

920401WE
Walk Through the Scriptures
Week # 10
A Study Guideⁱ to
THE BOOK OF RUTH
“THE WOMAN WHO
WOULD NOT TURN BACK”

“The Woman who would not turn back”

The book of Ruth opens during the period of the Judges when apostasy, decadence, violence, anarchy and warfare were the norm. Famine strikes **Bethlehem** which means a house of bread. In this time of need, **Elimelech** which means my God is King, seems to depart from the plan and desires of God. He takes **Naomi** which means pleasantness and favor, away from the land of promise and the covenant people of God into the land of Israel's former wandering and current enemies, Moab. With them go their two sons **Mahlon** which means joy or song, and **Chilion** which means ornament or perfection. These men seem to have stepped out of the revealed will of God in His Word, by marrying pagan, gentile women of God's enemies.

Away from the land of promise in Moab [descendants of Lot who worshiped Chemosh a god of human sacrifice by burning], **Elimelech** [my God is King] dies and so does **Chilion** [joyful song] and **Mahlon** [ornament of perfection]. After ten years of hardship **Naomi** [pleasant sweetness] becomes **Mara** [bitterness]. With all those she ever loved buried beneath the sod of Moab [her husband and

two sons]. She finally looks back at the land of promise because food is available in Bethlehem. As she sets off to return home she asks her daughter-in-laws to go back to their families and find a new life. In one of the most touching moments of the Scriptures, **Ruth** [satisfied, fullness] clings to Naomi and the God of Israel. **Orpah** [stiff necked, double minded] departs for her people in Moab.

The two main sources of extra biblical history on this period are the widely respected references *Encyclopaedia Judaica* and the *Jewish Encyclopedia* both record under Ruth the historical note that Orpah and Ruth were descendants of Eglon King of Moab. When Orpah returned she forsook the God of Israel, embraced the gods of Moab, married and bore a child and from her descendants came Harafu the mother of the four Philistine giants, one who was named Goliath. It is fascinating to think that David Ruth's grandson met and destroyed Goliath Orpah's grandson. The result of a simple turn in the path of life. What a great difference small decisions make in life.

Listen to what a pastor wrote a century ago: “Now if this is not a striking type-picture of Israel we are much deceived. Israel as originally constituted in Canaan was a Theocracy. God was Israel's King. Israel was Elimelech -- and could say “My God is my King.” Israel was married, as it were to Naomi -- pleasantness, favour, and blessing; and Israel's offspring were Mahlon and Chilion -- song and perfectness. But, under testing, Israel compromised and went astray, leaving the early allegiance to Jehovah. Elimelech died. No longer could Israel say with a perfect heart before the Lord -- “My God is my King.” Mahlon and Chilion passed away too -- the “song” of praise and the “ornament” of devout godliness died off; while eventually Naomi, the once “favoured” and “pleasant” returns, a sorry remnant, “empty” and “bitter,” as in the days when the remnant returned, under Ezra and Nehemiah.

But from the point of Naomi's return, Ruth ("comeliness") takes the prominent place; and Ruth is a type of the Church. The type-picture is made up of three scenes -- (1) Ruth in the harvest field, (2) Ruth in the threshing floor, (3) Ruth in the home of Boaz.

First we see the Ruth who gleanes in the harvest field, the alien, poor and destitute; having no part or lot in Israel, or in the covenant of promise, yet seeking refuge under the wing of Jehovah, God of Israel, and begging kindness at the hand of the gracious, wealthy Boaz. The name, Boaz, means "In him is strength"; and surely Boaz, the strong, the wealthy, the noble, the gracious, is here a type of Christ, as he looks on the Gentile Ruth with generous favour and with tender love toward her.

Second, we see Ruth who, having no hope in anyone other than Boaz, goes to the threshing floor, risking everything, believing in his kindness, staking her all on his honour and grace and his power to redeem; coming to him poor and friendless, yet loving him because he had first loved her; lying at his feet, praying the shelter of his name, asking the protection of his arm, seeking the provision which only his love could give; and finding in him more than hope had dared to expect.

Third, we see the Ruth who, having been graciously received by redeemer-Boaz, becomes united to him as his wife, shares with him his life, his home, and all his wealth and joys." What a beautiful picture! Now let's glean some spiritual grain from this book.

I. **In even the shorter books of the Bible there is so much beauty and truth.**

- A. Boaz a kinsman [goel appears 13x in this book] who redeems Ruth parallels Christ. Our Messiah has:
 - 1. The Ultimate Right to redeem.
 - 2. The Ultimate Power to redeem.

- 3. The Ultimate Desire to redeem.
- B. The Book may be outlined to show a bit of the I Corinthians 13 quality of a "love that suffers reigns at last". [Baxter]
 - 1. Love's Resolve [1] in Ruth's noble choice.
 - 2. Love's Response [2] in Ruth's lowly service.
 - 3. Love's Request [3] in Ruth's tender appeal.
 - 4. Love's Reward [4] in Ruth's marital joys.
- C. Challenges for the dedicated Christian are vivid:
 - 1. Following the Lord takes definite choices. [Ruth clings to Naomi]
 - 2. Following the Lord often means we must leave behind things that were once dear. [Ruth leaves behind her old family]
 - 3. Following the Lord demands constant discipline. [Ruth could see her old home in the hills of Moab every day in the fields of Bethlehem]
 - 4. Following the Lord offers incredible rewards. [Ruth is invited into the family of Boaz, the line of David, the lineage of the Messiah Jesus Christ]

II. **In the Darkest Times of Life God can shine brightest.**

- A. The book of Judges portrays gloomy disobedience, idolatry, unbelief, immorality, compromise and destructive sin.
- B. The book of Ruth portrays the bright, unchanging, loyal love that God so desires to see. Remember Micah 7:18 Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. (NIV)

C. Those verse that end the book list names that can bring joy to our hearts. If we compare these verses to the genealogy of Matthew 1 we find some components of those lists that are down right shocking. To even name women was out of the norm. But, Matthew names four who were all Gentiles and each were tainted!

1. Matthew 1: 3 Tamar [Ruth 4:18 mother of Perez] was involved in prostitution and incest with her father in law Judah to produce two sons.
2. Matthew 1: 5 Rahab [Ruth 4:20 was the wife of Salmon] was the what? The Harlot.
3. Matthew 1: 5 Ruth [Ruth 4:21 the wife of Boaz]was a Moabitess excluded from blessing for 10 generations [Deuteronomy. 23:3].
4. Matthew 1: 6 Bathsheba [Ruth 4:22 the wife of David and most likely a Hittite] this is the one we remember as David and ...equals adultery, deception, murder and so on.
5. Matthew 1: 16 Mary an unwed mother!

D. What could some of the conclusions of this list of names including Ruth's teach us?

1. **God is for women and not just men.** They followed, fed and cared for Jesus. They were last at the Cross and first to the Empty Tomb. They were there in that prayer meeting of Pentecost and are seen prominently throughout the NT church. This should encourage every woman and young lady to follow and serve even more!
2. **God is for Gentiles and not just Jews.** As Jesus prayed and the prophets foretold, there would be other sheep not of the fold of David

but blessed by the seed of Abraham and all his spiritual children. [John 10:16].

3. **God is for sinners and just the righteous.** Those are even His very words when he confessed Matthew 9:13 "... For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (NIV)

III. In some of the most insignificant places God has blessings.

A. We can find them in other genealogies:

1. Noah was the 10th generation and we see in him a God who saves by grace [Gen. 6:8].
2. Abraham the 20th generation and we see in him a God who calls by election [Gen. 11:1]
3. Boaz the 30th generation and we see a God who offers hope [Ruth] What does this mean? Love that doesn't falter or change is the message of Ruth. Hope for Jews and Gentiles may be found in the love of a God who takes in a gentile Ruth.

- 1.

ⁱ This lesson was drawn from the following sources: The Word of God; Baxter, Explore the Book; Scroggie, The Unfolding Drama; Christ in all the Scriptures; The Criswell Study Bible; Walk through the Bible; The Compact Guide to The Bible, Lehman Strauss, CHM.