

Ruth

Authorship: Unknown.

Date and Location: Though it is not known precisely when the story was recorded, it had to be at least a few generations after the events it relates, for three reasons: (1) The end of the book mentions David, the great-grandson of Boaz and Ruth; (2) The opening expression, "In the days when the judges ruled," implies an author who lived after that time; and (3) 4:7 mentions a custom "in those days" the apparently had fallen out of practice. Ruth was probably written in Jerusalem by a court historian in the time of David or Solomon, between 1000-920 B.C.

Background: Sometime shortly before 100 B.C., during the last days of Israel's judges, an Israelite family moved to the land of Moab to escape a famine in Israel. When the father and two of his sons died, his wife returned to Israel with her Moabite daughter-in-law named Ruth. This set the stage for a beautiful story of faithfulness, love, and marriage. It is included in the Bible because from Ruth the Moabitess and her Israelite second husband, Boaz, would come Jesus the Messiah.

Purpose: The beginning and end of Ruth reveal much about its purpose. The book ends with a genealogy, and the last word of the book is David. The primary purpose of Ruth was to document David's godly ancestry. A secondary purpose can be seen in the book's opening verses. After preliminary facts set the stage, the drama opens with Naomi expressing her hope that her daughters-in-law will find "rest" or "security" after the deaths of their husbands. The same Hebrew word is found in 3:1, where again Naomi wishes "a permanent home" for Ruth, this time with a specific plan to achieve that goal. Ruth did in deed find a home in the God and people of Israel, as should all unbelievers. Ruth can be seen as representing the extension of God's grace to Gentiles. A final purpose was to show the wonderful, though sometimes hidden, ways in which God meets needs. Naomi was "empty" in 1:21 but had a full lap (a son) in 4:16. Note the foreshadowing of Naomi's spiritual "filling" when she was physically filled with food (3:17), as Boaz tells Ruth not to go to her mother-in-law "empty-handed," the same Hebrew word as in 1:21.

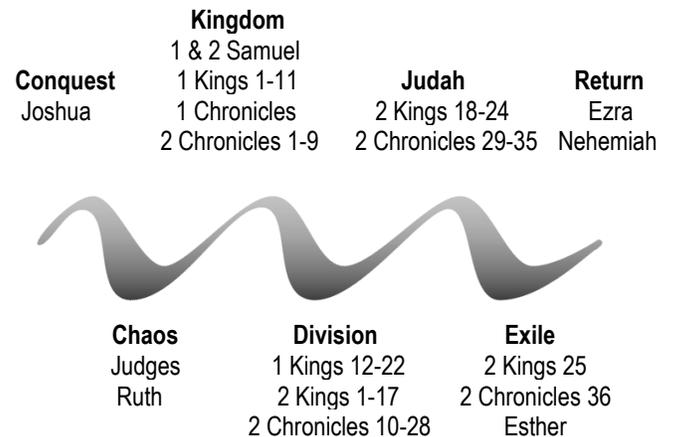
Key Verses

"But Ruth said, 'Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you'"
(Ruth 1:16-17 ESV)

Outline:

- I. **Ruth's Renunciation (1)**
 - A. The setting of the drama (1:1-5)
 - B. Naomi's three commands to return (1:6-15)
 - C. Ruth's renunciation of her people and gods (1:16-18)
 - D. Naomi's emptiness (1:19-22)
- II. **Ruth's Reaping (2)**
 - A. Introduction of Boaz (2:1-3)
 - B. Boaz takes special notice of Ruth (2:4-17)
 - C. Naomi is glad to hear of Boaz (2:18-23)
- III. **Ruth's Request (3)**
 - A. Naomi's plan (3:1-5)
 - B. Ruth's proposal (3:6-9)
 - C. Boaz's pledge (3:10-13)
 - D. Ruth returns to Naomi (3:14-18)
- IV. **Ruth's Redemption (4)**
 - A. Boaz confronts the nearer kinsman redeemer (4:1-8)
 - B. Witnesses affirm Boaz as kinsman redeemer (4:9-12)
 - C. Marriage of Boaz and Ruth; blessing of Naomi (4:13-17)
 - D. Genealogy: From Ruth to King David (4:18-22)

Peaks and Valleys of Historical Books



Three Qualifications of a Kinsman Redeemer:

- 1) Had to be a blood relative
- 2) Had to be willing to redeem
- 3) Had to be able to pay the redemption price

The kinsman redeemer is a beautiful picture of Christ, who met all these qualifications (Gal. 4:4-5; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Pt. 1:18-19).

Sources:

Journeying with God: A Survey of the Old Testament, Purposeful Design Publications.
Wilmington, Harold L. *Wilmington's Bible Handbook*, Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 1997.