

Ruth

The Name of the Book is Very Important	Ruth is one of two books in the Bible named after a female. Her name is significant in Hebrew. It has two meanings: “companion or friend.” And “understanding.” We see both fulfilled in Ruth. The first through Ruth’s relationship with her mother-in-law, Naomi. The second when she marries Boaz and is thereby “grafted in” to the Davidic line (and Jesus’ line by extension).
The Significance of the Person is Very Important	Ruth is an important heroine in the Bible because she is a quasi-Gentile. She is a Moabite. Moab was the son of Lot who, with his sister, survived the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Consequently, she was from the same ethnic stock as Israel as a descendant of Shem. But she was different in that she was not a descendant of Jacob. The significance of who she was is this: David’s kingdom as well as Jesus’ is founded on God’s work of redemption for both the Jew and the Gentile, not just the Jews.
The Historical Setting is Very Important	In Genesis-Judges, there is a gradual movement through the periods of the Patriarchs, The Egyptian Bondage, the Exodus, the Wilderness Wandering, the Entry and Conquest, and the Judges of Israel. Ruth’s historical setting is the period of Judges, yet it sets the stage for what is about to come: the Monarchy. As a result, the book is a transitional hinge between those two periods.
The Internal Setting is Very Important	Ruth begins in Moab (northeast of the Dead Sea) and then moves to Bethlehem. A famine forces Elimelech and his wife, Naomi, from their home in Israel to the country of Moab. Elimelech dies and Naomi is left with her two sons. They marry two Moabite girls: Orpah and Ruth. Sometime later, both of her sons die and Naomi is left alone with Orpah and Ruth in Moab in a strange land for the Jewish Naomi. Orpah returned to her parents in Moab. But Ruth determines to stay with Naomi as they journey to Bethlehem. The move was providential. Ruth marries a wealthy man named Boaz. She bears a son, Obed, who becomes the grandfather of David and the ancestor of Jesus.
The Marriage is Very Important	The marriage of Ruth to Boaz was a Levirate Marriage. In ancient times, if a man died without a child, it was common for the man’s unmarried brother to marry the widow in order to provide an heir for the deceased. A widow would marry a brother-in-law and the first son produced in that union was considered the legal descendant of her dead husband. Ruth’s first husband died without having a child. Later, Ruth meets Boaz in Bethlehem, who happens to be a distant relative of Ruth’s late husband (don’t forget that the Moabites were Semitic). Ruth asks Boaz to be her kinsman-redeemer, that is, to marry her and preserve the land her husband had owned. Boaz agrees but informs Ruth there was one other relative of nearer kin and the obligation to marry Ruth fell on him first. The nearer relative, however, officially transferred the right of redemption to Boaz, clearing the way for Boaz to marry Ruth. All of it was providential.
The Implications Connections are Very Important	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The kinsman-redeemer. Boaz acted upon his duty outlined in the Law to redeem the impoverished Ruth from her circumstances. Christ redeemed us from ours. 2. The Providence of God. He guided Ruth every step of the way to fulfill His plan for her to become an ancestor of Jesus. 3. Hope for the Gentiles. Ruth foreshadows the truth God had a plan for the Gentiles well before Jesus that will be ultimately through Jesus. 4. A Proverbs 31 Woman. Ruth, a Moabite, becomes the exemplar for virtue in the OT. 5. The Boaz Typology. Boaz is a foreshadowing of Jesus.
Key Verse	<i>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. (1:16)</i>
Outline	I like to think of the word “mutual” in the Book of Ruth. It helps with seeing the structure. In chapter 1, Naomi and Ruth suffer a mutual grief. In chapters 2-3, Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz share a mutual pursuit. And in chapter 4, Boaz and Ruth have a mutual love.

The Mutual Grief (Ch 1)

1. The Worst Situation Imaginable - In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. ²The man’s name was Elimelek, his wife’s name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. ³Now Elimelek, Naomi’s husband, died, and she was left with her two sons.⁴They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, ⁵both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. (1:1-5)
2. The Right Advice - ⁶When Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. ⁷With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. ⁸Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go back, each of

you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. ⁹ May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." (1:6-9)

3. The Fate of Two Daughter's in Law Centered Around One Decision - ¹⁴ At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵ "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her." ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." (1:14-17)

The Mutual Pursuit (3-4)

1. Boaz Seeks First as Ruth Works in His Grain Field - ⁵ Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, "Who does that young woman belong to?" ⁶ The overseer replied, "She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi. ⁷ She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter." ⁸ So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. ⁹ Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled." ¹⁰ At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?" (2:5-10)
2. Naomi, Then, Tries to Help Ruth Through Nefarious Means and Ruth Goes Along With It (this is what happens when we try to do God's work our way). One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home^[a] for you, where you will be well provided for. ² Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. ³ Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do." ⁵ "I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered. ⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do. (3:1-5) **In my view, Naomi was doing her best to ensure a marriage here.
3. Ruth Pursues Boaz - ⁷ When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁸ In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet! ⁹ "Who are you?" he asked. "I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer^[b] of our family." ¹⁰ "The Lord bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. ¹¹ And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character. ¹² Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. ¹³ Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to do his duty as your guardian-redeemer, good; let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives I will do it. Lie here until morning." (3:7-13)

The Mutual Love (4)

1. The Levirate Marriage Announced: ⁹ Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon. ¹⁰ I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!" ¹¹ Then the elders and all the people at the gate said, "We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. ¹² Through the offspring the Lord gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah." (4:9-12)
2. The Levirate Marriage Consummated: ¹³ So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. . . The Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. . . ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. ¹⁷ The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. (4:13-17)
3. A Providential Lineage - This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah. . . ⁵ Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab. Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth. Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of King David. (Matthew 1:1, 5-6)