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Article 8: Ruth at a Glance

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RUTH AT A GLANCE

This is the story of two widows, the first a (temporarily) bitter and disillusioned woman named Naomi, and the second, her daughter-in-law, a new convert to Israel's God, Ruth by name. In the providential plan of God Ruth meets and marries Boaz, a godly man from the tribe of Judah, which couple will later become the great grandparents of King David himself.

BOTTOM LINE INTRODUCTION

HOW ON EARTH DID A PAGAN WIDOW GET A BOOK IN THE BIBLE NAMED AFTER HER?

Here is the thrilling story. Ruth is the first of two biblical books named after a woman. The other is Esther. Note the contrasts between these two women.

Ruth was a Gentile who lived among Jews. Esther was a Jewess who lived among Gentiles.

Ruth married a Jew. Esther married a Gentile.

In obedience to Naomi (her mother-in-law), Ruth's faith is rewarded (3:1-6).

In obedience to Mordecai (her uncle), Esther's faith is rewarded (Esther 4:13-14).

The eventual outcome in both stories is determined through a midnight conversation: Ruth's talk with Boaz, Haman's talk with the king. (See Ruth 3:8-13; Esther 6:1-10).

FACTS REGARDING THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK

1. Who? **Samuel**. He was the son of Hannah (1 Sam. 1:19, 20) who anointed both Saul and David as king over Israel (1 Sam. 9:27-10:1; 16:13).
2. What? The books of Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel 1-24.
3. When and where? 1020 B.C. (?), probably from Shiloh (1 Sam. 3:21) or Ramah (1 Sam. 7:17) in Israel.
4. Why?
 - a. Judges. The woes of Israel (due to sin) and the warriors of God (the 12 Judges).
 - b. **Ruth**. The thrilling love story of David's great-grandparents, Boaz and Ruth.
 - c. 1 Sam. 1-24. Saul's anointing as Israel's first king and subsequent persecution of David.
5. To whom? The generations living just prior to and immediately following the monarchy in Israel.

KEY EVENTS

1. Ruth's conversion to the true God
2. Ruth's marriage to Boaz

KEY INDIVIDUALS

1. **Elimelech:** husband of Naomi
2. **Naomi:** Ruth's mother-in-law
3. **Ruth:** wife of Boaz, daughter-in-law to Naomi, mother of Obed, and great grandmother to King David
4. **Boaz:** husband of Ruth, father of Obed, and great grandfather to King David

KEY PLACES

1. **Bethlehem:** home of Naomi
2. **Land of Moab:** original home of Ruth
3. **A barley field:** where Boaz and Ruth met

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. Ruth becomes the third of four women to be mentioned in the genealogy of Christ as given by Matthew (1:5). The others are Tamar (Mt. 1:3), Rahab (1:5), and Bathsheba (1:6). Ruth can also be looked upon as the third of three Old Testament women who foreshadow Christ and his church in the New Testament. The first two are Eve (Gen. 2), and Rebekah (Gen. 24).
2. Ruth provides a marvelous illustration of redemption. The law made provision for women who, due to the death of their husband, were left without heirs and faced with the loss of their property. Both heirs (Deut. 25:5-10) and property (Lev. 25:25-28) were to be secured by a "close relative," or "kinsman redeemer" (Hebrew *goel*, 2:20; 3:9, 12-13; 4:1, 3, 6, 8, 14). This law sanctioned the ancient custom of *levirate* or "brother-in-law" marriage. Gen. 38:1-10 records an incident in which the custom was disregarded; the story of Ruth illustrates its proper application. The kinsman redeemer had to meet three qualifications:
 - He had to be a blood relative.
 - He had to be willing to redeem.
 - He had to be able to pay the redemption price.The kinsman redeemer is a beautiful picture of Christ, who met all these qualifications (Gal. 4:4-5; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).
3. This story records the first of five all-important trips to the little city of Bethlehem. The *first* resulted in the marriage of Ruth to Boaz. The *second* occurred when Samuel went to Bethlehem to anoint David as king (2 Sam. 16:13). The *third* took place when Joseph and Mary left Nazareth for Bethlehem (Lk. 2:1-7). The *fourth* and *fifth* transpired at the visit of some shepherds and wise men (Lk. 2:15-16; Mt. 2:8-11).
4. Some of the Scripture's most beautiful words of love and devotion are found in Ruth: *"And Ruth said, 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"* (1:16-17).

5. Even though the events in Ruth occur during the Judges period, it is in stark contrast to that depressing and depraved era. It is, in fact, like a pure lily gloating on a stagnant pond.
6. Instead of bloody battlefields, we read of blooming harvest fields. In place of the soldier's shout there is the farmer's song. The story progresses from a famine, to a funeral, to a field, and finally, to a firstborn.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

Genesis:

- Genesis, like Ruth, contains examples of God's providence. What at first seems to be coincidence often turns out to be God's plan. Joseph happened to be in the right place at the right time in Egypt, as did the servant of Abraham in Gen. 24.
- Jacob's statement of despair in Genesis can be compared to that of Naomi's in Ruth.
Note:
Jacob's statement: "*All these things are against me*" (Gen. 42:36).
Naomi's statement: "*The hand of the Lord is gone out against me*" (Ruth 1:13).

Matthew:

- The book of Ruth closes with a genealogy, while the book of Matthew opens with one.
- Both genealogies refer to Ruth, her husband Boaz, her son Obed, grandson Jesse, and great grandson David (Ruth 4:21, 22; Mt. 1:5-6).

TITLES FOR AND TYPES OF JESUS

1. The Almighty (1:21)
2. Kinsman Redeemer (2:1)
3. The Lord God of Israel (2:12)