

Ruth 1

Introduction

The name "Ruth" means "friend, companion"

Ruth is not a fairly common name today

-For the years 1890-1900, Ruth was ranked at #6 as a favorite name for girls in the U.S.

-But for 2011, Ruth was at #347 in the U.S. (a big drop in Bible names in general)

-Have we had any members of this congregation named Ruth?

When the writer of these notes was growing up, he had a wonderful aunt named Ruth – she has now departed from this life, but she left many wonderful memories with her survivors concerning her faithfulness to the Lord

Note to the teacher: There are many wonderful art works on the Internet of Ruth and Naomi (paintings of them together, etc.)

-It would be good to download these paintings and show them to the class.

The setting for the book of *Ruth*

Review of the organization of the Bible:

Pentateuch (5)	-Gen. – Deut.
History (12)	-Joshua – Esther
Poetry (5)	-Job – Song of Solomon
Major Prophets (5)	-Isaiah – Daniel
Minor Prophets (12)	-Hosea – Malachi
Gospels (4)	-Matthew – John
History of the Church (1)	-Acts
Letters of Paul (13)	-Romans – Philemon
General Letters (8)	-Hebrews – Jude
Revelation (1)	-Revelation to John

Optional: Notice the 12 books of history:

-From the crossing of the Jordan River to the close of Old Testament times (the book of *Esther*)

-Approximate date for the crossing of the Red Sea: 1445 BC

-Then 40 years in the wilderness

-The crossing of the Jordan River into the Promised Land: 1405 BC

Period of the Judges: 1405-1043 BC (then the reign of Saul began, as the first king over the 12 tribes) – so about 350 years of the Judges

1-2 Samuel – the reigns of Saul and David

1 Kings – Solomon (*1 Kings 12* – the 12 tribes split into two nations)

2 Kings and 1-2 Chronicles: the time of the kings (did not include the kings of the Northern 10 Tribes – these two books were meant to encourage the Jews who survived the Babylon captivity)

Notice the book of *Judges*

-It is probably the most violent book in the entire Bible

-Samson – much bloodshed – a wild man, fought vicious battles with the Philistines

Judges 19 – cutting up the body of a concubine (after her rape and death)

Judges 20-21 – almost the total destruction of the tribe of Benjamin

The book of *Judges* would be an X-rated movie today – so much violence

Read Judges 21.25 (last verse in the book)

What was the reason for the violence and bloodshed? The people had left God and his word (that is the theme of the book of *Judges*)

Any applications to our country today?

Then think about the book of *1 Samuel*

-We remember the corrupt sons of Eli

-People were demanding a king from Samuel

-Who was appointed as the first king over Israel? Saul

-How did that turn out? He was removed from being king because of his disobedience of the laws of God (he offered animal sacrifices, without waiting for Samuel to arrive; later he committed suicide)

Saul was replaced by David, who was later replaced by his son Solomon

-So from the book of *Judges* until the end of *2 Chronicles*, there was so much turmoil and violence and bloodshed and sexual immorality and nations rising and falling

But sandwiched in between the books of *Judges* and *1 Samuel* is the very short little book of *Ruth*

Someone has said that *Ruth* is "like a peaceful valley of brooks and beautiful fields with two ragged mountains on each side"

Purpose of the book:

To show that even in the worst days of violence and wickedness, righteous people can still live peaceful and faithful lives

Stated another way: Not all was lost in the time of the *Judges* – there were still some faithful people who were able to live peaceful and calm and loving lives

Author: Anonymous – it had to be someone who lived until the days of David

-**See Ruth 4.22** - this Scripture tells us that Ruth was the great-grandmother of David

-Jewish scholars have usually believed that Samuel wrote the book – an excellent choice and very likely

So what is the first theme of the book? Living a faithful and peaceful life in times of great turmoil and violence

A second theme: God loved the Gentiles also (Ruth was a Moabite – not a direct descendant of Abraham)

-She was in the genealogy of Jesus – **See Matt. 1.5, Luke 3.22**

What is book in the 12 Minor Prophets showed that God loved the Gentiles? Jonah

Recommended reference books: *Beacon Bible Commentary*, J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth – Romance of Redemption*, Leslie G. Thomas, *The Beautiful Gleaner* (GA, 1961) – See: *Thomas' Valedictory Sermons* (outstanding!)

Ruth 1.1-5

- V1 – The setting for the book?** The days of the *Judges*, when a famine was taking place
- Why a famine?** Punishment from God; crops destroyed by the Philistines (*Judges 6.3-4* – days of Gideon)
- This will be the story of one tiny family
- Yet the Holy Spirit considered it to be important
 - And it was a part of the genealogy of the Messiah
 - We never know how small things may have a tremendous impact on future events
- What did the man do?** Took his wife and two sons to Moab
[Look up Moab on a Bible map – SE of Dead Sea]

Origin of the Moabites:

- Moab was the son born to Lot and his older daughter (incest) – *Gen. 19.30-38*
- Remember Balak?** – He tried to get Balaam to curse the children of Israel - Balak was the king of the Moabites (*Numbers 22-24*)
- The Moabites did not want Moses and the Israelites to come through their land on the way to Canaan
- Zephaniah 2.8-11* – prophecy of the destruction of Moab because of its pride

V2 – Name of the husband and wife? Elimelech and Naomi

- Names of their two sons?** Mahlon and Chilion
- They all went to the land of Moab

V3 – The first tragedy to occur with this family? Elimelech died

V4 – What did the two sons do? Both married Moabite women

- The names of the two wives? Orpah and Ruth

Wikipedia:
Winfrey was named "Orpah" after the Biblical character in the Book of Ruth, but her family and friends "didn't know how to pronounce it", and called her "Oprah" instead.

V5 – Next event? Both of the sons died

- Now we have 3 widows (one Jewish mother and two Moabite daughters-in-law)

Ruth 1.6-13

V6 – What decision did Naomi make? To return to Judah

- Why?** The rumor of food there
- An interesting way to put it: *The Lord had visited his people....*
- What kind of woman was Naomi pictured to be here?** Very practical
- In other words, when you get hungry and lonely, you can always go home

Robert Frost, "Death of the Hired Man":
'Home is the place where, when you have to go there,

They have to take you in.'
(commonly said during the Great Depression)

- It is again true today because of the bad economy
- many young people are moving back in with their parents

V 7 – The three of them started on the road to Judah

V 8 – **What did Naomi recommend to Orpah and Ruth?** That they stay in Moab
-**Why?** Because she could not guarantee them a husband or a home in Judah
-The two daughters-in-law must have been good women (v 8b)

V 9 – **Naomi's wish?** That they could remarry

V 10 – **Reaction of Orpah and Ruth?** They wanted to return to Judah with Naomi

V 11 – Reference to the Old Testament marriage laws – **Read Deut. 25.5**
-Reference to the Levirate marriage laws
-But Naomi had no hope of more sons for her two daughters-in-law
-**Where in the New Testament is there a reference to the levirate marriage law?** *Matt.*
22.23 – Story of Sadducees to supposedly disprove the resurrection

V 12-13 – **Message of Naomi?** Very practical
-There was no hope of their getting husbands from her (she was too old, etc.)
-But notice v 13c – Naomi was a complainer

Ruth 1.14-18

V 14 – Notice the two different attitudes between Orpah and Ruth
-Orpah could cry and express her love for Naomi, but she really did not have any deep feelings for Naomi – Orpah is never mentioned again after this point in the Bible
-The same with a lot of people today who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ
-They claim to be faithful, but they don't really mean it – their "faith" is very shallow

Read Matt. 7.21-23

- But what did Ruth do?** She was clinging to Naomi
- Search Google-Images for paintings of this scene**

V 15 – **Naomi's comment?** Follow Orpah back to Moab and its gods
-**Why would Naomi say this?** Maybe a test for Ruth
-There are times in life when we make momentous decisions (mid-life career change, moving to a new town, getting married, etc.)
-This was such a time in Ruth's life

V 16-17 – Often used in weddings (beautiful words), but really the words of a daughter-in-law to her mother-in-law
-**What would have caused Ruth to make this decision?** The godly life of Naomi, her monotheistic religion

- Ruth was abandoning the pagan gods of Moab, and there was no turning back
- What major changes was Ruth going to make in her life?** Changing nationalities, moving to a new home, adopting a new set of relatives
- Have we ever had anybody in this congregation who gave up one nationality to become a citizen of another nationality?**
- But more importantly: a new faith in the one true God
- What kind of impact can a father-in-law or mother-in-law have on a son-in-law or daughter-in-law?** A tremendous effect, either for good or for bad
- If the person who married our child sees us as weak (in the Christian faith), it will have disastrous consequences
- But if that person sees that the church always comes first in our lives (with no exceptions), the effect will be great for good
- There are many jokes about mothers-in-law, but a godly Christian mother-in-law who is totally committed to the Lord and his church can have a tremendous effect on others
- What lady earlier in the Old Testament made a decision similar to Ruth's?** Rahab
- Her story...?**
- For Ruth, the entire course of her life changed, and the course of Old Testament history also changed because of the genealogy of Jesus Christ

V 18 – Did Naomi try to discourage Ruth from going with her from this point on? No

Ruth 1.19-22

V 19 – Why would the ladies say, "Is this Naomi?"

- They had been gone about 10 years
 - They had left with the Naomi's husband and their two sons – now all dead
- Some have said that this is similar to the Prodigal Son
- Any similarities?** He returned a lot poorer than when he left
 - Any differences?** Naomi did not suffer because of her sins

V 20 – Note again the complaining nature of Naomi

- People have always tried to blame God for their misfortune – the "old poor me" defense

V 21 – Again God is blamed

V 22 – **Time of the year when they returned?** The beginning of the barley harvest (April, spring)

- What is the significance of this?** As the book unfolds, we learn more and more about the providence of God

See McGee, *Ruth*, p. 69 – the importance of Ruth entering Bethlehem = the importance of people today entering the church of Christ