

The Book of Ruth

The Author, Title, and Date of Ruth

1. Title - Ruth
2. Author: Unknown. Likely Samuel, at the time of David.
3. Date: c. 1000 B.C. – During the reign of King David.
 - a. Following the period of the Judges. *1.1*
 - b. Explanation of custom at the time of Ruth, which would be unfamiliar to the readers. *4.7*
 - c. Lineage of David. *4.17-22*

The Background and Setting of Ruth.

1. Background
 - a. Famine forces Naomi's family to move from Bethlehem to Moab, where *nothing but trouble* befalls them:
 - 1) Her sons marry Moabites.
 - 2) Her husband and sons die in Moab.
 - 3) She returns to Bethlehem of Judah a *widow and childless, embittered*.
 - b. The only bright spot is that her daughter in law, Ruth, a Moabitess, accompanies her.
2. Historical Setting
 - a. This book occurs during the time period of the book of the Judges. *1.1*
 - b. The spiritual, moral, and social conditions of Israel during this period were appalling!
 - 1) Moral and political chaos, faithlessness and idolatry.
 - 2) This overall character is described by two vignettes in *Judges 17-21*, and summed up in one verse: *Judges 21.25*
 - c. Ruth is a bright star set against a black backdrop, of the character and condition of a faithful remnant.
 - 1) A faithful trust and obedience of God is seen, against the weak faith and idolatry of the times.
 - 2) Ruth herself is especially noteworthy, given her background as a Moabitess.
 - a) Ruth is a Gentile, who acts far more godly than the Israelites around her! She follows YHWH, breaking with the idolatry of her ancestors, at a time when Israel keeps toying with idolatry.
 - b) She is faithful to care for her mother-in-law, marries an Israelite, and faithful to God.
 - c) Her character was noted as gracious and loyal. *2.11*
 - d) The Moabites
 - (1) Began in *Genesis 19.30-38*, through the faithless, incestuous deception of Lot's oldest daughter. cp. *19.37*
 - (2) They were idolaters, and perpetual enemies of Israel. cp. *Nu 22-24; 25.1-9; Jg 3.12-30*
 - e) The book emphasizes her background: "Ruth the Moabitess" - *1.22; 2.2, 21; 4.5, 10*
 - f) She is one of four women recorded in the line of the Messiah.

The Purpose of Ruth

1. Ruth serves to introduce the books of Samuel, especially to show the lineage of David (which is not recorded in Samuel). *4.17-22*
2. Ruth is a shining star in the midst of the blackness of the times of the Judges, showing the character of the godly elect of Israel in a time of dark unfaithfulness.
3. Ruth shows God's sovereign providence in times of adversity, in order to fulfill His covenant promises (A.C.).
4. John Reed: "The Ruth narrative provided a gratifying reminder that even in the darkest times God was at work in the hearts of His faithful remnant."

The Message of Ruth

1. The main message of Ruth in that of *Redemption*.
2. The book focuses on Boaz, in his role as kinsman-redeemer.
 - a. *Deut 25.5-10; Ruth 2.20; 3.12; 4.1-10*
 - b. Boaz shows grace and godly character in exercising this role.
 - c. Boaz typifies the love of God for Israel (*and the Gentiles*), and His redemption of them.

3. The words appear 113x in OT - In the Pentateuch, Psalms, Isaiah, Ruth, and Job
 - a. Noun - *goel*
 - 1) = *kinsman, kinsman-redeemer*
 - 2) 13x in Ruth – 2.20, then 12x in ch. 3-4 – All of the *kinsman-redeemer*
 - 3) 13x in Isaiah – *chs. 41-63* of YHWH
 - 4) 1x in Job 19.25 - YHWH as Redeemer
 - 5) 12x in the Pentateuch - *Blood avenger*
 - b. Verb - *gaal*
 - 1) = *redeem*.
 - 2) Used 7x in *Ruth 4*.
 - c. Concept
 - 1) The *redeemer* is a person who takes the responsibility to deliver a near relative from the power or ravages of another.
 - a) Redeem from murder – *blood-avenger*
 - b) Redeem from poverty or slavery – *kinsman-redeemer*
 - c) Redeem from stigma of childless family line – *kinsman-redeemer*
 - 2) The *redeemer* had to meet several qualifications, in the case of the third one.
 - a) A near relative, and thus the *right* to redeem.
 - b) The *ability* to redeem.
 - c) The *willingness* to redeem.

The Structure of Ruth

1. Simple structure: Dialogue, four scenes
 - a. 1.1-22 Moab (10 yrs)
 - 1) 1.1-5 Ruined in Moab
 - 2) 1.6-22 Return to Judah
 - b. 2.1-23 The Fields of Boaz
 - 1) 2-3 months
 - 2) Boaz shows *chesed* to Ruth
 - c. 3.1-18 The Threshing Floor of Boaz
 - 1) Boaz commits to be *redeemer* to Ruth
 - 2) 2-3 weeks
 - d. 4.1-21 The House of Boaz
 - 1) 4.1-12 Boaz *Redeems* Ruth
 - 2) 4.13-17 Blessing
 - 3) 4.17-22 Legacy and Lineage
2. Key Verses: 1.16; 4.17
3. Key Words: *goel, gaal, chesed*

The Themes of Ruth

1. The key theme is that of God's faithful covenant love to His people.
 - a. Kinsman-Redeemer and Covenant
 - b. All the other themes tie to this one.
2. God's grace and inclusion of the Gentiles in the Abrahamic covenant.
 - a. Ruth - 1.16; 2.3; 4.13 n.b. Mt 1.5
 - b. God's redemptive plan extended *beyond* the Israelites, to the Gentiles n.b. Ge 12.3; Ruth 2.12
3. God's sovereign working in the context of the Abrahamic Covenant.
 - a. The covenant is still moved forward.
 - b. John MacArthur: "Ruth describes God's sovereign . . . and providential care . . . of seemingly unimportant people and apparently insignificant times which later prove to be monumentally crucial to accomplishing God's will." *MSB*