

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
6-5-24

Overview Book of Ruth

When someone says, “Let me tell you about my mother-in-law,” we expect some kind of negative statement or funny anecdote. That’s because the mother-in-law caricature has often been used in humor and comedy. The book of Ruth, however, tells a different story. Ruth loved her mother-in-law, Naomi. Recently widowed, Ruth begged to stay with Naomi wherever she went, even though it would mean leaving her homeland. She ended her plea with, “Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God” (1: 16). Naomi agreed, and Ruth traveled with her to Bethlehem.

Not much is said about Naomi except that she loved and cared for Ruth. Obviously, Naomi’s life was a powerful witness to the reality of God. Ruth was drawn to her— and to the God she worshiped. In the succeeding months, God led this young Moabite widow to a man named Boaz, whom she eventually married. As a result, she became the great-grandmother of David and an ancestor in the line of the Messiah. What a profound impact Naomi’s life made!

The book of Ruth is also the story of God’s grace in the midst of difficult circumstances. Ruth’s story occurred during the time of the judges— a period of disobedience, idolatry, and violence. Even in times of crisis and deepest despair, there are those who follow God and through whom God works. No matter how discouraging or antagonistic the world may seem, there are always people who follow God. He will use anyone who is open to him to achieve his purposes. Ruth was a Moabite, and Boaz was a descendant of Rahab, a former prostitute from Jericho. Nevertheless, their offspring continued the family line through which the Messiah came into our world.

Read this book and be encouraged. God is at work in the world, and he wants to use you. God could use you, as he used Naomi, to bring family and friends to him.

VITAL STATISTICS

PURPOSE: To show how three people remained strong in character and true to God even when the society around them was collapsing

AUTHOR: Unknown. Some think it was Samuel, but internal evidence suggests that it was written after Samuel’s death.

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: The people of Israel

DATE WRITTEN: Sometime after the period of the judges (1375– 1050 B.C.)

SETTING: A dark time in Israel’s history when people lived to please themselves, not God (Judges 17:6)

KEY VERSE: “But Ruth replied, ‘Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God’” (1:16).

KEY PEOPLE: Ruth, Naomi, Boaz

KEY PLACES: Moab, Bethlehem

THE BLUEPRINT

1. Ruth remains loyal to Naomi (1:1-22)
2. Ruth gleanes in Boaz's field (2:1-23)
3. Ruth follows Naomi's plan (3:1-18)
4. Ruth and Boaz are married (4:1-22)

When we first meet Ruth, she is a destitute widow. We follow her as she joins God's people, gleanes in the grain fields, and risks her honor at the threshing floor of Boaz. In the end, we see Ruth becoming the wife of Boaz. What a picture of how we come to faith in Christ. We begin with no hope and are rebellious foreigners with no part in the kingdom of God. Then as we risk everything by putting our faith in Christ, God saves us, forgives us, rebuilds our lives, and gives us blessings that will last through eternity. Boaz's redeeming of Ruth is a picture of Christ redeeming us.

MEGATHEMES

THEME: FAITHFULNESS

Explanation: Ruth's faithfulness to Naomi as a daughter-in-law and friend is a great example of love and loyalty. Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz are also faithful to God and his laws. Throughout the story we see God's faithfulness to his people.

Importance: Ruth's life was guided by faithfulness toward God and showed itself in loyalty toward the people she knew. To be loyal and loving in relationships, we must imitate God's faithfulness in our relationships with others.

THEME: KINDNESS

Explanation: Ruth showed great kindness to Naomi. In turn, Boaz showed kindness to Ruth—a despised Moabite woman with no money. God showed his kindness to Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz by bringing them together for his purposes.

Importance: Just as Boaz showed his kindness by buying back land to guarantee Ruth and Naomi's inheritance, so Christ showed his kindness by dying for us to guarantee our eternal life. God's kindness should motivate us to love and honor him.

THEME: INTEGRITY

Explanation: Ruth showed high moral character by being loyal to Naomi, by her clean break from her former land and customs, and by her hard work in the fields. Boaz showed integrity in his moral standards, his honesty, and by following through on his commitments.

Importance: When we have experienced God's faithfulness and kindness, we should respond by showing integrity. Just as the values by which Ruth and Boaz lived were in sharp contrast to those of the culture portrayed in the book of Judges, so our lives should stand out from the world around us.

THEME: PROTECTION

Explanation: We see God's care and protection over the lives of Naomi and Ruth. His supreme control over circumstances brings them safety and security. He guides the minds and activities of people to fulfill his purposes.

Importance: No matter how devastating our present situation may be, our hope is in God. His resources are infinite. We must believe that he can work in the life of any person— whether that person is a king or a stranger in a foreign land. Trust his protection.

THEME: PROSPERITY/ BLESSING

Explanation: Ruth and Naomi came to Bethlehem as poor widows, but they soon became prosperous through Ruth's marriage to Boaz. Ruth became the great-grandmother of King David. Yet the greatest blessing was not the money, the marriage, or the child; it was the quality of love and respect between Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi.

Importance: We tend to think of blessings in terms of prosperity rather than the high-quality relationships God makes possible for us. No matter what our economic situation, we can love and respect the people God has brought into our lives. In so doing, we give and receive blessings. Love is the greatest blessing.