

I. Ruth

- a. Purpose: In this session we shall survey the book of Ruth by going over the book's authorship, purpose, structure and other matters so that we would delight in God's Word with the book of Ruth and vow to study it for ourselves.
- b. Authorship
 - i. There is no consensus among scholars of when this book was written though it seems best to see it written during the period of Jewish monarchy as the earliest given the reference to David.¹
 - ii. According to the Jewish Talmud: "Samuel wrote the book which bears his name and the Book of Judges and Ruth." (Baba Bathra 14b-15a)
- c. Purpose
 - i. According to John Walton: "The purpose of Ruth is to show that when people are faithful, God is faithful... God preserved such families of faithfulness and that is the very background from which David came."²
 - ii. According to Walter Kaiser: "The heart and purpose of the book is identified in **Ruth 2:12** where Boaz prays that Ruth, a Moabitess, might find her reward for her kindness (*hesed*) under the wings (*kenapim*) of Yahweh."³
- d. Structure
 - i. Structure can be divided into five scenes and two book "ends"
 - ii. Outline⁴
 1. Introduction (**1:1-5**)
 2. Act 1: The Exodus (**1:6-18**)
 3. Act 2: At Bethlehem (**1:19-22**)
 4. Act 3: Boaz Introduced (**2:1-23**)
 5. Act 4: The Plan (**3:1-18**)
 6. Act 5: The Public Pronouncement (**4:1-12**)
 7. Postlude (**4:13-22**)
- e. Closer Look
 - i. **Ruth 1:1-2** opens up with Elimelech's family, Judahites from Bethlehem, moving into Moab because of a famine.
 - ii. **Ruth 1:3-5** informs readers of the death of Elimelech and eventually the death of his two sons, leaving behind three widows.
 - iii. **Ruth 1:6-14** record of how Naomi, Elimelech's widow, planned to Israel and her advice to her two daughters-in-law to not go with her. Orpah left her while Ruth clung to Naomi.
 - iv. **Ruth 1:15-18** show Ruth verbalizing her commitment to follow Naomi and also to have Naomi's God be her God even though Naomi asked her to go back to her own land.
 - v. **Ruth 1:19-22** record Naomi and Ruth entering Bethlehem.
 - vi. In **Ruth 2** we read about the character of Boaz

¹ Andrew Hill and John Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 250.

² Andrew Hill and John Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 249.

³ Walter Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 111.

⁴ Mark Rooker, "The Book of Ruth" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 10828-10833.

1. He is a kin to Elimelech, Naomi's deceased husband (**Ruth 2:1**).
 2. Boaz requested Ruth to glean only in his field with his maids and servant because of her commitment to her mother-in-law (**Ruth 2:8-11**).
 3. After Boaz fed Ruth and told his servants to allow her more wheat which she beat to make an ephah of barley (**Ruth 2:14-23**).
- vii. In **Ruth 3:1-4** we see Naomi's plan for Ruth to dress and wash herself in order that she present herself to Boaz at the threshing floor at the end of the barley harvest. Ruth does this in **Ruth 3:5-9**.
 - viii. In **Ruth 3:10-15** we see Boaz being an honorable man by telling Ruth he will seek the nearest kin to her to be her kinsman redeemer.
 - ix. In **Ruth 3:16-18** Ruth reports back to Naomi what happened and also shared the barley that was given to Naomi; Naomi tells Ruth that Boaz will be resolved to do what is right.
 - x. **Ruth 4:1-4** record Boaz going to the city gate and requested the nearer kinsman to buy Naomi's land that was inherited from her late husband Elimelech. The man initially agreed but then backed down when it involved marrying Ruth and splitting his inheritance (**Ruth 4:5-6**).
 - xi. In **Ruth 4:6-12** we see the legal transition for Boaz to marry Ruth.
 - xii. **Ruth 4:13-17** record the blessing from the women's perspective with a genealogy in **Ruth 4:18-22**.
- f. Literary beauty in the book of Ruth
- i. Dialogues
 1. "Most of this slim volume is dialogue—in fact, fifty-five out of the eighty-five verses are dialogue. More than half of the word of this book(678 of them, or 52.4 percent) are from the lips of the book's main characters."⁵
 2. This is "the highest ratio of dialogue to narrative of any narrative book."⁶
 - ii. Contrasts
 1. In the end of the book "the quick meeting, romance, marriage, and pregnancy contrasts with the 10 years of barrenness in the land of Moab (**1:4**)."⁷
 2. Naomi and Ruth
 - a. One was Jewish, the other a Gentile.
 - b. One complained, the other trusted in God.
 3. Boaz and unnamed nearer kinsman
 - a. One named, the other unnamed.
 - b. One was insightful of the future, the other was not so much.
 - c. One was generous, the other was not generous.
 - iii. Play on Words

⁵ Walter Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 111.

⁶ Mark Rooker, "The Book of Ruth" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 10837-10838.

⁷ Mark Rooker, "The Book of Ruth" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 10826-10827.

1. In **Ruth 2:12** Boaz blessed Ruth by saying may she be under the “wing” of Yahweh which in the Hebrew is the same word used for “covering” that Ruth asked Boaz to spread over her in **Ruth 3:9**.⁸
- g. Place of this book in the Canon
- i. A contrast with the book of Judges
 1. Godly woman versus ungodly men.
 2. Godly Gentile versus ungodly Jews.
 3. Recall the most heinous event in the book of Judges is a Levite from Bethlehem versus here a man of lovingkindness from Bethlehem name Boaz.
 - ii. Connection to Proverbs 31: “Hebrew expression *ēšet ayil* is used to describe the excellent wife (**Proverbs 31:10**) and the character of Ruth (**3:11**). The adjective *hayil* is also used to characterize Boaz (**2:1**), thereby indicating that Ruth and Boaz were a perfect match.”⁹
 - iii. Genealogy shows the lineage of King David; of course the Messiah will come from David!

⁸ Walter Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 111.

⁹ Mark Rooker, “The Book of Ruth” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 10968-10970.