

Ruth

THE STORY OF RUTH

The story of Ruth and her family is easy to relate to. The characters were ordinary people with the same desires and needs we experience today. Ruth, Naomi and Boaz were used by God, not because of their individual greatness, but because they were open to being used to achieve His purposes.

Ruth and Boaz are the great grandparents of King David. The family line through which the Messiah came was from the offspring of Ruth, a Moabitess and Boaz a descendant of Rahab, a former prostitute from Jericho. This is a book of tremendous encouragement to everyone who reads it.

When society all around is collapsing, it can be difficult to stay strong in character and true to God. The book of Ruth has less than 100 verses, and yet tells the story of how three people stayed faithful to God in a time of crisis and deepest despair.

A picture of faithfulness, kindness and integrity are demonstrated in this story, which takes place during a time in Israel's history when people pleased themselves and not God. It was a time when there was moral and spiritual decay (Judges 17:6). This time in history was certainly not one of Israel's brighter moments spiritually.

The story of Ruth and her family is significant on several levels. To begin, the story teaches the importance of commitment and loyalty to God and family. Loyalty means one will endure in the face of difficult obstacles. It is an emotional or intellectual commitment to someone for a long period of time. Ruth is a good example of loyalty. Ruth was guided by her faithfulness to God. Through her actions of friendship and love toward Naomi she

Did You Know...

The book of Ruth may have been written after the period of the judges (1375-1050 B.C.). No one knows for sure who wrote the book, but Jewish tradition attributes the book to Samuel.

demonstrated her faithfulness. Her loyalty is unforgettably expressed in Ruth 1:16-17.

The book of Ruth is a call to responsible behavior and living. We could say the same call applies today. Parents have a responsibility to provide moral and spiritual guidance for their children and to establish values consistent with the goals of Christianity through their example. Kindness is an important virtue to model to children. Kindness is a virtue Ruth showed Naomi, Boaz showed Ruth and God showed to all three when He brought them together for His purpose.

As God's children, we have experienced His faithfulness and kindness. In turn we must respond to Him by showing integrity. Boaz was an honest man with high moral standards. He followed through with his commitments by buying back the land for Naomi and Ruth. His actions guaranteed their inheritance and showed his integrity. He was a man that did not just talk the talk, but he walked it as well.

Finally, Boaz's redemption of Ruth is a picture of Christ redeeming us. To be a kinsman that can redeem, four things are required; 1) the redeemer must be the nearest relative, 2) the redeemer must have the power to redeem, 3) the redeemer must be willing to redeem and 4) the redemption becomes complete when the price is paid in full.

Boaz is introduced in the second chapter of Ruth as the kinsman-redeemer.

In Ruth 3:12,13 Boaz revealed to Ruth he was not the closest relative. Boaz assured Ruth he would take care of her if the closer relative refused.

The law about who can redeem is found in Leviticus 25:48; 25:25. Jesus is our nearest kinsman. “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law” (Galatians 4:4). “But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:7). “For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). In order for Christ to identify with us and sympathize with our weaknesses, he became a bondservant, was tempted in all things and yet did not sin. Jesus Christ certainly has the right to redeem all of humanity.

Boaz was secure in his position. He was a wealthy and successful businessman who was not in need of redemption. He had the power to redeem. Boaz told the closer relative, “If you don’t want to buy it [the land], tell me because you are the only one who can buy it, and I am next after you” (Ruth 4:4). Christ has the power to redeem. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). Jesus paid the debt of the world with His life.

Boaz was willing to redeem Ruth and take her out of poverty. He was not motivated by self-interest, but by a deep love for Ruth. The close relative answered Boaz, “I can’t buy back the land. If I did, I might harm what I can pass on to my own sons. I cannot buy the land back, so buy it yourself” (Ruth 4:6).

Jesus willingly redeemed mankind from a life of slavery to sin. Jesus Christ, “gave Himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14).

Jesus said, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father” (John 10:17-18). Jesus’ motivation for redeeming us is His great love for us.

Boaz completed the redemption when he paid the price. Boaz said to the witnesses gathered, “I am buying from Naomi everything that belonged to Elimelech and Chilion and Mahlon. I am also taking Ruth, the Moabite who was the wife of Mahlon, as my wife” (Ruth 4:9,10). Jesus has paid the price in full to redeem us. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Jesus is the sinner’s nearest kinsman. Each of us has the responsibility to lie at the feet of our Redeemer and say, “Cover me with your blood and grace”.

Redemption is costly and personal. Boaz had a plan to redeem Ruth unto himself and he was willing to follow through with the plan. Jesus too has a glorious plan, which is working. It is the plan of salvation. Our salvation has been purchased at a great cost. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us” (Ephesians 1:7).

The story of Ruth ends with Naomi holding her grandson. “The neighbors gave the boy his name, saying, ‘This boy was born for Naomi.’ They named him Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse was the father of David” (Ruth 4:17), of the lineage of the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5). God redeemed Naomi and Ruth from their present situation through Boaz. God has redeemed all of mankind through our kinsman Jesus Christ.