

The book of Ruth introduces us to the family line of King David, and, by extension, Jesus Christ. Ruth and Boaz are the great-grandparents of David (Ruth 4:21-22) and thus are in the lineage of the Messiah. This book has many theological themes, including the redemption of Gentiles (Ruth), Boaz as a type of Christ being our kinsman-redeemer, and the right of David (and Christ) to the throne of Israel being traced back to Judah (Gen. 49:8-12; Ruth 4:18-22).

### Ruth 1

1 Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

**“Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled”** – This sets the time of Ruth in the same period covered by the book of Judges. It also implies that the writer did not live “when the judges ruled” but later on when Israel began to be ruled by kings.

**“that there was a famine in the land”** – This famine does not seem to be recorded in Judges, perhaps because it did not play a factor in any of the events recorded in that book.

**“And a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons”** – We are introduced to a specific man, who is named in v. 2, that left Israel and went to live in Moab because of the famine. The decision was apparently one of survival, as the man no doubt wanted to provide for his wife and two sons.

2 And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

We are given the names of the man, his wife and two sons in order that we may be able to follow the story. They are Ephrathites (the ancient name of the region around Bethlehem), which is significant because the family of Elimelech are the ancestors of David and Jesus Christ, the Messiah, (**Micah 5:2** “*But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*”).

3 And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. 4 And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. 5 And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

Some time after arriving in Moab, Elimelech died and Naomi was left with her two sons, both of which eventually take Moabite wives. Ten years later the two sons die, leaving Naomi alone with her two Moabite daughters-in-law: Orpah and Ruth.

6 Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread. 7 Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

After the deaths of her sons, Naomi hears that the famine in Israel has relented and she decides to return to her own country and live in the area where she had lived previously when her husband and sons were still alive. She sets out on her journey, accompanied by her two daughters-in-law.

8 And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.

At some point in the journey (perhaps at the border of Moab and Israel), Naomi stops and urges her two daughters-in-law to return to their families in Moab. She was obviously thinking of their welfare, knowing that they would likely be better off among their own people. She thanks them for their kindness to her and “the dead” (her husband and sons) and prays that the LORD would treat them kindly in return.

**Verses 9-15:** Naomi urges the two women to return to Moab and find husbands there since she is too old to provide sons to be their new husbands. The two women do not want to leave Naomi but she finally is able to convince Orpah to return to Moab. However, Ruth cannot be convinced to leave.

16 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: 17 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.

**“And Ruth said, Intreat [*urge; plead*] me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee”** – We see Ruth’s love for Naomi in this verse. She is insistent that Naomi stop trying to convince her to return to Moab and leave Naomi’s side.

**“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”** – Ruth expresses her love for Naomi by saying that she does not want to be separated from her. She adopts Naomi’s people (Israel) as her own as well as her God. Apparently she saw something in Naomi that drew her to Naomi. Orpah had returned “unto her gods” (v. 15), implying that Naomi’s daughters-in-law had worshiped the LORD while they were married to her sons. However, Ruth was not willing to return to the gods of Moab and had embraced the God of Naomi.

**“the LORD do so to me, and more also, *if ought* but death part thee and me”** – Ruth makes a vow by the LORD that she will never leave Naomi. By invoking the name of the LORD, Ruth is apparently showing her faith in the LORD.

18 When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her. 19 So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, *Is this Naomi?*

**“When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her. So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem”** – Once Naomi realized that Ruth had made her mind up, she stopped trying to convince Ruth to return to Moab and they continued their journey until they came to Bethlehem, Naomi’s home town.

**“And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, *Is this Naomi?*”** – Cities in the OT weren’t typically very large, so most everyone knew everyone else. Naomi had been gone for around 10 years, so there were many people still around that knew Naomi from before she and Elimelech had left for Moab. Apparently the years and hardship in Moab had not been kind to Naomi because these people were unsure if they were correctly recognizing her.

**Verses 20-22:** Naomi’s name means “my delight” but she declares that people should not call her by that name but call her “Mara” instead, which means “bitter.” She believes that the LORD has taken everything away from her after losing her husband and sons.

## Ruth 2

1 And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband’s, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz.

We are now introduced to a wealthy kinsman (relative) of Elimelech (Naomi’s dead husband) named Boaz. We will see the significance of the fact that Boaz is a kinsman of Elimelech in chapter 3.

2 And Ruth the Moabites said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after *him* in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.

Ruth wants to glean in the fields of anyone who would allow her to do so. Under the Mosaic law, land owners were required to allow poor people to glean in their fields, but not everyone obeyed the law. The land owners were not allowed to harvest the corners of their fields, leaving them to be gleaned by the poor. They were not allowed to go back and retrieve a bundle of grain that was accidentally left in the field. It was to be left for the poor to take (Lev. 23:22; Deut. 24:19-21).

3 And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field *belonging* unto Boaz, who *was* of the kindred of Elimelech.

Ruth finds a field in which to glean, and it happened to be a field belonging to Boaz. Of course, it wasn’t random chance that she ended up in Boaz’s field. The LORD was in control of the situation and guided her into the field of Boaz.

**Verses 4-10:** Boaz comes to the field and after greeting his reapers he sees Ruth and asks who she is. They tell him that Ruth had asked to glean in the field, which she had been doing all morning. Boaz goes to Ruth and tells her that she should not to go to any other field but to remain and glean in his field. He assures her that she will be safe because he’s instructed the young men working for him to not bother her. He shows his kindness to her by allowing her to drink from the water that the workers have drawn. She humbly thanks him and asks why he would show such kindness to a foreigner like her.

11 And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and *how* thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

As a relative of Elimelech, Boaz had already heard about Ruth and the kindness she has shown to Naomi after her own husband died. She has left behind everything and everyone she knew in Moab and has come to Israel to live among people she does not know in order to stay with Naomi.

12 The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

Boaz’s prayer is that the LORD would reward Ruth for her kindness, particularly since Ruth has now placed her trust in the LORD.

**Verses 13-23:** Ruth thanks Boaz for speaking so kindly to her and he invites her to eat with him and the workers at mealtime. He continued to show kindness to Ruth by giving her parched grain to eat until she was full and even had some left over. When Ruth returned to gleaning, Boaz told his workers to allow her to glean from the bundles of grain that they had harvested. He even instructed them to drop “handfuls on purpose” for her to glean, going far beyond what was required by the Mosaic Law. After a day’s work of gleaning, Ruth was able to thresh about an ephah of barley (about 30 lbs), which is a sizable amount for someone to glean in one day. She takes it home and shows Naomi what she gleaned, giving her the parched grain that she had leftover after eating with Boaz and his workers. Naomi asks Ruth whose field she gleaned from and recognizes that Boaz is a relative. Ruth tells of all the kindness Boaz has shown her that day and that he instructed her to stay with his workers until the end of harvest. Ruth continued to glean from Boaz’s field through the barley harvest and until the end of the wheat harvest. Barley harvest began mid-April and wheat harvest lasted until mid-June, so Ruth was able to glean from Boaz’s fields for around two months.