

Introduction to Ruth

The story of Ruth begins in the dark time of the Judges. It stands in contrast to the Book of Judges which is categorized as a time when “Everyone did what was right in their own eyes.” It is a time of apostasy, warfare, violence, moral decay and anarchy. The Book of Ruth gives us a glimpse into the individual lives that still clung to Yahweh as their God. It is a story of love, devotion and redemption. Ruth illustrates how genuine faith and obedience lead to blessing. It also shows us how through faith the Gentiles can be grafted into the royal family. We will see God’s providence uncovered through Ruth, a Moabite woman who forsakes her heritage in order to cling to the people of Israel and their God. Her faithfulness in a time of faithlessness is rewarded by God’s grace, giving her not only a husband and son, but a place in the lineage of David and the coming King of Kings. It stresses God’s providential rewards for the faithfulness of those who did what was *right in the sight of the Lord*.

Background Information

Bethlehem, where our story begins, is located about 5 miles south of Jerusalem. It was particularly susceptible to the climate because there was no natural spring and it relied on cisterns to gather water. The Moabites, decedents of Lot, worship Chemosh and other pagan gods. We see them in two occasions in scripture fighting against Israel. Ruth takes place about two centuries after the first war and approximately 80 years before the second war. (Judg.3:12-30, 1 Sam. 14:47) The journey to Moab was approximately 70 to 100 miles from Bethlehem, and would have taken about a week to get there. When Naomi and her husband left their home, they intended to temporally reside in the territory of Moab, but their sojourn lengthened long enough for their two sons to both marry and eventually die. Ruth means “friendship or association.” Ruth is a story of Hope!



LOOKING FOR GOLD - WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The first step in mining for gold is getting the lay of the land. **Carefully observe the text** looking to see where you might dig to find hidden treasure. **Mark your text** looking for repeated words, contrasts or similarities. Look for answers to, Who? What? When? Where? Why or How?

Setting the scene: You may want to begin your reading with Gen. 19:36-37, Lev. 26:1-46 specifically 3-5

Ruth 1:1-5

1 Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. 2 The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion — Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there. 3 Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. 4 Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years. 5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.



Digging Deeper

Dig deeper using other resources such as a dictionary, concordance, maps & cross-references. Notate where you found it to share with the group. Look for commands to obey or questions to be answered. What does God want you to know about Himself?

Ruth 1:6-18

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had visited His people by giving them bread. 7 Therefore she went out from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. 8 And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house. The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 The Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband."

So she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. 10 And they said to her, "Surely we will return with you to your people."

11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 12 Turn back, my daughters, go — for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, 13 would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me!"

14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

15 And she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." 16 But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. 17 Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me." 18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her.



Ruth 1:19-22

19 Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem. And it happened, when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was excited because of them; and the women said, "Is this Naomi?" **20** But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. **21** I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.



BOILING IT DOWN – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



What **lesson** can I draw from my observations?

State each lesson in a simple sentence (aim for 10 words or less).

Ruth 1:1–5 _____

Ruth 1:6-18 _____

Ruth 1:19-22 _____



REFINED AS GOLD - HOW CAN I APPLY IT?

How should it change me? Ask yourself, “What **course of action** do I need to take to apply each lesson?” (aim for 10 words or less)

Ruth 1:1–5 _____

Ruth 1:6-18 _____

Ruth 1:19–22 _____

CHALLENGE: Use cross-references to find correlating scripture that backs up a main point of the chapter. Summarize your findings in your own words.



STORING UP YOUR TREASURE . . .

What did God say? Deut. 28:15-19,30

What was it like in the time of the Judges? Judges 21:25

What is the difference between Orpah and Ruth's response? v 15 & 16

Did God cause the calamity in Naomi's life? Be ready to discuss

What words or phrases are repeated? Repeated words help us discover the main points.

CHECKING FOR CLARITY: See if you can boil down the meaning of **each section** into one or two words. This helps you fully understand what the author is trying to convey. (It's fun to alliterate if you want to try) Did you catch the vision?

Ruth 1:1-5 _____
Ruth 1:6-18 _____
Ruth 1:19-22 _____

BARS OF GOLD: State the main **point** of the passage in the form of a title.

FLEX YOUR MUSCLES: Can you discover an N.T. example of this O.T. truth?



—
HIDE YOUR TREASURE IN YOUR HEART

Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. Ruth 1:16b

Radiating His Truth . . .

Although God does not prevent the painful consequences of our sins, He does overrule so that His purposes are fulfilled. - Warren Wiersbe

