

## BOOK OF RUTH

1. In the Hebrew Bible, the book of Ruth is found in same book as the book of Judges. Both books were written by Samuel as one book.
2. Judges is a book about many judges over a period of about 300 years but Ruth is a book about only one generation of one single family.
3. The book of Judges is a book describing the national history of Israel. Judges is full of violence whilst the book of Ruth is a love story with a great ending. The book of Judges had 7 cycles of sin, oppression and deliverance but the book of Ruth is a sequential straightforward story, yet the 2 books fit beautifully as one!
4. The book of Ruth has no explicit mention of God's working yet it is evident that God is working in the background. This teaches us how God is involved in our everyday Christian life in the background. God is a like a good and wise father who helps us quietly.

### Chapters 1 to 4

1. Ruth 1:1-5. The opening verse gives the context of the timing of when this love story happened. It was during the Period of the judges.
  - a) It was the darkest period in Israel's history and God punished Israel with a famine. He held back the rain because they disobeyed God. The place in which this story was set was Bethlehem in Judah. The word "Bethlehem" means "House of Bread", yet there was a famine (without bread).
  - b) This family went to Moab, which was an ancient enemy of Israel. This man ran away from Judah with his family.
    - i. This was not the right thing to do in a time of God's judgement (or punishment). He should have repented instead! Should he have repented, God would have provided. However, this man ran away and was punished with death!
    - ii. His 2 sons married 2 Moabite women and both sons also died as such inter-marriages were not permitted by God. The Moabite women survived as they did not know God's law and hence did not transgress His law.
2. Ruth 1:6-18. Naomi, the wife of the man and her 2 daughters-in-law planned to return to Israel.
  - a) Naomi requested for her 2 daughters-in-law not to return with her as life as a Gentile in Israel would be difficult for them.
  - b) However, Ruth, one of her two daughters-in-law, insisted on going with her and she said, "Your God will be my God"
  - c) Why did Ruth have this faith?  
It is probably because of Naomi's good testimony about God. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (see Romans 10:17).
3. Ruth 1:19-22. Naomi and Ruth went back to Israel. Naomi (whose name means "pleasant") changed her name to Mara (in verse 20) which means "bitter or sad". (This is also one of the meanings of the name "Mary").
4. Ruth 2:1-4. Mosaic law teaches that during gleaning, the owner must leave fallen grains for widows and orphans so that they could pick up.

Ruth picked these fallen grains in the field of her family's relative. God will direct our steps as we obey Him.

5. Ruth 2:5-3:18. Boaz, the owner of the field, saw Ruth, the loyal Moabite and showed kindness to her. Naomi sensed that Ruth liked Boaz and instructed her to change out of her widow's clothes to indicate that she was willing to remarry. During a feast celebration, Naomi told Ruth to lie near the feet of Boaz as a hint to Boaz to marry her by warming his feet. Ruth obeyed her mother-in-law and Boaz was keen to marry her.
6. Ruth 4:1-12.
  - a) According to the Israeli law, all the sold land must be returned to the family who sold it, on the 50<sup>th</sup> year of Jubilee. The law stated that Ruth was to marry a relative so as to bear a son who would be able to carry on Ruth's husband's own surname in order that during the 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee year, the land could be returned to the owner with the original surname!
  - b) Boaz asked the first right of refusal relative, i.e. "next relative" to marry Ruth. This man only wanted the land but did not want to marry Ruth, so he agreed to pass the rights to Boaz in verse 6. He took off his shoe and gave it to Boaz as a sign of sealing the deal in verse 8. Therefore, Boaz married Ruth.

#### Why did the Bible include such a love story?

1. Obed was born out of the marriage between Boaz and Ruth, following which, Obed begot Jesse and then Jesse begot David.
2. Therefore, Ruth is the great grandmother of David, even though she was a Gentile! (See Ruth 4:17).
3. Judges 21:25 ended with "In those days, there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes" showing a lack of leadership in Israel. David, their king was born later and his line continued until Jesus!
4. The book of Ruth ends with a promising ending where we see Gentile blood coming into the picture. In the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:5, we see that Boaz also had Gentile blood because his mother was Rahab (the prostitute in the city Jericho who believed in God and helped the Israeli spies in Joshua 2:1-24). Once again, we observe how Gentile blood comes into Jesus' lineage. It is a hint of God's salvation extending to the Gentiles!
5. The book of Ruth is a romance story in contrast to the war stories in Judges. The book of Judges shows the horrible and sinful nature of man but the redemption story is a romance story in which Jesus looks for a Bride (the Church).
  - a) Boaz was the redeemer in this book of Ruth. He was the kinsman redeemer who redeemed Ruth so that the name of Naomi's husband could be carried on.
  - b) Jesus is our Redeemer. He redeemed us hopeless sinners without inheritance, just like Naomi and Ruth. The Gentiles are taken in by Jesus, the King of the Jews. Jesus is the only One who can redeem both the Jews and Gentiles.

#### Why was Boaz allowed to marry a Gentile?

1. He was performing his duty in obeying the rule of God. This is unlike Naomi's sons who married the Moabites against God's law.
2. Boaz was blessed and he became the ancestor of David and Jesus!

3. Obedience to God is how we fulfill God's will in our life!

The book of Ruth is about the relationship between Ruth and her mother-in-law as well as Ruth and her husband. Ruth was loyal to both her husband and her mother-in-law. We have to be faithful to God too!