

Women of the Bible

Lesson Four: Ruth

After the Law of Moses was given the Israelites were led by judges, who acted both religiously and militarily to defend the people. The Lord wanted Israel to see Him as their king (see I Samuel 8:7), yet not all Israelites did. Among those who may have recognized this fact was a man named Elimelech (Heb. *Elimelek* אֱלִימֶלֶךְ meaning - “God is my king”). Ironically, from this man’s family would spring the Davidic line of Israelite kings, through Elimelech’s daughter-in-law, Ruth.



Introduction. During a time of famine in Israel, Elimelech, his wife and two sons, went to Moab to survive the famine (Ruth 1:1-2). Moab was a nation descended from Lot, and viewed a relatives of the Israelites under the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 2:9). While there, his sons took Moabite wives, but Elimelech and both of his sons died (Ruth 1:3-5). His widow was named Naomi and one of his daughters-in-law was named Ruth.

I. Ruth Goes With Naomi.

- A. Naomi decided to return to Israel, to her hometown of Bethlehem and urged her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab and marry again (Ruth 1:8,9).
 - 1. While the other woman stayed, Ruth went with Naomi (Ruth 1:16-17).
- B. Ruth’s commitment to Naomi and “her God,” together with her marriage to Elimelech’s son, make it clear that Ruth had forsaken the false gods of Moab.
 - 1. The Moabites worshipped the false god Chemosh (I Kings 11:33).
 - 2. Marriage to an unconverted Moabite was unlawful (Ezra 9:1,2).

II. The Widows’ Life in Bethlehem.

- A. In Bethlehem, Naomi sends Ruth to glean in the field of a relative named Boaz in order to provide them with food for themselves (Ruth 2:1-3).
 - 1. The Law of Moses commanded that Israelites were not to harvest every bit of the produce from a field but they were to leave some for the poor to “glean” (Leviticus 19:9-10).
- B. Boaz noticed Ruth and instructed his workers and Ruth so that she would be able to glean more than enough from the fields (Ruth 2:8,9; 2:15).
 - 1. Ruth, overjoyed at Boaz’ protection of her, learned that Boaz had heard about her care for her widowed mother-in-law (Ruth 4:11-12).

Women of the Bible Lesson Four: Ruth

2. When Ruth returns to Naomi, she brings with her an Ephah (=1.1 bushel) of barley, causing Naomi to rejoice (Ruth 2:17-19).

III. Ruth and Boaz.

- A. After Ruth had gleaned in the fields of Boaz for some time, Naomi tells Ruth to go to Boaz, with a humble gesture of affection to demonstrate her willingness to be taken under Boaz' protection as his wife (Ruth 3:1-5).
 1. This gesture of "uncovering his feet" was not improper, but actually symbolic of what she was requesting (cf. Ruth 2:12).
- B. Ruth goes and does as Naomi said, humbly asking Boaz to be her "kinsman-redeemer" (Ruth 3:6-9).
 1. As a "close relative" (vs. 9) - Heb. *go'el* גֹּאֵל (meaning - "to act as a kinsman-redeemer"), Boaz had the right to redeem the property or family of a relative (see Leviticus 25).
 2. Boaz is delighted at the gesture and says that he will try to do as she has requested (Ruth 3:10-11).
- C. The next day Boaz goes to a closer relative and makes the arrangements and then takes Ruth as his wife (Ruth 4).
 1. Ruth and Boaz conceive and have child, whom they name Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of King David (Ruth 4:17-22).

Conclusion. Ruth was a faithful and loving woman who demonstrated a spirit that trusted in God, was concerned with the welfare of others and was willing to sacrifice her own comfort for the good of another. She is a wonderful example to Christians today and was, undoubtedly, a great influence on the faithful members of her family who would come after her.

