Bethlehem in Judah (Ruth 1:1; cf. Judg. 17:7-8; 19:1-10), but whereas the other two sullied the reputation of the town by their subsequent behavior, Elimelech and his family enhanced it. In Ruth, Bethlehem becomes a most suitable setting for the birthplace of King David. In the second story, Saul's ancestors, the Benjamites, had humiliated and disgraced a Bethlehemite, much to their later sorrow to be sure; but Bethlehem not only survived, it went on to produce Saul's successor, the man after God's own heart. The place of Bethlehem in the stories is, then, of no little importance.<sup>15</sup>

The story provides an alternative perspective of the spirituality of Israel in the generations after the time of Joshua. Whereas according to the Book of Judges most of Israel apostatized, this book shows the LORD preserved a remnant, a godly family and community, in Bethlehem during that dark era. Set in the dark and bloody period of the judges, when oppressors invaded the land and the Israelite tribes even fought one another, this cameo of a covenant family that sacrifice for one another, and provides plenty for the empty and rest for the wanderer, presents a striking alternative to the social chaos brought on by apostasy.

The contrast between this small book and the Book of Judges is stark. After navigating through the turbulent rapids of Joshua and Judges the reader comes at last to the placid waters of the Book of Ruth. Here there are no more sordid stories of crime and bloodshed, of lawlessness and savage revenge. The atmosphere of simple devotion pervades the story. One senses throughout the overruling providence of God quietly moving forward with his program in those dark days of the Judges.<sup>16</sup>

As the book concludes with the Davidic line, so it serves as a suitable introduction to the next books of Samuel which focus on the rise of the Davidic monarchy.

The story begins and ends with a narrative history, establishing its role as a bridge between the more earth-shaking acts of earlier judges and later kings.<sup>17</sup>

## **5. Original Audience/Message**

All of the themes in Ruth work together as part of an overarching concern. As the closing genealogies suggest, the book established the legitimacy of David's kingship despite his Moabite ancestress. The law of Moses taught explicitly that the king of Israel must be "from among your own brothers" (Deuteronomy 17:15). The book of Ruth admits that David had a Moabitess in his line. But she was a convert (Ruth 1:16) and of noble character. She came into Israel through the providence of God (Ruth 1:1-7), and the legal practice of levirate marriage (Ruth 3:1-8). Moreover, she was approved by God's blessing (Ruth 4:13-17).

The book of Ruth could have served the cause of David early or late in his reign. If it was finally compiled as David rose to power, it supported him against those who opposed his leadership. If it was written after his establishment, it defended his right to continue to reign against those who sought to discredit him.

## **V. THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

As Ruth is not usually included in the "Deuteronomistic History," Deuteronomistic themes will not be followed through here.

### **1. A "morality tale"**

Some have taken the story of Ruth to be simply ethical by promoting the virtue of family, kindness, and loyalty. In this sense the book is exemplary.

The message of the book could be characterized in this way: "Be loyal like Ruth and kind like Boaz, and God will reward you."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> E H Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books House, 1992), 182.

<sup>16</sup> J E Smith, *The books of history* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), Electronic Edition.

<sup>17</sup> L Ryken and T Longman III (Editors), *The Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 1993), 151.

## **2. God's Providence**

The simple moralistic reading “distorts the book and misses its profound theological teaching.”<sup>19</sup> The hidden and continuous providence of God is subtly revealed.

Of its eighty-five verses, twenty-three mention God; of these, only two are the narrator's comments (1:6 and 4:13 bracket the book); the rest are from the mouths of the protagonists. The characters themselves are conscious that God sovereignly orders events, and they depend on Him to do so.<sup>20</sup>

In verse 2:3b Ruth “happened” to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz. The verse means the exact opposite of what it seems to say. It means no human intent was involved.

No supernatural events or miracles punctuate the book of Ruth, but the attentive reader finishes the book knowing that God's hand guided the events of this story as directly as the exodus from Egypt.<sup>21</sup>

Although, as mentioned above, the main characters do express confidence in God, His presence is actually in the background working quietly away.

The lesson communicated by this is that God's hand is to be searched for in the everyday affairs of life, in the turns of fortune of God's faithful people. The story's characters certainly were aware of this. His presence is a continuous, faithful one, not merely of the dramatic, “hit-and-run” type.<sup>22</sup>

There are no miracles, no heavenly revelations, no prophetic disclosures, and yet there is the strong underlying sense of God's purpose and God's providence, or ‘providing’, being unfolded.<sup>23</sup>

## **3. God's Redemption**

The kinsman-redeemer (*go'el*) comes from the Hebrew word *ga'al* (it and its roots occur 20 times in Ruth) meaning: redeem, avenge, revenge, ransom, do part of kinsman redeemer. It was principally used to indicate obligations of a close relative in a dangerous or difficult family situation. The *go'el* is “the family protector”

### **a. Qualifications**

- (i) Must be a blood relative
- (ii) Must have the wherewithal to purchase the forfeited inheritance
- (iii) Must be willing to buy back that inheritance
- (iv) Must be willing to marry the wife of a deceased kinsman.

### **b. Functions**

- (i) Avenged the death of a family member (Num 35:19-21)
- (ii) Bought back family property previously sold to pay debts (Lev 25:25)
- (iii) Bought back a relative who had sold himself into slavery (Lev 25:47-49)
- (iv) Married the widow of a dead relative (Deut 25:5-10).

<sup>18</sup> R Dillard and T Longman III, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 133.

<sup>19</sup> R Dillard and T Longman III, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 133.

<sup>20</sup> D M Howard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993), Electronic Edition.

<sup>21</sup> R Dillard and T Longman III, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 133.

<sup>22</sup> D M Howard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993), Electronic Edition.

<sup>23</sup> G Crossley, *The Old Testament Explained and Applied* (England: Evangelical Press, 2002), 228.

Redemption involved a kinsman restoring what was alienated. The aim was to maintain the name of the deceased (Deut.25:6). Ruth is a story about preserving the social immortality of those who depend on the unfailing love of their relatives to preserve it. The faithful play their role out of love, not merely out of duty. Boaz is sacrificing his wealth and his offspring, not merely sharing it. Although Boaz aimed to give social immortality to Elimelech and Mahlon as the legal parents in the Bethlehem's registry of citizens, the LORD rewarded him as the biological parent with an even greater social immortality by including him in the lineage of David and of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:6-16; Luke 3:32-38).

This was an image of God's saving activity towards Israel (Isa.41:11-16; 54:5-8).

a. God redeemed Israel out of Egypt (Ex.5:22-6:8)

- (i) Yahweh avenged the Hebrews' blood (Ex.12:21-32)
- (ii) Yahweh redeemed the land which He had promised to Israel
- (iii) Yahweh redeemed from bondage and slavery
- (iv) Yahweh married the people to raise up spiritual seed

b. God redeemed Israel out of Babylon (Isa.47:1-4; 48:10; 49:24-26; 52:9; Micah.4:10)

**4. Covenant Loyalty and Love (HESED) (1:8; cf. 2:11-12, 20)**

HESED is usually translated as "steadfast love," "kindness," or "mercy." In Ruth, the term occurs three times, translated as "kindly" or "kindness." However the term is also closely associated with the covenant and may also be translated "covenant love or loyalty."

a. God showed covenant love to the nation

God loves His people, Israel, and shows his care for them by ending the famine (1:6; cf. Judges 2:18). Despite Israel's sin He turns famine and death into fertility and life. He gives help to the helpless and hope to the hopeless.

b. God showed covenant love to the individual

God loves those who are merciful to the weak, helpless, and hopeless (1:8; 2:11-12; cf. Matt 6:14-15; Phil 4:19). He prospers them and uses them in his plan of salvation. He cares for the poor and weak through gleaning (Lev 19:9-10), levirate marriage (Deut 25:5-10), and the kinsman redeemer (Lev 25:25-28).

The events of Ruth happened "in the days when the judges ruled" (1:1), that is, when the covenant was placed at considerable risk by Israel. Ruth indicates how Israel's future will be preserved, namely, by the extraordinary initiatives taken throughout her history by Yahweh. The book points to Yahweh as Israel's Redeemer, great in *hesed* (Exod. 34:6)...At a time when the covenant was threatened, Yahweh's *hesed*, seen in this book as establishing and preserving personal relationships, was in fact establishing Israel's history. This was a history that would be consummated by the birth of David, the establisher of Israel's rest and the bearer of a famous name (Ruth 4:14; cf. 2 Sam. 7:9).<sup>24</sup>

c. Individuals showed covenant love to God

Ruth and Boaz illustrate what covenant righteousness and loyalty were in an era when "everyone did *what was right in his own eyes*."

<sup>24</sup> W J Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 276-277.

## **5. The Gentiles**

Gentiles who commit themselves unreservedly to Israel's God and show loving kindness to his people become the people of God. The narrator brings the first chapter to a conclusion by naming the heroine "Ruth the Moabitess" (1:22), the foreman identifies her as "The Moabitess" (2:6), and she identifies herself as "a foreigner" (2:10). Moreover, she does not just move into the family of God but also moves into the line of Christ. So here we see God's universal point of view here, his desire to include Gentiles as well as Jewish people in the ultimate promise of a line of salvation.

The book of Ruth communicates powerfully that God's purposes are not limited to Israelites. Ruth stands with a proud group of other foreigners in the OT, such as Melchizedek, Rahab, Naaman, and the Ninevites of Jonah's day, who knew or embraced Israel's God. She was one of four women – along with Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba, all foreigners – included in the line of Jesus in Matthew 1. She illustrates the principle laid out in Genesis 12:2–3, that people would be blessed through their contact with Abraham's descendants and their God.<sup>25</sup>

## **6. Emptiness and fullness**

The theme of "emptiness and fullness" is at the heart of the narrative. The barren and fruitless fields of the beginning symbolize the women and their needs. At the end of the story, Ruth's new fullness (marriage and fertility) is associated with the harvest.

The ironic balance of fertility and sterility in the story suggest that these are central concerns of the storyteller. The family had left Judah because of famine, moving to the nearby Moab, a land that venerates fertility. But here the men die and the women remain barren. In returning to Bethlehem – the House of Bread – and casting their lot with the God of Israel, they find the abundant life. An older man, not the usual image of fertility, a gracious protector, offers to spread his wings over them and give them security. By a convoluted system of proxy marriage, Naomi finds her line restored, a child on her breast once again.<sup>26</sup>

## **7. Davidic Monarchy**

The last word in the book is "David." This, the genealogy and the emphasis on the preservation of the Davidic line through Elimelech's family show that God's choice of David had its roots much earlier than David's own time.

This emphasis on the (Davidic) monarchy is reinforced by the prominent place Judah occupies in the book as well. Several patriarchal wives, related to Judah in one way or another, are mentioned in Ruth 4:11–12, as is his son, Perez, in 4:12, 17, and even Judah himself (4:12). Judah was the tribe from which the true monarchy was to come (Gen. 49:8–12). We can even note that the book goes beyond Judah *per se* and emphasizes all the patriarchs via many allusions and customs. In this way, Ruth and Boaz, and ultimately David, are seen as standing in continuity with all of these, to whom God had promised, among other things, kings from their line (17:6, 16 ; 35:11).<sup>27</sup>

# **VI. NEW TESTAMENT ANALYSIS**

## **1. Genealogy**

Matthew's genealogy reminds us that Ruth was the grandmother of David and that this descent led to Jesus. Consider the women in the genealogy. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Two were Canaanites (Tamar and Rahab), Ruth was a Moabite, and Bathsheba was a Hittite. One was an unwed mother, one was a harlot, one was a foreigner, and one was an adulteress. But God used each of them to further the line that led to the Messiah.

This book also presents the ancestry of David, but more especially the ancestry of David's Lord (Matt. 1:5-6). Here is a family tree that beautifully illustrates the amazing love of God and his unique

<sup>25</sup> D M Howard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993), Electronic Edition.

<sup>26</sup> L Ryken and T Longman III (Editors), *The Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 1993), 163.

<sup>27</sup> D M Howard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993), Electronic Edition

redemptive work. Perez (4:18; Matt. 1:3), Boaz's great-great-great-great-grandfather, was one of the twins conceived as a result of an immoral union between Judah and his Canaanite daughter-in-law Tamar (Gen. 38). Rahab, the former prostitute, was adopted into the congregation of Israel (Josh. 6:25) and married Salmon, Boaz's father. Ruth, the converted Moabitess, was taken by Boaz as his wife. The blood of Ruth ran in the veins of the Lord Jesus Christ. The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is the real redemption for Ruth.<sup>28</sup>

The genealogy not only legitimates the Davidic kingship, then, but also the kingship of Christ who acquired the throne of Israel as the perfectly faithful son of David (Mk 10:47-48; Ac 2:22-36; Ro 1:2-4).

## **2. Foreshadowing**

### **a. Ruth**

Ruth is a type of the Church of Christ. Matthew included four women in Christ's genealogy. Tamar and Rahab were Canaanites, Ruth a Moabite, and Bathseba was probably a Hittite. All four are Gentiles, thus highlighting the worldwide reach of the Savior.

The Church, similar to Ruth, is mostly a Gentile bride who becomes the people of God by commitment to her Husband...She becomes a covenant mother who bears seed that will destroy the Serpent (Gen.3:15; Ruth 4:18-22; 1 Chron.2:5-15; Matt.1:3-6; Lk.3:31-33).<sup>29</sup>

Ruth is, then, the typical believer to whom rest in the land will be granted; at this level she symbolizes Yahweh's wider attitude toward Israel.<sup>30</sup>

Ruth may also be seen as a symbol of the Gentile portion of the church of Jesus Christ.

The interest the book shows in the inclusion of Ruth, a Gentile, anticipates the expansion of the kingdom of God to Gentiles during the New Testament period. Because Ruth exhibited the faith of Abraham as she left country and relatives to travel under the Lord's care to a foreign land, she found the blessing promised to all the nations in Abraham's seed (Ge 12:3). As Ruth became one with Israel, Gentiles and Jews are now reconciled to God in one body through their union with Christ (Eph 2:16; 3:6).<sup>31</sup>

### **b. Boaz**

Boaz sacrificed his own interests to redeem his relative, Ruth. Likewise Christ sacrificed Himself to redeem His people (see below).

...The ideal portrait of Boaz, Ruth's kinsman-redeemer, provides substance to the New Testament declaration that the church is the bride of Christ (Eph 5:25-27; Rev 19:1-8; 22:17). Boaz demonstrated ardent, selfless love for two helpless widows, Ruth and Naomi. This characterization of Boaz offers insight into how Christ ardently and selflessly loves his dependent bride, the church.<sup>32</sup>

### **c. Naomi**

Naomi is a type of ethnic Israel. Like Naomi, Israel is widowed then restored to hope through the Gentile bride.

Naomi's fate and the fate of her family is inextricably linked with Ruth. The old and failed widow may represent old Israel without hope of future life. The new and young widow full of hope and promise represents and foreshadows the role of the Gentiles to revitalize Israel. By her faith and covenant

<sup>28</sup> G Crossley, *The Old Testament Explained and Applied* (England: Evangelical Press, 2002), 232-233.

<sup>29</sup> B Waltke, *Lectures on Ruth* (Orlando: RTS).

<sup>30</sup> W J Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 275.

<sup>31</sup> *Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 381

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

loyalty she transforms bitter and hopeless Naomi (i.e. old Israel), to the joy of salvation. The woman continue to call her Naomi, a name that is now fitting.<sup>33</sup>

### **3. Redeemer**

This temporal redemption by Boaz points to God's redeeming work, which reaches its climax in Christ's redeeming work (Titus 2:14).

- a. Jesus Christ is willing to perform the role of kinsman-redeemer (Matt.20:28; Jn.10:15-18).
- b. He is a blood relative by the virgin birth (Gal.4:4,5; Heb.2:16,17)
- c. Christ has the price to pay to purchase the forfeited inheritance. The cost is the blood of Christ (1Pet.1:18-19). Both Boaz and Jesus Christ voluntarily sacrificed themselves to redeem those in need.
- d. He releases from bondage to sin (Titus 2:13,14, Eph.1:7) and not just from people or countries.
- e. He reclaims the inheritance (Heb.9:15), and not just dusty land of Palestine but an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that fadeth not away (1Pet.1:3-4).
- f. He marries His people and raises seed (Jn.1:12, Eph.1:5)
- g. He executes blood vengeance (Lk.18, 2Thess1).
- h. He gave the dead immortality. By his sacrifice he bought back those who had verged into death and debt and secured a Gentile bride. He brought his bride into final rest. As Boaz brought Naomi and her family "rest," (see 1:9; 3:1) so David brought Israel rest, and Christ gives the Church rest.

From this standpoint, therefore, the little book of Ruth is one of the most instructive in the Old Testament concerning the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus.<sup>34</sup>

### **4. Providence**

Dillard and Longman highlight the way God's hidden hand overruling and guiding providence towards a definite destination is climaxed in the crucifixion.

While to many in Jerusalem the crucifixion was just another execution and to those who nailed him to the cross it was an expression of their desire to kill him, yet God's hidden hand was behind it (Acts 2:23-24).<sup>35</sup>

### **5. "May he become famous" (4:11)**

This prayer is answered when the Son of David is given a name above every name (Phil.2:9).

## **VII. THE MESSAGE OF RUTH**

**Original Message:** The Davidic King has a legal right to reign and redeem

**Present Message:** The Son of David (Christ) has a legal right to reign and redeem

<sup>33</sup> B Waltke, *Lectures on Ruth* (Orlando: RTS).

<sup>34</sup> G L Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), Electronic Edition.

<sup>35</sup> R Dillard and T Longman III, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 134.