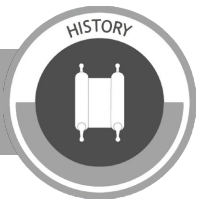


# The Bible's Big Story



## Ruth

Though short and seemingly simple, the book of Ruth carries significant theological weight. Ruth functions as a kind of appendix to the book of Judges, set during the same dark period. While Judges closes by dwelling on Israel's faithlessness and moral collapse, Ruth tells of faithfulness, providence, and redemption happening quietly in that same era. It shows that even in the darkest days of Israel's history, God had not abandoned his people or his plan. He was at work not only within Israel, but also through unexpected people and circumstances outside it.

The book of Ruth demonstrates that God's rescue plan was still advancing during the time of the judges; it bridges the narrative between Israel's entry into the land and the rise of her first righteous king; and it serves as an echo of the larger redemptive story, foreshadowing God's ultimate work of redeeming and restoring his people.

### Introductory Information

**Title:** The book takes its name from its central character. The Hebrew name Ruth likely means "friendship" or "friend."

**Authorship:** The Book of Ruth is anonymous, though some Jewish tradition attributes it to the prophet Samuel. The book's events take place during the judges period, yet its closing verses look forward to David, suggesting it was composed near the beginning of David's reign or by someone familiar with Samuel's prophetic anointing of David.

**Date: ca. 1000 BC** The book was written some time after the events it describes (indicated by the explanatory note in 4:7) but likely before or during the early years of David's reign, since Solomon is not mentioned. A date around 1000 BC is most reasonable.

**Theme & Purpose:** The major theme of Ruth is God sovereignly working through ordinary life events to accomplish his plan of redemption. The book's twofold purpose is to demonstrate, first, that God was not absent during the dark years of the judges and had not abandoned his covenant promises to the patriarchs; and second, that Israel's disobedience did not thwart God's plan. He is able to work through anyone—even a lowly Moabite widow—to redeem a people from every tribe and nation.

**Summary Theme:** *A Moabite widow named Ruth clings faithfully to her Israelite mother-in-law, Naomi. God's provision for her and her eventual redemption through marriage to Boaz display the Lord's mercy and providence, preparing the way for the coming King.*

### Redemption Revealed in Ruth

***God's providential ordering of events displays his sovereignty in caring for his people and drawing them to himself.***

Ruth may seem like a story about people, with God playing a minor supporting role. However, God's involvement in Ruth is just as real as it was in Exodus or Joshua. Every element of Ruth's journey, from the famine to Elimelech's journey into Moab, to Ruth's arrival in Boaz's field, to the willingness of the other kinsman to step aside, was divinely orchestrated by the Lord who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

God is not a passive observer in the lives of his people. He is constantly working in ways often unseen to provide for their needs and draw them to himself.

***Boaz's redemption of Ruth looks forward to our redemption in Christ.***

Boaz is an Old Testament figure whose life and actions point forward to Christ. As kinsman-redeemer, he was under no legal obligation to take Ruth's case, yet he willingly bore the full cost of redemption that she could not pay. Through his marriage to her, Ruth was taken from being a Moabite outsider and made a full member of the covenant community. She who was far off is brought near.

This is a type and shadow that points us to Christ. He humbled himself, took on human flesh—becoming our near kinsman, like us in every way yet without sin—and accomplished the work of redemption out of love. As Paul writes to the Ephesians: "you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19). Those who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of his cross (Eph 2:13).

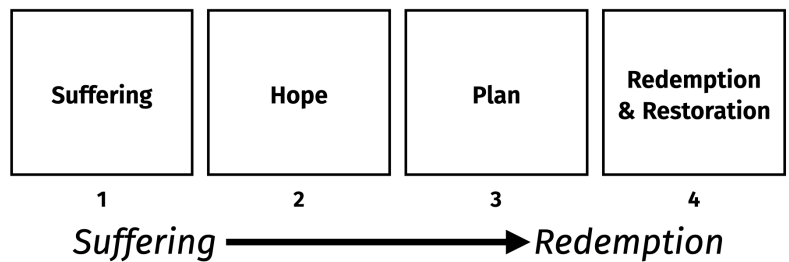
***The redemption of Ruth shows God's purpose has always been to redeem people from every nation.***

Ruth was a Moabitess by birth—part of a people explicitly excluded by the law of Moses (Deut 23:3). How is she included in the covenant people? The answer is as simple as it is profound. Ruth was not received as a Moabite. By God's saving grace, this Gentile was made a new creation and an Israelite—part of the people of God.

Though Israel was chosen as the instrument through which the Messiah would come, God's plan of redemption has always extended to people from every nation. From the moment he called Abraham, the promise carried a universal scope: "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:3). Israel was chosen not as an end, but as a light through which the knowledge of God would reach all peoples. Salvation is not tied to any ethnic identity, but is given to all who by faith take refuge in him.

**Notes:**

**Structure of Ruth**



**Questions for Reflection and Discussion:**

1. Ruth’s declaration in 1:16–17 is often quoted as an expression of loyalty, but the lesson emphasizes that its deeper significance is her confession of faith in Yahweh. How does understanding her words as an act of saving faith change the way you read her story? What does her example say about the nature of genuine faith?
2. The lesson describes God’s providence as his “sovereign preserving and governing of all things in life.” Looking at Ruth’s story, nearly every “coincidence” was actually a providential act of God. Can you identify moments in your own life where what seemed like chance or circumstance was, in hindsight, God’s hand at work?
3. Boaz redeemed Ruth at personal cost, with no obligation to do so, out of willing love—and his actions are presented as a type pointing forward to Christ. In what ways does reflecting on Boaz’s role as kinsman-redeemer deepen your understanding of what Christ has done for you?
4. Ruth was a Moabite, excluded by the law, a Gentile outsider, yet she became part of the covenant community and entered the very genealogy of Jesus. What does her inclusion teach you about the scope of God’s redemptive purposes, and how should it shape the way you think about who the gospel is for?