

A Series on the Book of Ruth

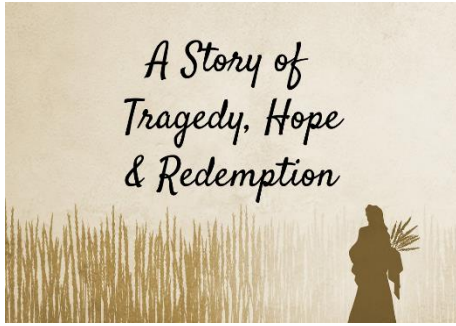
*A Story of
Tragedy, Hope
& Redemption*

A Publication of Ray Reynolds Rap



BIBLE CLASS STUDY GUIDE

Prepared by Ray Reynolds, Ph.D.



BIBLE STUDY GUIDE FOR THE BOOK OF RUTH

Publication of Ray Reynolds Rap

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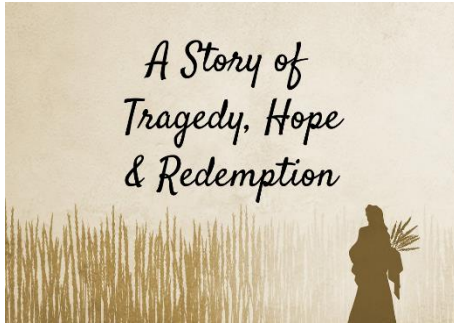
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INTRODUCTION

Author:

The author of the book is unknown and was not given at the time of its composition. Some scholars believe that it was written by the prophet Samuel. This is a widely held tradition but Samuel died prior to the kingship of David and Solomon (**I Samuel 25**). The date of the book may reveal another writer, unless the latter part was written after the fact (see Date).

Date:

Dating the book has proven to be difficult. The predominant view is a date between 1010 and 930 BC, after David assumed the throne of Israel. This date seems appropriate because can note the references to “latter times” and Jewish customs that were altered or abandoned (**Ruth 4:7**). The genealogy of David is also mentioned at the end of the book (**Ruth 4:18-22**). Therefore, the book was probably written during the time of David or Solomon.

Theme:

The events of the book clearly take place during the period of the Judges and in a rural setting. The story begins in the heathen country of Moab, a region northeast of the Dead Sea, but then quickly moves back to Bethlehem.

The general theme of the book is hope and redemption. The main characters at the beginning of the book include Elimelech and Naomi. They have rights to ancestral property in Bethlehem. The family flees Bethlehem due to a famine but Elimelech and his two sons still die.

A dilemma arises when Naomi decides to return home. Her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, expect to make the trip with her. Eventually Orpah turns back but Ruth clings to her mother-in-law. Naomi will change her name to “Mara” to abandon what is pleasant and accept what is bitter (word play).

The rest of the story reveals the love and devotion of these widows. It also highlights Ruth’s courting, and eventual marriage, of Boaz. He was a wealthy man who accepts the role of Kinsman Redeemer (**Leviticus 25**). They will bear a son, Obed, who will become the grandfather of David and the ancestor of Jesus. Obedience brings Ruth into the lineage of Jesus Christ.

Audience:

The audience of Ruth seems to be the Israelites. Ruth teaches that genuine love requires unwavering sacrifice. Humility, service, love and kindness are rewarded by God. The Israelites needed to be reminded that God abundantly blesses those who live obedient lives and follow His will. The Israelites also needed to remember that God extends mercy to the merciful. The Lord expects us to be good neighbors and treat one another with fairness. We should not neglect the poor, stranger, or the widow.

Literary Notes:

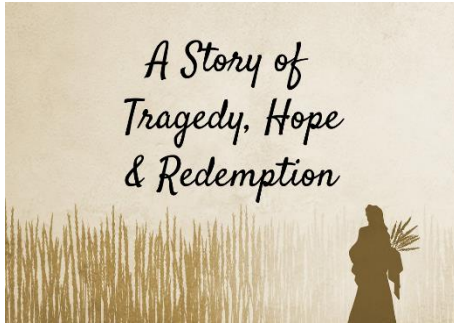
Ruth is considered to be a literary masterpiece. It is written in a short story format. There is suspense, romance, drama and redemption. The story also reveals a historical and theological purpose. The redemption of Ruth (and Naomi) is a foreshadowing of our relationship with Christ (see the New Testament). Jesus redeems His people, the spiritually impoverished, from the slavery of sin and spiritual death. We witness the sovereignty of God in action throughout Ruth. He has not forgotten His people.

Key Verses:

Ruth 1:1, 6, 16-17, 21, 2:4, 11-12, 3:5, 9-11, 17, 4:6, 9-10, 13-17

Outline of the Book:

- I. The Predicament of Naomi (Chapter 1)**
 - A SIGNIFICANT FAMINE IN BETHLEHEM (v.1)*
 - A FATEFUL SOJOURN IN MOAB (vs.2-5)*
 - A FAITHFUL RETURN TO JUDAH (vs.6-18)*
 - A FUTURE AWAITS NAOMI & RUTH (vs.19-22)*
- II. The Plans for Ruth (Chapter 2)**
 - RUTH IS FAITHFUL TO NAOMI (vs.1-7)*
 - BOAZ SHOWS FAVOR TO RUTH (vs.8-13)*
 - RUTH WORKS THE FIELD (vs.17-19)*
 - NAOMI FORMULATES A PLAN (vs.20-23)*
- III. The Proposal of Boaz (Chapter 3)**
 - THE TEACHING OF NAOMI (vs.1-4)*
 - THE TROUBLE FOR RUTH (vs.5-7)*
 - THE TEMPERANCE OF BOAZ (vs.8-13)*
 - THE TRIUMPH OF THE WOMEN (vs.14-18)*
- IV. The Provision of God (Chapter 4)**
 - THE ASSEMBLY OF THE ELDERS (vs.1-4a)*
 - THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE KINSMAN REDEEMER (vs.4b-7)*
 - THE ACCEPTANCE OF BOAZ (vs.8-12)*
 - THE ANCESTRY OF OBED (vs.13-22)*



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The Predicament of Naomi (Chapter 1)

INTRODUCTION: Ruth was a young foreign girl, raised in paganism, immersed in idolatry, and a descendent of Moab. However, despite all odds, Ruth weaves her way into the greatest story ever told (the story of Jesus). This book connects us to the past of Israel and propels us into the future kingdom. Without this little book we couldn't connect the house of David to the tribe of Judah. It is a story of tragedy, hope, and redemption. Let's study together...

DISCUSSION:

I. A SIGNIFICANT FAMINE IN BETHLEHEM (v.1)

- A. The Specific Timing
- B. The Special Town
- C. The Sudden Tragedy

II. A FATEFUL SOJOURN IN MOAB (vs.2-5)

- A. The Immediate Family
- B. The Family Tree
- C. The Failure of the Family

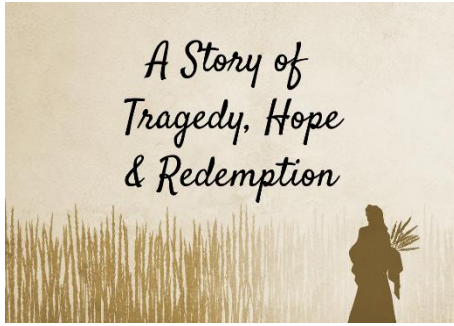
III. A FAITHFUL RETURN TO JUDAH (vs.6-18)

- A. The Decision of Naomi
- B. The Decision of Orpah
- C. The Decision of Ruth

IV. A FUTURE AWAITS NAOMI & RUTH (vs19-22)

- A. The Boastful Crowd
- B. The Bitterness of Naomi
- C. The Blessings of God

CONCLUSION: These ladies (Naomi and Ruth) returned to Judah/Bethlehem during the barley harvest. This sets the tone for the next part of the story. This is not the end of their journey. This story is about making tough choices. Elimelech, Mahlon, Chilion, Ruth, Orpah, and Naomi all had to make tough decisions and they had to live with consequences (good and bad). When we read this story we realize that we also have tough decisions ahead of us. We will all face a predicament like this one. Will you choose what is right or will you choose what is wrong (**Matthew 6:33**)? Do not wait to do the right thing! Follow God!



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The Plans for Ruth (Chapter 2)

INTRODUCTION: We noticed in our last lesson that Naomi and Ruth have returned to Bethlehem. These two ladies had already faced tragedy and were unsure of God's plan. Naomi has asked people start calling her "Mara" which changes her name from one that means "pleasant" to another that means "bitter." The previous chapter ended on a positive note. We are told that they returned during the barley harvest. The famine was over! Better days are ahead for these two ladies. Let's study together...

DISCUSSION:

I. RUTH IS FAITHFUL TO NAOMI (vs.1-7)

- A. Ruth Wants To Serve Naomi
- B. Ruth Wants To Seek Favor
- C. Ruth Wants To Satisfy Hunger

II. BOAZ SHOWS FAVOR TO RUTH (vs.8-13)

- A. The Compassion of Boaz
- B. The Consideration of Boaz
- C. The Comfort of Naomi

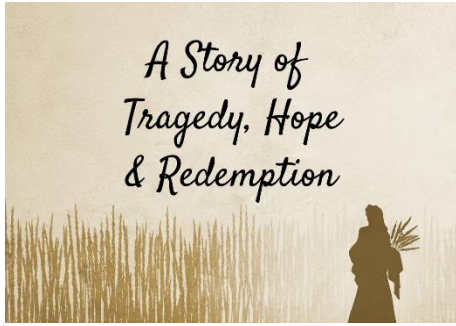
III. RUTH WORKS THE FIELD (vs.17-19)

- A. The Measure
- B. The Meal
- C. The Message

IV. NAOMI FORMULATES A PLAN (vs.20-23)

- A. The Kindness of God
- B. The Kinsman Redeemer
- C. The Knowledge of Naomi

CONCLUSION: Naomi has found the good in a bad situation. Every person needs to learn to see God's hand in everything around us (**Romans 8:28**). We need to look for something positive things and always give God glory (**Philippians 4:8-11**). Naomi and Ruth have found hope in the midst of tragedy. It doesn't bring back their husbands, heal their wounds, finalize their grief, and remove sorrow or heartache. However, it does allow them to see something new on the horizon. A new day was dawning. They are being offered a second chance! Do you need second chance? Are you lost in sin? Are you covered up with shame and guilt? Do you need healing? Come to the foot of the cross! Right now you've got to make a decision. Which path will you take (**Matthew 7:13-14**)? Do not wait to do the right thing! Follow God!



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The Proposal of Boaz (Chapter 3)

INTRODUCTION: Why do relationships have to be so difficult? Sometimes it takes a lot of work to make it right. We often get our hearts broken along the way. We must remember that God's way is always the best way. He is always right on time! Previously we have noted that Ruth and Naomi came to Bethlehem during the barley harvest. The famine was over for the people, but these two widows were desperate to find help. God had already provided for them (**Deuteronomy 25:5-9**). How will He work this plan together for good? Let's study together...

DISCUSSION:

I. THE TEACHING OF NAOMI (vs.1-4)

- A. The Security
- B. The Swiftiness
- C. The Secrecy

II. THE TROUBLE FOR RUTH (vs.5-7)

- A. The Promise
- B. The Path
- C. The Posture

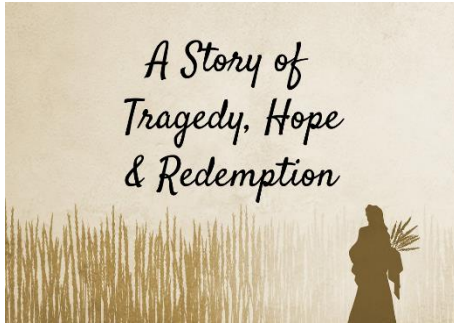
III. THE TEMPERANCE OF BOAZ (vs.8-13)

- A. The Request
- B. The Reply
- C. The Respect

IV. THE TRIUMPH OF THE WOMEN (vs.14-18)

- A. The Veil
- B. The Victory
- C. The Verdict

CONCLUSION: Naomi gives Ruth a four step process to redemption. She said, "Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor" (**Ruth 3:3**). If you want to claim your Kinsman Redeemer (Jesus Christ) you must wash yourself in baptism for the remission of your sins (**John 3:5**), receiving anointing of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38**), put on a new life in Christ (**Galatians 3:27**), and start following God's path for your life (**John 14:6**). We need to be saved! Then, we need to get out into the world and shine our light! We need to be an example of Christ. Ruth continued to surrender herself and serve others. Are you redeemed by the blood of the Lamb? Will you be servant-minded like Ruth? Will you follow the Lord's instruction?



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The Provision of God (Chapter 4)

INTRODUCTION: The book of Ruth is not just about providing a home for Naomi, finding a husband for Ruth, or seeing God's love for mankind. It is about preserving the lineage of the Messiah. This story shows us that when God accomplishes His will through us it will bless everybody around us. These women were in great company and attention is called to other great women like them: Leah, Rachel, Tamar, and Rahab. God used all of these women to preserve the Messianic seed (**Matthew 1**). These women would have a part in blessing the whole earth! Let's study together....

DISCUSSION:

I. THE ASSEMBLY OF THE ELDERS (vs.1-4a)

- A. Boaz Calls a Public Meeting
- B. Boaz Confronts a Problem
- C. Boaz Keeps His Promise

II. THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE KINSMAN REDEEMER (vs.4b-7)

- A. The First Relative Approves
- B. The First Relative Aborts
- C. Boaz Accepts Responsibility

III. THE ACCEPTANCE OF BOAZ (vs.8-12)

- A. The Reflection of Boaz
- B. The Redemption of Ruth
- C. The Response of the People

IV. THE ANCESTRY OF OBED (vs.13-22)

- A. Ruth Was Blessed
- B. Naomi Was Blessed
- C. Israel Was Blessed

CONCLUSION: The poem "If God Went On Strike" offers a graphic reminder of what would happen if God went on strike. We are more blessed than we could ever imagine. When we head down the wrong path, God has already prepared an exit strategy. He never gives up on us (**Hebrews 13:5**). He hopes that we will trust Him, submit to Him, and serve Him in a humble obedient way. **Proverbs 16:9** says, "*the heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.*" What would happen if you completely surrendered to the will of God? Do you believe He will provide? Are you serving Him with your whole heart?