

Bible Snapshots



Ruth – The Royal, Loyal and Royal Pains

Author – Most likely Samuel, ca. 1300 BC

Connection with Judges

- The book of Judges constructs what Israel as a whole looked like during the “period of the judges” from the perspective of the judges. Ruth is about a single family during that same time period and all they have to go through (1:1).

Facts

- Historical in nature; covers a period of about 12 years; 4 chapters and 85 verses; one of only two books in the Bible that bear the name of women.

Themes

- Being loyal to God in desperate times – many such as Ruth remained loyal and served God in simplicity and purity, despite the chaos of the times.
- God’s providence / Sovereignty – God bring Ruth back to Palestine, where she would meet Obed, who will end up being a forefather to King David, who is in the lineage of Christ (Mt. 1:5).
- Love – Ruth is a story about love between family, husband and wife and God and man.

Key chapters/verse

- 1 – Ruth’s Decision ; 4:14

Key phrase / word / thought

- Kinsman (2:1); near kin (2:20b)

Christ In Ruth

- Our Kinsman Redeemer (2:1) We are bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19, 20)

Ruth in the New Testament

Ruth is mentioned in Christ’s genealogy (Mt. 1:3-6; Luke 3:31, 32)

Customs and Ruth

Ruth clave to Naomi – (1:14) It was unheard of among just about any culture in these ancient times that a person would leave either family or religion. Yet, that is what Ruth does. She leaves behind both her god and her family in order to go back to Bethlehem with Naomi. While it broke every tradition, even among the Moabites, it is a prime example of the absolute surrender that we must make to God.

Skirt spread over the handmaiden (3:9) Some have asserted that uncovering of the feet of Boaz was euphemistic and implied a sexual exchange. Perhaps this is a failure to understand eastern culture, where this custom is widely known and simply means that the maid was seeking the protection of the man. When Boaz spread his garment over her (3:7-14) it showed his willingness to be her kinsman-redeemer and protect her. This ancient custom is referred to as well in Ezekiel (16:8).

Ruth’s Veil (3:15) – In the west a veil is a small piece of semi-transparent material that is seen typically at weddings. This is not the case in eastern culture. Ruth’s veil would have been a lightweight mantle or what we would call a shawl, which would have been large enough to make a bundle. Part of the veil would cover the face, but the rest would have been arranged to cover the neck, shoulders and head. Thus, it would have been easy to get so much grain in Ruth’s veil. Women of poor families in some eastern cultures still harvest the fields in like manner.

Kinsman-redeemer and shoes (4:7) – When Boaz closer kin would not redeem Naomi, realizing that the deal included Ruth, Boaz agreed with him to do so. Passing a shoe, which seems odd to us, seals the deal. In eastern culture a “bill of sale” would be given for tangible items like gold and silver and cattle. But when intangible goods were transferred, as is the case here, near kin would pass a shoe from one to another. This was done in the presence of witnesses – typically the elders of the city – and was considered binding. It also gave Boaz the right to marry Ruth.