



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

God's Leader Series: Ruth

FEBRUARY 15, 2012

Dave DePue / PO Box 1775, Topeka, KS 66603 / dave.depue@capitolcom.org

These notes chronicle the story of Ruth, a book of the Bible by the same name. The historical action takes place during the period of the judges, before the year 1000B.C. Samuel has been suggested as the author, but this is not confirmed in the text. This powerful leadership lesson reviews the steps of a young widow who moves from a hopeless existence to greatness. The provision of Yahweh, the covenant making God, is boldly displayed in the background.

INTRODUCTION

Famine in the land prompted a Hebrew family to relocate, walking approximately sixty miles around the end of the Dead Sea from Bethlehem to the country of Moab. They sojourned there about ten years. During this period, Elimelech, the father died, and the two sons married local women. Then each of the sons died. This left the mother, Naomi, and the two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. In this agriculture-based culture, a son was expected to care for a widowed mother. Family was expected to carry the burden when there were no sons. Naomi was in a foreign land with neither sons nor family. Furthermore, Naomi had distanced herself from her people and her God. The people of Moab were descendents of the oldest daughter of Lot, Abraham's nephew. Moab was a pagan nation, enemies of Israel for more than three centuries. What do you do when you run into hard times and find yourself away from your source of support?

RETURNING HOME

Ruth 1:7 Naomi and her daughters-in-law left the place where they had lived and started back to the land of Judah.¹

Naomi had lived a pious life, remaining strong through her husband's and sons' deaths. Her model influenced the daughters-in-law to stay under her care rather than move back with parents or step out into the immoral culture. However, Naomi realized that they faced a difficult transition and might not find a husband there where marriages were often arranged by family. Twice she stopped at crossroads to ask if they wanted to go back. Naomi released them of any obligation to her.

The women cried together out loud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law Naomi good-bye, but Ruth held on to her tightly (Ruth 1:14). Naomi cared deeply for both of the young women but gave them the same choice that God gives to each of us!

TOTAL COMMITMENT

Ruth 1:16-17 But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me."²

Naomi had said that the LORD left her "empty" after the loss of a husband and two sons (Ruth 1:21). Note she has gained a loyal daughter as the restoration process begins (Joel 2:25). Ruth calls on the LORD, translated from the Hebrew "Yahweh" meaning that she knew Him, not just about Him.

Ruth 1:22 So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning³

God's provision for the poor in this agrarian culture was written into the Mosaic law. Reapers were to leave the corners of fields and stalks of grain dropped by workers. The two widows, needing the basics of life, arrived at the opportune time. *And Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor."*(Ruth 2:2). Ruth arrived in a field early and politely asked permission of the reapers to glean. The owner, a man named Boaz, arrived at noon. He asked about the young woman who was gleaning. The chief servant told him her name and commented on her work. Boaz had heard of Ruth's loyalty to Naomi. Boaz spoke kindly to her, insisting she share food and water provided for the reapers and to glean in all his fields. She was given favor!

BIBLE STUDIES

LEADERSHIP STUDY WEDNESDAYS: 7 TO 7:50AM, CAPITOL ROOM 142 SOUTH

STAFF/GUESTS: WEDNESDAYS: 12:05 TO 12:55 PM, GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ROOM – CAPITOL 264WEST

Kansas

God's Leaders: Ruth

BOAZ PRAYS FOR RUTH

Ruth 2:10-12 At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?" Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

Boaz did not realize that God would use him to answer that very prayer for Ruth! Naomi learned that Boaz was a close relative, likely a cousin of her late husband. In the levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:1-10) the law provided for a "kinsmen-redeemer." A close relative had the right to buy back property lost by a family member and marry the widow, enabling the family line to continue through children. Naomi carefully coached Ruth as she worked in Boaz's fields through the barley and wheat harvests (perhaps two months). Ruth symbolically asked Boaz to redeem the family heritage, taking her under his wing.

FAMILY LINE RESTORED

Ruth 4:13-17 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and 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 redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him."

Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.⁵

God used Ruth, a redeemed Moabite woman, to connect the royal line from Abraham through King David to Jesus. Ruth is the picture of one of us. We are redeemed from a relatively brief life of toil to eternal glory through the royal line of Christ.

CONCLUSION

Naomi is the image of wisdom. She modeled, mentored, and tutored through trials and tragedy. She gave wise counsel to Ruth over several years, transforming her to greatness. Ruth is the model of an emerging leader. She demonstrated an exemplary work ethic, was honest, had integrity, and was seen as noble. Most of all, she was loyal and teachable. Orpah is the image of the ordinary. She was double-minded, wavered with uncertainties, and chose the familiar, bleak as it was, over the unknown. Boaz was the image of one who was open to be used by the Lord, for His purposes. He was blessed abundantly and had his needs met beyond anything that he could imagine, including being added into the royal family line.

¹ The Holy Bible, New Century Version. (Thomas Nelson Inc.). 2005.

² The Holy Bible, New International Version. (International Bible Society). 1984.

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ The Holy Bible, New Century Version. (Thomas Nelson Inc.). 2005.