

Ruth

Summary

The book of Ruth tells the story of Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, during a difficult time. There is a famine in Jerusalem and their family decides to move to the region of Moab. While they are staying in this land, all of the men in their family die. By this time, the famine ends, and Ruth and Naomi travel from Moab back to their ancestral home in Jerusalem in hopes of survival. Ruth meets a "kinsman redeemer" named Boaz. A kinsman redeemer is a distant relative who marries a widow to care for her and keep the family line going. In an incredible act of love and mercy, Boaz does exactly that. Boaz marries Ruth and takes care of her and Naomi. He provides the security that they need to survive, showing God's provision through the course of their struggles.

Author

The authorship of Ruth is unknown. Although the book of Ruth does not name an author, early rabbinic tradition believes that it was written by the prophet, Samuel. However, the book refers to King David, who came to the throne after Samuel's death, therefore, Samuel's authorship is very unlikely.

Date

The exact date that the book of Ruth was written is uncertain, but most scholars suggest a date between 1010 B.C. and 1050 B.C. due to the mention of King David.

Primary Characters

Ruth (Ruth 1-4)

Naomi (Ruth 1-4)

Boaz (Ruth 2-4)

Historical Moments

Famine in Jerusalem (Ruth 1)

Major Theological Themes

God Will Help His People - In chapter 2, Ruth and Naomi became aware that God came to the aid of His people, which led them to travel back to Bethlehem. Even in difficult times, we must know that God will provide. It may not always be the way we expect or desire, but He will provide.

God Offers Redemption - Through the relationship between Ruth and Boaz, we get a preview of God's redemption through Jesus Christ. Boaz came to save Ruth and Naomi, and all that Ruth had to do was accept his gift. Likewise, Christ comes to save mankind, and all that we need to do is receive His gift.

God's Providence - We can trust that God will work in our lives in ways that we cannot imagine. God worked through famine, through a move from Moab to Bethlehem, and through a chance encounter in a field. While it may have been difficult for Ruth and Naomi to see God's hand at work from their vantage point, it is much more obvious to the reader. Often in our difficult situations, we struggle to see God at work, and the story of Ruth should serve as a reminder.

Lessons Learned from Ruth

The Value of Loyalty - Throughout the book of Ruth, we are given examples of unconditional loyalty. Despite the fact that Naomi gave Ruth permission to leave her, Ruth refused to do so. She went as far as to say, *may the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me* (Ruth 1:17). While we are not told that Ruth was rewarded due to her loyalty, she did meet Boaz because of her faithfulness. This led to Ruth giving birth to a son who became the grandfather of the great King David.

The Value of Kindness - As with loyalty, kindness is evident throughout the book. Ruth is kind to Naomi by staying by her side and caring for her. Boaz is kind to Ruth by providing for her in the fields and eventually marrying her. The presence of kindness, in the difficult times, allowed each of the characters to make it through the hard times and eventually flourish.