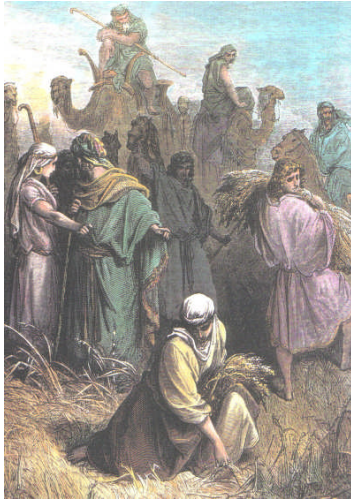


Bible Study - Ruth

Who wrote this book and when?

The authorship is unknown and the book is just named after its principle character – Ruth. Some scholars have said the actual author was Samuel. The book comes after Judges in the so most scholars date it to be around 950 BC. The dating issue is further complicated because the book ends with a genealogy pointing it to King David – but as we will later see - for a good reason.



Literary form

The book is a story of faithfulness both human and divine. It is a beautiful story usually overlooked by bible readers. The book starts out like a fairy tale “Once in the times of the Judges...” The story reads just like a Hollywood movie (and was actually made into such a movie) with the following four acts:

Act 1 presents Naomi as the lead character – who is a pleasant and capable Jewish girl. She follows her husband to Moab where she loses him and all of her children. Alone, she returns to her home of Bethlehem where she curses God for her ill fortunes.

Act 2 presents the harvest and matchmaking (just like the movies). Naomi sends her daughter-in-law to the field to glean (as shown by the above picture). Ruth meets the rich bachelor Boaz and is encouraged by Naomi to court him. They fall in love.

Act 3 describes the marriage contract – which seems to be strange since Boaz has to clear

up some Jewish legal issues with the terms that will allow him to marry Ruth. He settles the issues and finally marries Ruth.

Act 4 is the conclusion of the story with Naomi accepted and loved by her people. A baby is born to Ruth but the story presents it more like a grandchild of Naomi than the child of Ruth. This is likely to establish the relationship to David through Naomi since the story ends with a genealogy that proclaims this child will be the ancestor of King David and finally leading to Jesus.

What is the primary theme of this book?

In the Greek and Latin canons the Book of Ruth is positioned after Judges due to the time period. It is placed before Samuel as a somewhat introduction to it - since it traces the ancestry of the David. Tradition has always held – that it contains a true history and is not just a nice story.

The book contains a beautiful story of pious love and devotion. It was especially pleasing to the Jews and Gentiles of that time because of its connection to King David. The story line shows divine reward for piety that can be practiced by a stranger to the Jewish religion. This is especially important because the people of Moab were considered to be the worst of the pagans – with sacrifice of children. I find this idea similar to Jesus’ parables using the Samaritans to admonish the Pharisees.

Summary and theological significance

The book of Ruth shows God quietly working with ordinary people turning bad into goodness. It shows God’s love for all of His people. Ruth, a pagan Moabite, becomes an ancestor of David whom the Jews look to as the source of the promised Messiah – Jesus Christ.