

Ruth(2)

July 14, 2022

In the previous lesson we looked at what the book of Ruth says. What is the purpose of this book?

Takeaways

I'm certain I have not considered everything God would have us to know about Ruth and the book named for her, but I think the following points address some of those things as they came to mind during this study. I had read the book of Ruth several times, but it has been a while since the last time. I had never studied it, though. Needless to say, this study has been enlightening to me and I hope it is to you, too.

- The Deaths of Elimelech and His Sons
 - Why did Elimelech and his sons die sooner than normally expected? Elimelech left Judah on his own accord, whereas Joseph was sold into Egypt and Jacob and his family moved to Egypt as commanded by God (Genesis 37:25-28; 46:1-7). Although Scripture doesn't say, Elimelech's untimely death may have been a judgment of God for leaving the promised land and not depending on the provision or guidance of the Lord. One of God's promises to Israel was that if they were obedient then He would fulfill the number of their days; i.e., they would live full lives (Exodus 23:20-26). Israel did not obey God, however, and suffered the consequences. God will fulfill all of His promises to Israel in their future kingdom, during which the people of Israel will be completely obedient to God (Ezekiel 36:22-36; Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:37-41).
 - Likewise, perhaps the sons died because they had married foreign women, which was against the commandment of God to Moses and Israel (Deuteronomy 7:1-6). There is no indication that Orpah or Ruth had turned away from worshiping the idols of Moab to worship the God of Israel—the Almighty God—when they married the sons of Elimelech. It is possible that the sons of Elimelech had turned from God to worship the idols of Moab.
- Lineage in the Book of Ruth
 - The book of Ruth provides the lineage of David beginning with Perez. Perez was a son of Judah, who was a son of Jacob (who was also known as Israel—Genesis 32:28; 35:10). In Matthew 1:1-16 and Luke 3:23-38, we see the lineage of Boaz that confirms that Ruth was the grandmother of David, King of Israel, and that her son Obed was in the line of Christ. So, David's grandmother was a Gentile, which is significant as discussed later.
 - In the lineage of Christ, Matthew 1:5 states that Rahab (spelled *Rachab* in the King James Version) was the mother of Boaz. Although I'm not certain, it appears that this is the same Canaanite (Gentile) woman named Rahab (a prostitute at the time—Joshua 2:1) who hid the spies of Joshua before Israel destroyed the city of Jericho through the power of God (Joshua 2 and 6), and much later was identified in Hebrews 11:30-31 for her faith. If this is the same Rahab, she wasn't the actual mother of Boaz but was an ancestor of Boaz; i.e., in the line of Boaz and, therefore related to him.¹ Furthermore, it would indicate that two Gentile women were integral parts of God's plan for Israel and its Messiah.

¹ I haven't studied it through for myself, but it appears that when genealogies are provided in Scripture that there are often gaps; i.e., some people in the generational line are missing in some lists and appear in other lists, or are left out entirely. Other people have researched this and it appears to me to be true. For example, genealogies of Judah through David are the same in Ruth 4:18-22 and Matthew 1:3-6, but the list in Luke 3:31-33 includes the

- Luke 2:4 refers to Bethlehem as *the city of David*. The account of Ruth established the basis for this name as Elimelech, Boaz, and David were all from Bethlehem (Ruth 1:1; 2:4; I Samuel 17:12-15).
- Ruth's Character
 - Ruth loved and was devoted to her mother-in-law, beginning in Moab. This may not have been acceptable to her family because she had married a foreigner; furthermore, she may have turned from worshiping the idols of Moab to worship Naomi's God—the Almighty God of Israel. If so, these things might have helped her to decide to leave with Naomi.
 - God rewarded Ruth for her faithfulness to Naomi by providing more grain to glean than expected. God is able to provide for us beyond what we can ask or think (Ephesians 3:20-21), but we don't realize this if we aren't living as faithful ambassadors for Christ (i.e., when we depend on ourselves and not on God, we can't see what God is doing for us).
 - Faithful to her word to Naomi, Ruth did exactly as Naomi instructed her to do regarding Boaz, not realizing the outcome for doing so. Consequently, Ruth was exceedingly blessed by God.
 - Was it wrong for Boaz to marry Ruth who was a Gentile, as apparently it was for the son of Elimelech who married Ruth? I don't believe so. Ruth had committed to Naomi that she would worship Naomi's God. It would appear that Ruth was doing so by the time she married Boaz, so she would have been a Jewish proselyte (Gentile sojourner or alien who believed in the God of Israel) by then; that is, she would have been considered to be a Jew like Boaz (II Chronicles 30:25; Acts 2:5-11; 6:1-6).
- Naomi's Character
 - Naomi apparently continued to worship the Lord during her sojourn in Moab (even though her means to do so were limited because she was in a Gentile nation) because she was aware of what He was doing for her people in Judah. Also, Ruth was aware of Naomi's faith because she desired Naomi's God to be her God.
 - Her daughters-in-law loved her and wanted to remain with her. This is a testament to the love and integrity of Naomi.
 - She tried to keep their best interests in mind, knowing that they likely wouldn't be accepted in Judah (because they were Moabites—Gentiles).
 - She believed that God had forsaken her or was judging her by taking away her husband and sons. She didn't understand that she had nothing to do with their deaths and didn't realize that God was working through those events according to His plan; she temporarily shifted her focus from God to herself. This is a reminder to us to remember that God is working out His will through us and that He works all things together for good for His own children (Philippians 2:12-13; Romans 8:26-28). We should remain faithful to God because God is faithful to His word—He will accomplish what He has promised (I Corinthians 1:4-9; 10:13; Philippians 1:6; I Thessalonians 5:24).
 - Naomi later recognized, however, that the Lord was providing for Ruth, and herself, through Boaz. Thinking that God has left or ignored us because of adverse circumstances is a natural reaction. However, although this wasn't the case with Naomi because the deaths of her husband

additional generation of Admin between Ram and Amminadab. Apparently, therefore, each genealogical list provides names of people most significant to the specific context of that portion of Scripture; the order is correct but not all of the generations are listed. Therefore, saying that Rahab was the mother of Boaz would be similar to correctly saying that Abraham was the father of Mary's husband Joseph (Matthew 1:1-2, 16).

and sons were not consequences of her actions, we need to regularly examine ourselves to see if we are living for ourselves and not for God (II Corinthians 5:14-15; 13:5; Galatians 6:1-5). For me, what shifts my thinking back on the right path is to remember all the things that God has done, and is doing, for me through Christ. It is true that believers (the children of God) have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).²

- How the Account of Ruth Relates to God’s Prophetic Plan for Israel
 - Elimelech and his family left Israel for a foreign land (to escape a famine) that worshiped other gods; Israel, too, walked away from God by worshiping the idols of the Gentile nations.
 - Naomi returned to Israel after suffering desolation (she thought God had forgotten or forsaken her). God will gather the people of Israel from the nations back into its own land after the rapture (Ezekiel 36:22-36; 37:15-23; Hosea 3:1-5; Micah 2:12-13).
 - Ruth gleaned grain that had dropped from the sheaves collected by the reapers. I believe that this is a foretaste of the Gentile woman who responded to Jesus about (figuratively) feeding on the crumbs that had fallen from the master’s table (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30). Furthermore, the example in the New Testament is a foretaste of the prophesied last days when the gospel of Christ’s future kingdom on earth will be spread to the Gentile nations, and when Gentiles will be blessed through Christ and His kingdom (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:15-18; Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20).³ When individual Gentiles believe that message of the kingdom, they will be saved and will inherit the promises of Israel—they will become as the redeemed Jews. Therefore, I believe that the account of Ruth’s gleaning and the outcome of it was prophetic regarding Israel and the Gentile nations.
 - Boaz redeemed Naomi’s inheritance—the family land of her deceased husband (in accordance with the accepted practices of the people of Israel at that time)—and specifically included the Gentile Ruth as part of that redemption (not necessarily acceptable in Israel). Boaz was a type of Christ⁴ who will redeem His people, and the Gentiles will be blessed in accordance with God’s promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:15-16). Please note that in this account Boaz did not spiritually redeem Naomi (cleanse her of sin) but redeemed her land—her inheritance. After the rapture, Christ will restore Israel to its promised land and then spiritually redeem (cleanse) the nation.
 - Naomi realized that Ruth’s only hope as an unmarried Gentile woman in Judah was to obtain the good graces of Boaz. Ruth followed Naomi’s instructions and eventually was exceedingly blessed through marriage to Boaz and becoming a part of the lineage of Christ. This is another example of how Gentiles will be blessed through Christ and His chosen nation of Israel.
- How Does Ruth and the Book About Her Relate to Us?
 - Ruth was a stranger to the people of Judah and their God. However, by following the instructions of Naomi, she was blessed by God. Paul refers to Gentile believers as formerly being outside the commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-22; Romans 11). That is, we were enemies of God (actually children of Satan—Ephesians 2:1-3) and had no claim to the promise of eternal

² For example, some of the blessings we receive when we believe the gospel of salvation include forgiveness of sins, eternal life, peace with God, adopted as a child of God, holy and blameless in Christ, alive in Christ, justified, sanctified, glorified, etc. Our blessings are listed in several of my studies including **Our Lord Jesus Christ**.

³ See my studies **The Mystery (God’s Secret Plan)** and **Our Lord Jesus Christ** that address the prophesied last days.

⁴ In Scripture, a *type* is a foreshadowing or figure (representation) of a future person or event (Romans 5:14; Hebrews 11:17-19).

life that the believers of Israel had (Titus 1:1-3; 3:4-7). Upon believing the gospel of salvation, Gentiles today (in this dispensation of grace) are adopted as God's children and are full heirs of God in Christ (Romans 8:14-17; Ephesians 1:3-6; 3:1-7).

- God was working with Ruth through Naomi. If she hadn't believed what Naomi said and done as she was told, she wouldn't have been blessed as she was. Similarly, the Apostle Paul was chosen by God to reveal His message of grace through Christ to us and we are exhorted to walk worthy of our salvation because we are ambassadors for Christ (Romans 11:13; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 3:1-12; 4:1-3; Colossians 1:9-12; II Corinthians 5:20-21). If we don't follow the instructions of Paul, then we are being disobedient to God and will not know the peace of God that passes all understanding (Galatians 1:6-12; I Timothy 1:15-16; Philippians 4:6-9). Our salvation in Christ is secure but we will not realize the blessings we have in Him (Ephesians 1:13-14; II Corinthians 9:6-11; Galatians 6:7-9).
- The book of Ruth (as in all books of the Bible) demonstrates God's sovereign will. He worked everything together in ways that were not understood at the time, as He does now (Romans 8:26-28; 11:33-36; Ephesians 1:9-12; Philippians 2:12-13).
- To learn from the examples of Elimelech and his sons (I Corinthians 10:1-13), we are to depend on God in everything (Proverbs 3:5-6; Romans 8:26-28; Philippians 4:6-7, 11-13), and God desires that we marry believers (II Corinthians 6:14). Furthermore, we are disciplined by God when we live according to our will instead of according to His will (I Corinthians 11:27-32; Hebrews 12:4-11). However, the gospel of the grace of God does not say that His discipline includes death for our transgressions (although the *natural* consequence of some sins is death⁵). We are not under the Law of Moses (the Law of God) and its direct consequences for disobedience, but under the grace of God (Romans 3:21-28; 6:14; Galatians 3:10-14; Colossians 2:13-14; Ephesians 3:1-12). Paul did not tell the Corinthian and Galatian believers that they would die because of their disobedience and sinful activities; instead, he exhorted them (and us) to set aside the deeds of the flesh and live according to the Spirit of God (I Corinthians 3:1-3; 6:18-20; Galatians 3:1-3; 5:16-25; Colossians 3:1-17).

Summary

We are blessed to have the account of Ruth in the Bible—she was a remarkable woman with traits that we can take to heart. The book of Ruth, however, tells us about *three* important people in God's eternal plan. As I see it, the book of Ruth is pivotal in God's plan for Israel because I believe that it conveys for the first time in Scripture, through types, how God will fulfill His promise to Abraham (i.e., through his seed—Christ—all the nations will be blessed).

As explained in my takeaways, I believe that Naomi represents the nation of Israel, Ruth represents the Gentile nations, and Boaz represents Israel's Messiah, Jesus Christ, who will physically restore (redeem) Israel to its promised land and bless the Gentile nations. Prophecies related to the Messiah's spiritual redemption of Israel would come later, building upon what God revealed through the book of Ruth. I know that there are more things to learn from this short book that I haven't seen yet. What else have you discovered?

⁵ We have diseases that can naturally lead to death (heart disease, liver disease, lung cancer, throat cancer, sexually transmitted diseases, etc.) that often are directly related to our irresponsible lifestyle (overeating, overdrinking, smoking, tobacco chewing, immoral sexual behavior, etc.).