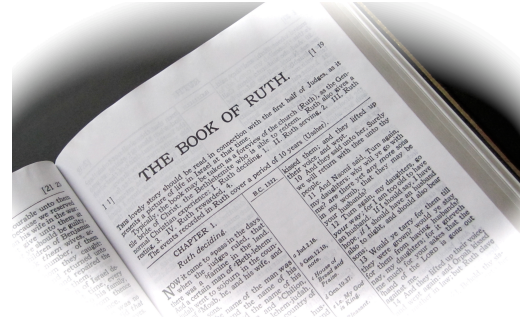


Books of The Bible

A Survey of Ruth

Introduction

There are sixty-six books in the Bible. Some are quite large and others quite small. An interesting experiment was done some years ago to find which are the most read books and which one was the least. Astoundingly, the least read was not the massive prophecy of Isaiah, but the tiny one chapter book of 3rd John with its fourteen verses! Apparently not too far behind 3rd John was Ruth, a tiny book of 4 chapters and eighty-five verses.



At times, perhaps subconsciously, we can view one book as more important than the other, i.e Revelation and 2nd John, yet the Holy Spirit informs us that: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). Consequently, to view one book more important to read than another is wrong. According to the Spirit of Truth, all scripture is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16), and that includes the tiny book of Ruth.

The events recorded in Ruth occurred during the time of the judges (ch. 1:1), which covers approximately the first three hundred and fifty years of Israel’s history in the land of Canaan. Ruth is set in contrast to the book of Judges which records the tragic history of failure because of compromise, constant national failure, and God’s gracious recoveries. For instance, there was the sin of intermarriage and idolatry (Jud. 3:5-7); God then disciplined them by selling them into captivity (Jud. 3:8), but when they cried to God He raised up a deliverer and there was national restoration (Jud. 3:9-11). Sadly this was not the only time they walked this pathway. In contrast, the book of Ruth records the history of a single family (Ruth 1:1-6), focusing on a singular woman, and shows that despite the family failure (Ruth 1:2) God brought about a wonderful restoration (Ruth 2:5-4:17).

a) Judges and Ruth are set in contrast to each other as G. Scroggie observes:

Judges	Ruth
Unfaithfulness	Faithfulness
National	Family and an individual
Immorality	Purity
Battlefields	Harvest fields
Wars	Peace
Idolatry	Worship of God

b) Ruth is one of the five women mentioned in the genealogy of the Lord (Matt. 1:2-16). Those five are:

- i) Tamar (Matt. 1:3) who was called Tamar (Gen. 38:6)
- ii) Ruth (Matt. 1:5)
- iii) Rahab (Matt. 1:5; Josh. 2:1)
- iv) The wife of Urias (Uriah), named Bathsheba (Matt. 1:6; 2 Sam. 11:3)
- v) Mary (Matt. 1:16)

c) It is one of only two books in the scriptures which is called by a woman’s name, Ruth and Esther. Ruth was a Gentile brought into a Jewish home and into the line of kingship (we know who her family was from that point). Esther was a Jew brought into a Gentile Palace for the deliverance of God’s people but

know nothing of her family from that point on. In both cases the woman finds favour in the sight of the man. Together they foreshadow Jew and Gentile brought under Christ as Kinsman and King.

- d) Ruth is the only book in the scriptures completely devoted to one woman.
- e) There is a danger of looking down on Orpah for turning to go back to her homeland, but I see her as a woman who loved Naomi but had a major decision to make. She was a Moabite, and although one of the sons of Naomi had married her, contrary to the scriptures and he had died, the question could have arisen in her mind, “Is it because he married me?” Furthermore, if such was the reason, who in Israel would marry me?
 - i) That which may seem strange is if Naomi really believed Jehovah was the only true God, why did she seek to send Ruth and Orpah back into paganism? It would seem to me that she was a “nominal” believer, and seeking after the flesh saw things only from a fleshy perspective. It is tragic to consider that while the mother-in-law and sister-in-law from that side of the family, there were those who were redeemed, but Orpah knew nothing of that. It is an unsettling reality that there is many a parent who will be in Heaven but whose child, family associates, will be forever under the judgment of God in Hell.
- f) The four main persons in the book illustrate three aspects of humanity, and the fourth foreshadows the Lord. (see further under, “The Manifestation of Christ”
 - i) Naomi, the saint back sliding but restored
 - ii) Orpah, the sinner rejecting blessing
 - iii) Ruth, the sinner’s declaration and consequent blessing
 - iv) Boaz, see under “The Manifestation of Christ”
- g) Ruth, when in her natural world of Moab, knew nothing of the thoughts of God for her. She lived life, fell in love, and knew the sorrow of widowhood, unaware of how God was moving her life spiritually and geographically to fulfill His exaltation of her.

When Was Ruth Written?

There are several hints as to the time frame when Ruth was written:

- a) After the period of the Judges as ch. 1:1 indicates.
- b) It was after the time when the taking of the shoe as a kinsman for it says: “Now this was the manner in former time in Israel” (ch. 4:7)
- c) Since the last person mentioned is “David” (ch. 4:22) and not “King David” or “David the King”, it would indicate after his birth but before his coronation, therefore, possibly during the reign of Saul.

Keys:

Key word:

“**Rest**” (Ch. 1:9; 3:1, 18) There is in the word “rest” a lovely truth which helps explain the fulness of the devotion of Ruth and nullify any criticism of Orpah. Naomi said: “God grant you that ye might find rest in the house of your husband” (ch. 1:9). The word for “rest” indicates “a safe shelter” and indicates the husband’s house was a safe shelter and security for the woman. Naomi was saying to both her daughters-in-law, “There is safety in your father’s home, and in time perhaps a husband where you will find safety and shelter, go back there”. Ahead in Israel there were no such prospects and so Orpah decided to go back after she had kissed her mother-in-law (ch. 1:14). This was a stupendous heart wrenching moment, two women separating, possibly never to see each other again on earth. Ruth also had to make the decision and for her it seems there was not only a love for her mother-in-law, but also the desire to follow the God of Israel (ch. 1:16-17). God in grace provided for her shelter and safety, so in turning down the logical perspective and choosing faith in God she was more than richly blessed.

Key verses:

Ch. 1:16-17; 3:11

Avenues By Which To View Ruth

This little gem can be considered in several ways, some of which are:

a) Dispensationally:

i) In this viewpoint there is a combination of the persons involved:

1. Elimelech and his family illustrate what Israel were constantly doing under the Judges, they were moving away from the blessings of God but in two different ways.
2. Then in Naomi it is Israel returning and bringing a Gentile with her.
3. And Boaz as Kinsman redeemer.

b) Evangelistically:

- i) First kinsman (as we shall see) represented the law, but the law could not redeem. However, grace entered the situation and there was salvation.
- ii) By such a glorious object lesson we learn something of the riches of God's grace and none are beyond that grace. Irrespective of the background of the individual, the mercy of God flows out and the amazing thing is that there was no movement on Ruth's part to seek fellowship with God, it was God overruling in the circumstances of her life to bring her to Himself.
- iii) Ruth was not the first to leave her pagan heritage. Abram had done it long before for his background was idolatry (Josh. 24:1). Being a Gentile, Ruth demonstrates true faith in the God of Israel (ch. 1:16-17; 3:10) which led to her blessing and exaltation.
- iv) Ruth also conveyed the truth that Gentiles can believe in the true God and get saved. Other examples are Cornelius and the Ethiopian eunuch.

c) Exhortatively:

- i) Ruth was a woman for whom the future looked, from the natural viewpoint, very bleak. She was a young widow and going among a people who were forbidden to marry, a Moabitess, a "daughter of the land" (Ex. 34:16). She had left her homeland and people, and surely at times wondered, "What lies ahead?" It is a pathway many of us have trod, a spouse dies, a business loss, and the future looks bleak, and depression can easily set in and thinking, "what use is there in life?"
- ii) Ruth and Esther answer such a query.

d) Doctrinally:

- i) The following are some of the great doctrines exemplified in Ruth.
 1. Grace (in bringing Ruth into her high place despite being a Moabitess)
 2. God and His sovereignty in overruling where Ruth gleaned (ch. 2:3)
 3. Divine recompense (ch. 2:12)
 4. The universality of salvation and of the church (Boaz a Jew and Ruth a Gentile, united as one. Eph. 2:16-18).

e) Theologically:

- i) See under "The Manifestation of God"

f) Christologically:

- i) See under "The Manifestation of Christ"

Ruth The Woman

Ruth was a Moabitess (ch. 1:4) which meant she was a descendant of Lot, therefore, she had no claims on the things of God. Her ancient mother was a daughter of Lot, who by her father Lot gave birth to Moab. To her ancestors God had said: “Woe to thee, Moab” (Num. 21:29). In time the family became a kingdom with Balak as king, who hired Balaam to curse the children of Israel (Num. 22:6-21). Looking at her history, what chance had she of ever being brought into the camp of Israel, much less be exalted to be the great grandmother of David, the mighty king of Israel (Ruth 4:17), and be in line to the Messiah of the world (Matt. 1:2-16). Being the great grandmother of David and accounting for forty years for a generation, it would be approximately 100 years from Ruth to David, so this story took place in the latter years of the Judges. However, the major truth is not exactly when the record of Ruth took place, but that it is a broad connection between the Judges and the Kings.

The Moabites were idolaters who worshipped Chemosh and a variety of other pagan deities. They fought against Israel on two occasions (Jud. 3:12-30; 1 Sam. 14:47).

The Manifestation of Christ

Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer is one of the richest individual human shadows of the Lord in the scriptures. In Boaz two infinite truths concerning the Lord come to the fore, He was a kinsman, and her redeemer.

Boaz and Christ as Kinsman:

- a) For to be a kinsman there were three qualifications and then the fourth was the privilege of being such.
 - i) The first qualification was the individual had to substantiate his right of relationship. A stranger could not be a kinsman, for a kinsman had to be related to those he redeemed (Deut. 25:5, 7-10). The Lord was related to humanity being the “Son of man” who “partook of flesh and blood” (Heb. 2:14-15; Jn. 1:14; Rom. 1:3; Phil. 2:5-8). As such, the kinsman foreshadowed several great truths:
 1. The condescension of the Lord
 2. The incarnation of the Lord
 3. The closeness of the Lord to humanity
 - ii) The second qualification was he had to fulfill the requirements of the law, His moral perfection’s.
 - iii) The third qualification was he had to be able and willing to pay the price of redemption (Gal.3:13; Eph. 1:7, 14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 5:9)
 - iv) The privilege was the woman could become his bride and wife.
- b) There are other lovely truths:
 - i) He came from Bethlehem (ch. 1:22; 2:4)
 - ii) He was the Lord of the Harvest (ch. 2:3)
 - iii) He was a mighty man of wealth (ch. 2:1)
 - iv) He came to where Ruth was (ch. 2:4)
 - v) He was the Dispenser of blessing (ch. 3:15)
 - vi) He could not redeem Ruth for himself until after the first kinsman rejected the offer (ch. 4:4-6)
 - vii) He bought her for an undisclosed price (ch. 4:9)
 - viii) She became his wife (ch. 4:10)
 - ix) He was the Giver of rest (ch. 3:1)

The Manifestation of God

- 1) In Ruth, as in Esther, God is manifested in His sovereign grace and overruling power.
- 2) Despite the many failures of Israel recorded in Judges, in those days God was working through a family leaving the land of promise to bring about His own purposes for the coming Messiah.

Ruth's Relationship to Judges

Judges is the only book in the scriptures, that I am aware of, which has a double beginning and a double ending. In the ancient scriptures the Jews always connected Judges and Ruth together, for between them they give in triplicate the conditions of things in Israel during the time of the Judges. Neither the last chapters of Judges or the book of Ruth develop that which is historical (Jud. Chs. 1-16 records the historical development whereas Judges chs.17-21 and Ruth record the spiritual and moral conditions). The three of them, by contrast, reveal the spiritual conditions of the last period of that time.

- a) The first section and narrative (Jud. 17-18) tells of Micah and the Danites and is a sordid narrative of apostasy and idolatry. This was a major evil as the Holy Spirit emphatically records (Jud. 17:3, 4, 5; 18:14, 17, 18, 20, 24, 27, 30, 31). This was religious perversity.
- b) The second section and narrative (Jud. chs. 19-21) records vicious reverence and the base immorality of gang rape. This was moral perversity.
- c) The third section and narrative (Ruth) is set in contrast because it shows love, piety, and purity. Therefore, Ruth is the delight of love and purity in the midst of the morass of corruption and idolatry. This was individual conviction.

Structure

The book is divided into two main sections:

- a) The love of Ruth for another, where her love is the origin of devotion (ch. 1:1-2:23)
- b) The love of another for Ruth, where she is the object of devotion (ch. 3:1-4:22)

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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