

**Message #1**

**Various Texts**

Not long ago there was an article written about the most powerful and influential women in this world. On the list were women like Ruth Ginsburg, Rosa Parks, Hillary Clinton, Angela Merkel, Michelle Obama and Kamala Harris. We would certainly admit they are famous women in this world, but not too many would say that they are the most powerful and influential women when it comes to God and His word and Jesus Christ.

The truth is not too many famous women in this world are known for their love for Jesus Christ or their commitment to the Scriptures or their desire to submit to the will of God. Not many famous women seem to be interested in motivating other women to get serious about their relationship with God. So we would conclude that some of the most influential women in this world are not the most influential women in the sight of God.

But in the Bible, there are some rare women who are powerful and influential when it comes to God. In fact, God names them in His word. **There are specifically two women in the Bible who actually have a Bible book named after them. One is Esther and the other is Ruth.**

Ruth is one of the most significant women to ever live on this earth. Her life and impact actually has ramifications for any believer in Jesus Christ. The way God used her is one of the most amazing stories of any woman who has ever existed.

In the next weeks, we would like to take you through the book that bears her name.

**QUESTION #1 – Why study Ruth?**

We give six reasons for studying this book:

**Reason #1** - Ruth is one of only 66 inspired books of God.

Ruth is a great book to read. It is like reading a nice, interesting story. In fact, it has been called a “Hebrew short story that is told with consummate skill” (*NIV Study Bible*, p. 364). This book is a story of some women who were in a crisis in life. But it is not just a heartwarming short story of women in a crisis; this book is an inspired book of God.

The book of Ruth is the eighth book of the Bible in the Old Testament. It sits as the number eight book after Judges in the Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate and in our English translations. In the Hebrew Bible there are three divisions of O.T. books:

- 1) The Torah
- 2) The Prophets
- 3) The Writings

Ruth is in the category of the writings (Hagiographa) and actually is the 30<sup>th</sup> book in the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Text is very reliable with very few issues. The Septuagint and the Masoretic Hebrew Text are almost identical.

Daniel Block, who has written a good commentary on Ruth, says that “Compared to many other Old Testament books, the textual integrity of Ruth is remarkable” (*Judges, Ruth*, p. 589).

Much of the book of Ruth was found in 1952 in Qumran Cave #2, in the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Four fragments of the book of Ruth were found in Cave #2. Two small fragments from book of Ruth were found in Cave #4. The Jews had carefully copied this book as one of God’s books.

As far as it being a book that belongs in the Bible, there has never been any disagreement or challenge to it. By the first century AD, both Jewish and Christian writers cited it.

So there is no doubt that the book of Ruth is one of only 66 inspired books that God has given to man. So we are going to study it.

This book of Ruth contains only 85 inspired verses, but it is so deep and rich that as one teacher observed, it would be impossible to exhaust the book if you preached it every Sunday for a lifetime.

**Reason #2** - Ruth is a book that is critical to the physical existence of the God/Savior/Messiah Jesus Christ.

Quite honestly, there is no other book like it. **There are twelve people named in this book who are specifically named in the genealogy list and record of Jesus Christ:**

- 1) Perez - Ruth 4:18 / Matt. 1:3
- 2) Tamar - Ruth 4:12 / Matt. 1:3
- 3) Hezron - Ruth 4:18 / Matt. 1:3
- 4) Ram - Ruth 4:19 / Matt. 1:3
- 5) Amminadab - Ruth 4:19 / Matt. 1:4
- 6) Nahshon - Ruth 4:20 / Matt. 1:4
- 7) Salmon - Ruth 4:20 / Matt. 1:4
- 8) Boaz - Ruth 4:21 / Matt. 1:5
- 9) Obed - Ruth 4:21 / Matt. 1:5
- 10) Jesse - Ruth 4:21 / Matt. 1:5-6
- 11) David - Ruth 4:17, 22 / Matt. 1:1, 6
- 12) Ruth - Ruth 4:13 / Matt. 1:5

In **Matthew 1:5**, Ruth is specifically named as being in the lineage line of Jesus the Messiah. The story of this woman is a critical story because she becomes a key person for the existence of Jesus Christ being born as a human.

**Ruth became the great-grandmother of King David and Jesus Christ came through the Davidic line.**

**Reason #3** - Ruth is a book that shows God's redemptive plan not only has to do with National Israel, but also individual Gentiles.

The book of Ruth has been called "A love story of redemption." It is a story about how God redeems a woman, a nation and Gentiles. The hope that this book brings to destitute Gentiles is second to none.

Ruth was a Gentile Moabite woman who was from an ethnic group that was so godless that God wanted them destroyed (Jeremiah 48:1-20). Yet this one woman was different in her thinking. As a Gentile woman on the verge of destruction, Ruth proves that any sinner who wants a relationship with the true God can have it. It is an amazing story of grace.

**Reason #4** - Ruth is a book that tells the story of a woman God honors at the highest level.

Ruth is not specifically a history or a biography, but it is an amazing story. What we have here is a narrative story about a Moabite woman who ended up being a key ancestor of King David.

God elevates Ruth to one of the highest levels in the entire Bible. So a logical question would be, what was the reason? What were her qualities? Why was Ruth singled out to be elevated? If any woman follows the pattern of Ruth, she will be elevated.

**Reason #5** - Ruth is a book that presents the sovereignty of God in seemingly normal pressures and problems and decisions in life.

Ruth was a seemingly insignificant person living her life as a normal seemingly insignificant Moabite woman. In some ways she seemed to be a nobody. Some bad things happened to her in her life. She got hit with tragedy and she had to respond to it and go on with life. What she did not know is that God was sovereignly at work in every bit of her life.

**Reason #6** - Ruth is a book that says if you step out by faith and trust the Lord and turn to the Lord, you can be the recipient of some amazing blessings of God.

Ruth made a major decision that went against the grain of her own family and even the counsel of some who were right with God. That decision she made paid rich dividends.

For these six reasons, we will study the book of Ruth.

**QUESTION #2** – Who wrote Ruth?

**The book does not actually name the author who wrote it.** After reading page after page on the subject, **our conclusion is we don't know who wrote the book.**

Some have speculated that it was written by Hezekiah, Ezra, or King David. Many take the position that Samuel wrote it. Samuel was born in 1105 BC and died in 1010 BC.

The Talmud (a compilation of Jewish teachings and instructions) says that Ruth was written by Samuel. In fact, the Talmud says, “Samuel wrote the book which bears his name and the Book of Judges and Ruth.”

If, in fact, Samuel did write the book, it would have been written near the time when David was anointed King of Israel.

**QUESTION #3** – When was the book of Ruth written?

We know from the opening sentence of Ruth (Ruth 1:1) that this story occurred “in the days of the Judges” (1373 BC- 1049 BC).

It would appear from that statement that those days were over. Furthermore, the last word of the book is “David.” The time stops with David. So we may logically assume that this was written between those two time frames.

Most conservative scholars believe that the book was written near the time of David or Solomon. If we look at the genealogy at the end of the book of Ruth (4:18-22), we certainly could conclude **it was written near the time of David, which places it somewhere near the year 1000 BC - 970 BC.**

**QUESTION #4** – What are some purposes for the book of Ruth?

We will give seven purposes:

**Purpose #1** - To give a written account of the ancestry of David, to establish the lineage of Jesus Christ. The book tells a story that builds to this thesis in 4:17-22.

One commentator observed that when one goes through the book of Ruth, one does realize “the king is coming” (Daniel Block, *Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament Ruth*, p. 29). Ruth is the great-grandmother of King David and King David is the line of Jesus Christ.

**Purpose #2** - To show that God’s sovereign program, even when national, still cares for the individual.

God is a sovereign God over the whole world. He is over everything, including all nations of the world. But God is not a Deistic Being who just lets individual people go it on their own. God is intimately involved in people’s lives. In this book, God was sovereignly working to see to it that a widow and her daughter-in-law had enough food to eat.

**Purpose #3** - To show that God is totally sovereign and providential in all individual human events including that which is a tragedy.

God's people go through tragedies in life. Economies collapse and loved ones die. Ruth shows us that God's sovereign hand is in these things. Naomi's husband died and so did her two sons. She knew God was even sovereign over that (1:20-21).

**Purpose #4** - To show that anyone may become a believer and end up experiencing the great blessings of God, regardless of the past.

It does not matter what a person's past, that life may become a blessed life.

**Purpose #5** - To show that God rewards those who do good things for others.

We may never realize the importance of small things we do for God.

**Purpose #6** - To show that God can use all races of people from all backgrounds of life.

Boaz and Ruth are a mixed marriage. Boaz was an Israelite and Ruth was a Moabite. God used them both with their backgrounds.

**Purpose #7** - To show the kind of woman that God really does honor.

No woman or man for that matter can manipulate the favor and honor of God. To be a woman God honors means that woman honors God in her life. Ruth does that. She is an example to all women as to the kind of woman He elevates and blesses.

There are five women specifically named in the Matthew genealogy of Jesus Christ—Mary (1:16), Bathsheba (1:6), Tamar (1:3) Rahab (1:5) and Ruth (1:5). In this book we get to see the qualities that God honored that gave Ruth this accolade.

**QUESTION #5** – What is so unusual about the title of the book?

**The title of the book is “Ruth.”** There are three unusual things about this title:

**Unusual Title Matter #1** - The book Ruth is named after a woman.

As we mentioned, Ruth is one of only two books in the Bible named after a woman. This makes it unusual.

**Unusual Title Matter #2** - The book of Ruth is named after a woman who is not Jewish.

Ruth is not an Israelite, but a Moabite. That point is stressed multiple times in the book—Ruth 1:4, 22; 2:2, 6, 21; 4:5, 10. **This is the only book in the Hebrew Bible that is named after one who is not an Israelite.**

**Unusual Title Matter #3** - The book of Ruth is named after a woman who is not the primary character of the book.

There are three main characters in the book and Ruth is not the main character.

**The book begins with a focus on a key woman named Naomi, and as it develops, it moves to a focus on a key man named Boaz.**

**As near as I may determine, Ruth is named in the book 12 times, Naomi is named in the book 20 times and Boaz is named in the book 20 times.** Just those numbers indicate much of the focus.

In fact, when one looks at chapter 4, the entire emphasis is on Boaz and Naomi, with a small reference to Ruth. So the book is actually named after one who seems to be of lesser importance in the story.

Daniel Block wrote: “Of the 1,294 words in the book, 678 occur on the lips of the characters. However, of the three main actors in the drama, Ruth speaks the least often and her speeches are the shortest. Based on the plot, the book could just as well be called “The Book of Naomi,” but on the basis of the dialogue, the concluding episode and the final genealogy, “The Book of Boaz” would be appropriate” (*Ruth, Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 30).

**QUESTION #6** – What is the theme of the book of Ruth?

When this book of Ruth opens, it opens with a wife and mother losing via death her husband and two sons (1:5). They were all dead. The woman’s name was Naomi. **But this woman had an awesome and accurate theological grasp of the sovereignty of God in her life.**

In fact, in **1:8-9, 21; 2:20** she honors God as Jehovah. In **1:20-21**, she honors God as Almighty and admits God has sovereignly permitted her husband and sons to be dead. In 1:16, she honors God as Elohim.

In the book God is seen as the one who causes famine (**1:2**). God is seen as the one who determines who dies and who lives (**1:21**). God is seen as the one who causes chance events (**2:2-5**). God is seen as the one overseeing the schemes of men (**3:4, 7, 8, 14**). God is seen as one who is involved in monitoring legal processes (**4:1**).

In this book, Naomi goes from being full to being empty to being full.

In the midst of troubles and trials and hardships, God is still sovereign over world powers and over individual lives and He will bless and honor and give His grace to those individuals who turn to Him.

Ruth tells the story of one who goes from nothing to something, from famine to fullness; from barrenness to fruitfulness, from death to life. God will take one who is lonely and empty and bring them to fullness and happiness, if individuals will turn to Him.

We are living in a difficult world filled with worldwide problems. Famine, poverty, migrations and death all plague the world in which we live.

What this world needs is a story like the book of Ruth. People's circumstances can change. Things can go from bad to better. Lives can be transformed. God's individual healing and blessings and grace can be experienced by those who have been the lowest.

God can give His great blessings to His people. That is the story of Ruth.