

BIBLE SERIES: **"EXPLORING OUR AWESOME BIBLE"**

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RUTH 1-4 A WONDERFUL LESSON ABOUT PENTECOST & CHRIST



After the book of Judges, we come, curiously enough, to the book of Ruth. This interrupts the historical narrative that continues with the book of Samuel. Actually, the book of Ruth is in the wrong order in our Bibles, and in the Hebrew Old Testament, it is correctly placed in the Festival Scroll, called the Megilloth, and was read during *Pentecost*.

It is a pity it's in the wrong place. Our O.T. order comes from the Greek Septuagint version and its significance is lost when not connected to the Feast of Pentecost. It seems to be a diabolical plot to mix the books up in the Bible and conceal the knowledge of God's plan of salvation through His Feasts.

Regarding its authenticity and authorship, the *Expositor's Commentary* points out, "It seems unlikely that David would have been linked to a Moabite ancestry [of Ruth] unless the tradition was true. No Israelite would have created such a detested family connection...The story is plausible, contemporary circumstances and customs are accurately reflected...Jewish tradition in the Talmud (*Baba Bathra* 14b) accepted Samuel as its author."

Let's begin the account, and at the end, we will make the connection with the meaning of Pentecost. The names of the people in the account are important.

"Now...in the *days of the judges ruled*, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons...Then Elimelech [Heb. 'My God is king'], Naomi's husband, died [her name means 'pleasant'], and she was left, and her two sons [Mahlon 'sickly' and Kilion 'weak']. Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah [stiff-necked], and the name of the other Ruth [friend]. And they dwelt there about ten years" (Ruth 1:1-4).

God prohibited Israelites from marrying pagan Moabites (Deut. 7:1-3), but the two boys went ahead and did it. This is another example of the Bible prohibiting *inter-religious* marriages which some erroneously confuse with interracial marriages.

It is interesting that the story begins in tiny Bethlehem [Heb. 'house of bread'], which is mentioned twice at the end of Judges. Now it comes into view this third time in Ruth—and it would be the birthplace of David and the future Messiah. It would be the privileged place that would fulfill the prophecy

in Genesis 49:10, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people."

Naomi heard the famine was over in Bethlehem and decides to return, but she doesn't expect her two Moabite daughter-in-laws to accompany her. Although both of them initially wanted to go with her, Naomi tries to dissuade them. Orpah decides to stay, but Ruth will not leave her. She says the famous words, "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you: for wherever 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. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me" (1:16-17).

This is an incredible display of dedication, loyalty and self-sacrifice. She could have stayed in pagan Moab, but chose the Hebrew religion—no doubt in large part to Naomi's example of faith, even though it meant virtually accepting a life of poverty.

They arrived in Bethlehem during the barley harvest (1:22), the time of counting the days toward Pentecost. Two widows with no money and a small parcel of untilled land—not much of a future. Naomi feels she has been abandoned by God, and says her name should be changed to Mara or 'bitter'—but Ruth was no quitter. She had faith in the God of Israel and had a plan. She knew Naomi had a rich relative named Boaz ['In him is strength'] and asked her, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may favor" (2:2).

She begins gleaning the fields and finally comes unknowingly to Boaz' field. God's social welfare law protecting the poor stated the harvesters were to leave the loose sprigs to the poor (Lev. 19:9-10). But a hard day's work under the hot sun frequently netted only a small amount of grain, as described in Isaiah 17:5.

Boaz arrives and sees this relatively young woman diligently working away, and asks what is her name. The foreman answers, "It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house. Then Boaz said to Ruth, 'You will listen, my daughter, will you not?

Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn” (Ruth 2:6-10).

What did Ruth do? “So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said, ‘What have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?’ And Boaz answered, ‘It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge’ (2:11-12). This pictures a tiny bird snuggling under the wings of its mother (Deut 32:11).

Ruth thanks him and humbly mentions how she doesn’t deserve such favor. Boaz is impressed with her humility and invites her for dinner. *Expositor’s Commentary* adds, “In NT times Jews refused to eat with Gentiles (cf. Acts 10:28), but the Israelite attitude toward foreigners was apparently not so rigid in the time of the judges.”

He then notices how she saves some of the food for Naomi and is more impressed with her dedication. He then tells his workers to deliberately drop some sheaves for her to pick up. That day, she was able to gather some 40 pounds of grain! When Naomi saw this, she realized Boaz was becoming interested in her. She said, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field.’ So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law” (2:23).

Naomi then tells her: “My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Therefore wash and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall

go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do” (3:1-4).

Ruth followed Naomi’s advice and when Boaz felt someone at his feet, he was startled and asked, “‘Who are you?’ So she answered, ‘I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative.’ Then he said, ‘Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a *virtuous woman* [used for the Proverbs 31 woman (31:10)]. Now it is true that I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be that if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you—good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will...Lie down until the morning.’ So she lay at his feet until morning and she arose before one could be recognized another” (3:9-14). Then he sent her away with a generous portion of grain.

Boaz arranged a meeting with Naomi’s closest relative and some witnesses, but this man refused to buy Naomi’s land and redeem Ruth as his wife according to the levirate marriage law (Deut. 25:5-10). Having fulfilled the legal obligations with the closer relative, now Boaz can accept taking Ruth as his wife and continuing with Elimelech’s line of descent. He says, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech’s, and all that was Chilion’s and Mahlon’s, from the hand of Naomi. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate” (4:9-10).

His witnesses, impressed with this act of mercy from Boaz, proclaim, “The Lord make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem” (4:11-12).

What a turn of events for Naomi and Ruth! From being completely destitute, now they would be incorporated into the rich household of Boaz, their field made to prosper and Ruth becomes his wife.

“So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife, and when he went in to her, the Lord gave her

conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, ‘Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a close relative, and may his name be famous in Israel! And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is *better to you than seven sons*, has borne him” (4:13-15).

We see the Bible teaches not to be a respecter of persons, and how a *virtuous* woman is worth more than many average men. In those days, outside of Israel, no woman was regarded as equal to a man. Yet here is one said to be worth *more than seven men*!

There is a happy ending, “Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him. Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, ‘There is a son born to Naomi.’ And they called his name Obed [‘servant’ (of Naomi)]. He is the father of Jesse, the father of *David*” (4:16-17).

What is the connection with Pentecost since this book was to be read during that Holy Day? This feast represents the giving of God’s spirit by faith to those called among *all nations* to become God’s firstfruits. Boaz is a type of Christ, that although not obligated, extends his mercy to Ruth and Noemi--impoverished and destitute persons--and redeems Ruth. Christ does the same with us, extending His mercy on both Israelites and Gentiles, redeeming them and taking them under His protective wings. He sees the true faith which He has guided them to have, and then undeserved, accepts and redeems them as His family.

As Paul explains about believing Gentiles, “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were *without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world*. But now in Christ Jesus you who *once were far off* have been *brought near* by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:11-13).

Ruth was brought close to God through her faith and accepted into the commonwealth of Israel. As Paul further explains about this principle, “And will not the physically uncircumcised, [meaning Gentiles, men and women such as Ruth] if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew

who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that *of the heart* [Ruth had a believing heart], in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God” (Romans 2:27-29). So now it doesn’t matter where we come from—God’s way of life and Abraham’s promises are available to all of us.

As the book, *Kingdoms of Priests* points out about Ruth, “She was, then, not only a vital link in the messianic chain from Abraham to David (and eventually to Christ), but also an instrument to bridge the chasm between Judah and Moab, a type of paradigm of the reconciliation which God desires among nations, reconciliation which will fulfill the patriarchal blessing.

“When we examine the genealogical list of Matthew 1, we are struck by the fact that only four women are mentioned there, one of them being Ruth. Of these four, two (Tamar and Rahab) were Canaanites, one (Ruth) a Moabite, and one (Bathsheba) presumably a Hittite. Surely they exemplify the principle of the sovereign grace of God, who not only is able to use the foreign (and perhaps even the disreputable) to accomplish his eternal purposes, but even seems to delight in doing so. No one illustrates this better than gentle and loyal Ruth. In fulfillment of the prophetic blessing she became ‘like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel’ (Ruth 4:11)” (p. 187-188).

Thus we have an important spiritual lesson in Ruth—a Gentile who is accepted by her faith and dedication into the commonwealth of Israel. The connection with Pentecost is clear, for it represents God extending His grace and spirit to everyone who acts on their faith and begins to obey God’s Word.

They will be incorporated into the church and be part of God’s firstfruits (which Pentecost represents) and Ruth, a Moabite, is part of the heroes of faith that give us a wonderful example of overcoming adversity through faith, obedience and dedication.

As Peter mentions, “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:34-35).

As we have seen, this was the case with Ruth—who became King David’s great grandmother.