

RUTH

THE PERSON??

- NAME: RUTH (derived from "friend" or "friendship") Has a book in the Bible of 4 chapters. Jewish tradition has it that Samuel was the Author – but nothing certain. Probably written after the time of King David
- BORN? Between 1100 -1300 BC (1261 BC according to Chronological Bible I have) in Bethlehem in Judea - 10km south of Jerusalem. Sometimes referred to as "Ephrath". The time of the Judges - somewhere between when Joshua entered the Promised Land and the appointment of Saul as King. It was a time of moral and political chaos in Israel. There was no strong central government or leader, the people repeatedly turned away from God, and neighbouring peoples constantly harassed and invaded the disorganised nation.
- PARENTS? Ruth – unknown Moabites. (Elimelech and Naomi, from the tribe of Judah. Two sons - Mahlon and Kilion.) Occupation??
- MARRIED? When in Moab they married Moabite women – Mahlon married Ruth and Kilion married Orpah. Marriage was not forbidden to this group but they were not allowed to be part of the congregation of the Lord until the 10th generation.
- CHILDREN None – this was the issue! – until she was married to Boaz – and then we are only told of one son.

RELATIVES OF SIGNIFICANCE? Became the great-grand mother of King David

WHERE ELSE DID THEY LIVE? Due to a famine in their land – moved temporarily into the Moabite country – East of the Dead Sea. Moabites – descendants of Lot when he slept with his daughters. Ten years later – not sure after what – marriage or moving to land of Moabites – Elimelech and both the son-in-laws died. Bad to be husbandless in own land, in a foreign country – dire! Like having no welfare in a foreign country.

Naomi heard that God had broken the famine back in Judah – so decided to return home. Both DILs did not question their obligation to Naomi – they seemed happy to leave their people behind. However, Naomi releases /asked Ruth and Orpah to return to their own people – to the "womens quarters" –to find a new husband. Very reluctant - good mother-in-law! Orpah did, but Ruth would not leave Naomi.

Levirate marriage – a brotherinlaw was to marry their brothers widow – and as Naomi had no living sons – there was little hope for the DILs.

Ruth 1:20 – Naomi (ie "pleasant", asked for her name to be changed to Mara –ie "bitter") – puts the blame squarely at God's feet (the Almighty – Shaddai).

Ruth 1:22 – returned at time of barley harvest (April/May)

Ruth – chpt 2. Field of Boaz – a "relative" of Naomi's husband, and a man of standing. Law (Lev19:9-10) gave the poor the right to harvest the edges and glean in the fields behind the harvesters – but not everyone did this (esp after a famine?)

Ruth 2:4 – "the Lord be with you" – a god fearing greeting. 2:8-9 – privileges offered. (note women in the field too – tying bundles of grain). Then shared a meal and served her himself! (2:14)

Ruth 2:17 – ½ 2/3rds of bushel say 15 – 20 kgs for a days work – much more than you could normally expect without favours!
Naomi was impressed and learned that it was Boaz who showed the kindness. Pointed out (for Ruth's benefit) that Boaz was a "close relative." As such, he qualified as a "kinsman-redeemer", a man who under the levirate law could fulfill the duty of preserving the name of the dead by marrying Ruth.

The responsibilities of the kinsman-redeemer included avenging the death of a murdered relative, marrying a childless widow of a deceased brother, buying back family land that had been sold, buying a family member who had been sold as a slave, and looking after needy and helpless members of the family.

Naomi's advice – get dressed up - go to where they are threshing the grain – wait until Boaz and eaten (& drunk) – and go lay at his feet and see what happens! You are “ a kinsmen redeemer”. Could be others, Naomi probably knew this. Effectively seen as a request to marry her – but Boaz was much older. This request was not inappropriate in their culture. Boaz knew of a closer relative - so would need to check him out – otherwise he swore that he would be her kinsmen-redeemer. She spent the night but left before morning – with more grain! DID SHE SEDUCE HIM?

Ruth 3:18 Naomi now told her to wait.. – trusting God?

Next day Boaz goes to the city gate to wait for the nearer-kinsman where he calls 10 Elders to act as witnesses (ie a “full court”).

Ruth 4:3-4 It seems that Naomi was selling a piece of land (or is entitled to redeem it if sold previously by her husband) that must have belonged to her husband (which is a bit unusual for a wife), and it was important in Israel to keep land in the family. Boaz asks nearer kinsman of his intentions – and he says “not interested”. Boaz does seem to put a bit of bias into his question by reminding of obligations etc (vs 5), he must marry Ruth, pay for the land, which ultimately would become the property of the first-born son – legally the son of Mahlon!

Vs 6 – on hearing this – he rejects the offer. Boaz, it seems happily, in front of witnesses then takes on the role – an act which is blessed by the witnesses with reference to fertility and many off-spring (vs 11-12).

Ruth 4:13 – Boaz marries Ruth and a Son was born. (vs 4:16-17) Given to Naomi – and the **local women** named him Obed – who became the father of Jesse – who became the father of David. Ruth was better than seven sons!! (vs 15)

Ruth 4:18-22 Genealogy starts with Perez – who entered Egypt, and ends with those who entered Canaan. FROM EMPTINESS to FULLNESS – for the nation as well as Naomi/Ruth

Of interest – it seems that Boaz's mother was Rahab the prostitute who helped the spies through the wall of Jericho (and in doing so saves her family from the destruction of Jericho) and gets a place in the Hall of Fame in Heb 11:31)

WHAT DID THEY DO? Don't really know!

CHARACTER? A goody - Yes! A role model for us - Yes!

WHY DO THEY APPEAR IN SCRIPTURE? – Good question – might be to show Gods amazing way of controlling life events – here illustrating how a Moabite gets into the family tree of Jesus.

HOW LONG DID THEY LIVE & HOW DID THEY DIE? Don't know how Ruth died.

THEN – what are the key aspects of this person that interest you/us – relate to where you/ we are at? This is where the descriptions come to life. The following points might help:

- What can we learn about the nature of man (ie me)? – our potential in Him, powerful Christian living, walking in the Spirit etc or - the potential of our fallen sinful nature to sin, trying to do things on our own etc
- What can we learn about the nature of God? – who he is, His unconditional love, His promises
- What can we learn about how God wants to relate to us – and us to Him? Justice, mercy, faith, obedience

End