

May 2022

What's the Point....of Ruth? **Mark Garner**

During the frequently chaotic period of the 'judges', we see the comforting story of Ruth and Naomi. The book of Ruth tells of hope in difficult times; and God's compassion for Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz reassures us of God's care for us and the spiritual blessings he gives those who seek him. At the end of the book, we also see that Ruth was one of Jesus' human ancestors.

Refuge Under God's Wings (Overview Of Ruth)

Ruth is a moving story of how God cares for some faithful souls during their times of sadness and loss. It is a book that we can relate to, for it reminds us of God's care for each of us. The story centers on Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth, who in a time of trouble promises her, 'where you go, I will go' (Ruth 1).

Naomi, her husband, and two sons had fallen on sad times. They left Judah because of a famine and settled in Moab - yet Naomi's husband and both sons pass away, leaving only her and their Moabite widows. One of the Moabite women returns home, yet Ruth is eager to accompany Naomi back to Judah, out of her care for Naomi as well as what Naomi has shown her about the living God. Without any guarantees, Ruth leaves her homeland.

As Naomi continues to struggle with sorrow and confusion, she and Ruth return to Judah and hope to find refuge (Ruth 2); and throughout the rest of the book, we see God's hand and his faithful care. When Ruth goes to glean in the fields, she finds favor with the field's owner, a kind man who notices Ruth's gentleness and her care for Naomi, and who reassures her that the Lord will give her refuge under his wings (2:10-12).

When Naomi asks Ruth where she had gleaned, she is surprised and thankful that God has led her daughter-in-law to Boaz, one of her own close relatives, and also one of her family's 'guardian-redeemers.' When Naomi hears of Boaz's hope to marry Ruth (Ruth 3-4), she assures her that he will not rest until the matter is settled (3:9-13, 3:18), just as Jesus, our heavenly Redeemer, endured everything to redeem us and to reconcile us with God.

The book concludes with an outpouring of God's grace (4:14-17). His blessings flow to Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi; and they give encouragement to the town and remind them of God's compassion. And they lead to promises and spiritual blessings for the future too, for we also read that the son of Ruth the Moabite will become the grandfather of David.

Overall Thoughts

In Ruth, we see how God can change mourning, sorrow, and fear into hope, peace, and rejoicing. Moreover, all of God's kindness and mindfulness to Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz remind us of the even greater spiritual blessings God gives to those who follow Jesus and trust in our Heavenly Father. In the book of Ruth, we also see God's understanding as he ties things together, as he does even more fully and deeply through the coming of his Son and the good news he brings.

May 2022

What's the Point....of Ruth? **Caleb Dillinger**

If you've never read the story of Ruth, I recommend you go ahead and do so now. It's four chapters and a quick paced story, one you could imagine a grandmother telling her granddaughter right before bed. It has a beautiful ending, but to be honest, the beginning is dark.

The story begins focusing on a Jewish woman named Naomi, who moved away from Israel during a famine and settled in the area of Moab with her husband and two sons. Her sons married local Moabite women (non-Jews, this is important). Naomi's husband died. Then her two sons died. No family men were left, and they lived in a society where men worked and held land and women did not. So Naomi decides to return to her homeland, telling her daughters in law to remarry in Moab and leave her be. Both refuse; they cling to their mother in law. Finally, after much discussion, one leaves. But one Moabite woman, named Ruth, refuses to budge. Where Naomi goes, she goes. The God Naomi worships will be her God too.

They return to Israel, Bethlehem in particular, and there Ruth works to pick up leftover wheat from a field owned by Boaz, who just so happens to be a Kinsman Redeemer - a relative of Naomi's husband who could financially save them! Naomi sets up a little plan and Ruth has an opportunity to talk with Boaz and explain the situation. He says there's another Kinsman Redeemer who has "first rights" so to speak, but after convincing the man to forfeit his right, Boaz marries Ruth and saves the two women by bringing them into his family. They have a child, who has a child, who has a child named David....the future king David, the one who killed Goliath.

So, now we get to the point of the story. Ruth was recorded to show us the ancestor lineage of the greatest king of Israel: David. That's why the Jews knew and loved this story. Their amazing king, come from humble beginnings, saved by a woman of perseverance and a man of integrity. It's a great story. But God gives us so many more valuable lessons here.

This is one of the earlier stories where God is clearly working behind the scenes to prepare the world for his plans. And God doesn't work through the stereotypical hero - not a man, not a descendant of Abraham (God's chosen people), not the wealthy, not the talented - God chooses a poor foreign woman with hardships who never gives up faith. It's not even like she had tremendous faith in God (it's not mentioned!) - she has faith that life is more than just work and toil and death. The story of Ruth teaches us humility, faithfulness, and God's sovereignty.

The story also teaches us to keep our eyes open to the opportunities around us. Did it just so happen that Ruth went to work in the fields owned by Boaz, the one man who would be open to marrying her and saving her family? Did it just so happen that Boaz himself is a

May 2022

descendant of Rahab the Prostitute who was a foreigner who saved Jews before the conquest of Canaan? (Note: this is shown in the family history of Jesus in Matthew 1). I argue no. God opened doors, and faithful people walked through them. The point of Ruth is to remind all readers that God opens doors, God remains sovereign in hardship, and faithfulness leads to God's plan being revealed.