

8. Ruth

1. Overview: The book of Ruth provides the backstory of some of King David's (and Jesus's) unlikely ancestors: a young gentile woman and an old wealthy bachelor, who was the son of a certain gentile harlot and the grandson of a prince of Judah.
2. Who is the Writer? (Unknown) We can tell the book was written significantly after the events occurred based on the following:
 1. Boaz and Ruth's descendants are listed down three generations to King David.
 2. There is an explanation of an outdated cultural custom regarding the removing of a shoe to complete a redemption property transaction- that was no longer in practice when the text was written. (*Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe. Ruth 4:7*)
3. When did these events occur?

During the time of the judges, which extended around 400 years between the death of Joshua until Saul is anointed the first King of Israel. The events likely occurred early during the period of the judges because Boaz was part of the first-generation of Israelites to be born in the Promised Land.

We know this because of the 'begats' in Matthew Chapter 1 giving Jesus's genealogy starting from Abraham: *Naason begat Salmon and Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth* Matthew 1:4-5. Boaz's mother was Rahab (Booz and Rachab are the Greek spellings), the harlot from Jericho that Joshua spared when she hid the two spies. Boaz's father, Salmon was the son of one of the twelve princes of Israel-Naason prince of Judah (Numbers 7:12). The events possibly occurred during the 80 years of rest after 3rd judge, Ehud, assassinated the King of Moab, who had ruled Israel for 18 years because Boaz is described as an old man and Elimelech was willing to sojourn (visit) in Moab, which seems unlikely if Moab was still ruling over Israel (Judges 3).

4. Who are the Principal Figures?

Figure	Relationship	Meaning of Name	Result
Elimelech	A Man of Bethlehem	His God is King	Dies in Moab
Naomi	Wife of Elimelech	Pleasant	Return to Bethlehem
Mahlon	Son of Elimelech	Sick	Dies in Moab after 10 years
Chilion	Son of Elimelech	Consumption, failing, Destruction	Dies in Moab after 10 years
Orpah	Widow of Chilion	Mane or Neck	Returns to Moab
Ruth	Widow of Mahlon, Wife of Boaz, Great grandmother of King David	Friend	Return to Bethlehem
Boaz	Son of Rahab the Harlot, Near Kinsman of Elimelech Husband of Ruth and great Grandfather of King David	In him is Strength	Lives in Bethlehem

5) Chapter by Chapter:

Chapter 1 – While there is a famine in Israel, Elimelech takes his wife, Namoi, and two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, and leaves their home in Bethlehem ('House of Bread') to sojourn in the land of Moab. Elimelech dies and his sons each marry a Moabite woman (Orpah and Ruth), which was not permissible under the law (Deuteronomy 7:3 & 23:3). After 10 years both sons also die and Namoi, now a widow and destitute, leaves Moab to return to Bethlehem with her two daughters-in-law. Along the way, she counsels Orpah and Ruth to return back to their father's houses in Moab. Initially, both Ruth and Orpah protest. When Namoi pushes the point that she can't provide them with husbands, Orpah relents and goes home, but Ruth faithfully remains with her mother-in-law pledging never to leave her and she returns to Bethlehem with her. (See Key Verse #1) All of Namoi's neighbors come out to greet them, asking if this is Namoi, who that they haven't seen in ten years, but she tells them not to call her Namoi ('Pleasant') but rather Mara ('Bitter') because the Lord had dealt bitterly with her to take away both her husband and sons.

Chapter 2 – Ruth works diligently gleaning (picking up the leftovers) behind the men harvesting barley (reapers) in the field of Boaz, an older wealthy gentleman, who turns out to be a close relative (kinsman) of Elimelech. (See Deuteronomy 24 - God's provision for the poor) Boaz notices Ruth and asks his servant overseer about her. When he hears the report of her faithfulness to her mother-in-law, Boaz assures Ruth that she is welcome to glean in his fields and that she may have free access to the water drawn by his young men, who will also be under strict orders not to touch/harm her. Boaz gives her additional support by feeding her and instructing his servants to allow some barley to fall on purpose for her. (See Key Verse #2) Ruth is able to gather a full 'ephah' of barley that day, which is enough to feed two people for about five days. (In Exodus, God provided each person 1 'Omer' of Manna per day and we are told that an 'Ephah' is equal to 10 'Omers'. See Exodus 16:16 & 36) Naomi hearing the good news, praises God for blessing Ruth to find favor in the eyes of a man who was their near kinsman (relative). Ruth gleans in the fields of Boaz through the barley and wheat harvests.

Chapter 3 – Naomi tells Ruth that she is seeking to find 'a rest' for Ruth (a husband to provide for her). She instructs Ruth to prepare herself to meet Boaz on the threshing floor where he will be winnowing his barley that night. (The second half of processing the harvesting grain- step 1) beating (threshing) the kernels of grain to loosen off the husks and step 2) fanning (winnowing) them to cause the husks to blow away leaving just the seeds.) After Boaz was asleep, Ruth uncovers his feet and lays down beside his feet as Naomi had instructed. Waking up startled, Boaz is surprised to see a woman in the threshing floor and asks who she is. Ruth explains who she is and asks him to do the part of a near kinsman. (See Deut 25:5- Duty of a brother to take his brother's widow as his wife.) Knowing that he is an old man and that she could have attempted to secure a young man to be her husband, Boaz tells her that she has shown him greater kindness than she had shown already to Naomi and that he is willing to fulfill his role as 'Kinsman Redeemer', but there is one man, who is a closer relation to Elimelech and must be asked if he will perform the role first. He bids her to sleep there until early in the morning when he sends her away with six measures of barley back to Naomi, who counsels Ruth to be patient for Boaz won't rest until the matter is settled.

Chapter 4- Boaz goes to the city gate and flags down the man who is nearer relation and invites him to sit along with ten elders of the city, who are to be witnesses. Boaz explains that Naomi is selling the lands that belonged to Elimelech and his sons, by law he is the closest relation and is entitled to purchase them. The man at first agrees to buy the lands, until Boaz reveals that conditioned on the purchase is also the need to marry Ruth and have a child by her to which the lands would be passed. The man, possibly already married, backs out saying that such an arrangement would mess up his own inheritance planning and he waives his right to buy the lands, which was memorialized by the visible and deliberate act of removing a shoe. Boaz then does the part of the 'kinsman redeemer' and buys Elimelech's lands from Naomi and marries Ruth and they have a child, Obed, who is the grandfather of King David. Since God's covenant with Abraham, Ruth is the third gentile woman in the bloodline of David out of which would spring the Messiah. The 1st was Tamar (See Gen 38-

Judah's Daughter in Law) and 2nd, Rahab (See Joshua 2 -Harlot in Jericho). The chapter ends with the genealogy from Tamar's son, Pharez down to David. (See Key Verse #3)

6. Key Verses

1. Ruth 1:16-17. *Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.*

2. Ruth 2:10-12. *Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.*

3. Ruth 4:11-12. *And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem: And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman.*

7. How does this Book point to Jesus Christ?

1. Most directly, these figures make up a portion of Jesus's blood line: literally through Mary as his natural mother and by right as the adopted first born of Joseph. (Mary and Joseph share a common blood line until King David.)
2. Boaz as the Kinsman Redeemer is a 'type' (symbol) of Christ.
 1. In Boaz, we have a loving example of one who has both the right by law and who actually fulfills his role and duty to take stranger/alien to be his wife.
 2. Jesus is our kinsman redeemer. He is the only one who had the right to redeem his people, as He is the only sacrifice that was perfect; everything else is marred by sin. He fulfilled His role by submitting to the father's will in that covenant of grace that was entered into before the foundation of the world and by allowing Himself to be captured, tortured, and eventually by giving up his own life on the cross so he could wash his wife, his people/the church clean from all their sins and bring her to himself as his bride.(See Ephesians Chapter 1 and Ephesians 5:25-27)