

## 1. AUTHOR

Q. What do you know about *Ruth*?

A. Curiously, it is all about Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law. Set in the time of the judges (1:1) which was from around 1375 – 1050 BC

## 2. ONE KEY THEME – 'THE LORD'S LOVING-KINDNESS (HESED)'

• *May the LORD deal kindly [=תֹּדֶן (he.sed) 'goodness, loving-kindness, faithfulness, mercy etc'] with you* ESV

## 3. A KEY VERSE?

• *Ruth 2:20 And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law [Ruth], "May he [Boaz] be blessed by the LORD, whose[?] kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!" Naomi also said to her, "The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers."* ESV

NB a secondary key theme in 2:20: redeemer.

## 4. KEY GROUPS OF PEOPLE

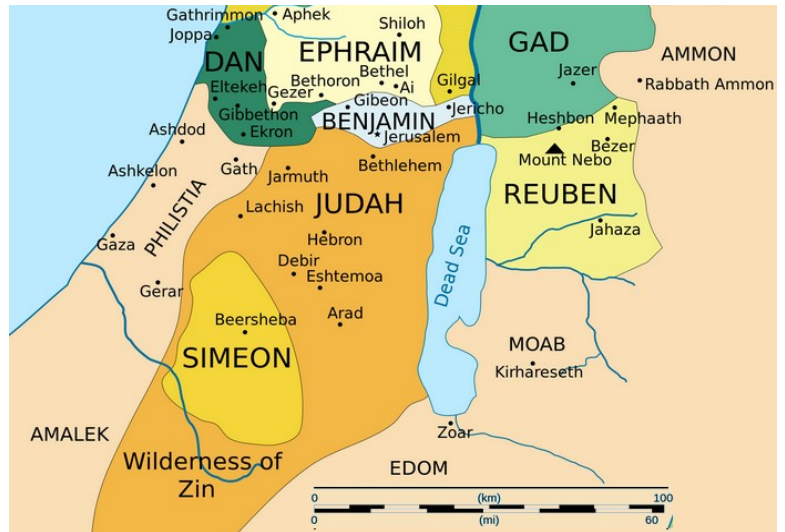
- |                     |               |
|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. Naomi            | 4. Boaz       |
| 2. Ruth             | 5. King David |
| 3. Elimelech + sons | 6. The LORD   |

## 5. TEXTUAL STRUCTURE OF RUTH

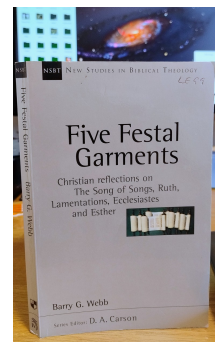
CHAPTER:VERSES	KEY EVENTS	BARRY WEBB COMMENTARY: <i>RUTH: GARMENT OF KINDNESS</i>
1:1-5	Naomi emptied	emptiness seeking finding fulness
1:6-22	Naomi returns from Moab	
2	Ruth meets Boaz	
3	Ruth and Boaz engaged	
4:1-16	Boaz marries Ruth	
4:13-17	Naomi filled	
4:18-22	Appendix: Genealogy of King David	

## 6. GREAT EVENTS

- The LORD curses Israel or Judah with a *famine*, presumably because of idolatry:
  - Deuteronomy 32:24 *they shall be wasted with hunger* [lit.=famine NIV], ... ESV
- The family leave the promised land.



Bethlehem, Judah and Moab



- All the men in the family die.
- Ruth's magnificent declaration of faith in the LORD. 1:15-18 (Read out)
- Ruth and Naomi return to Bethlehem in Judah.
- The LORD provides a husband and son for Ruth.
- The LORD provides a grandson for Naomi.
- The LORD causes King David to be descended from a Moabitess!

## 7. ONE SHAPE – SYMMETRY

The Book of Ruth is beautifully symmetrical, with a steady progression of the story from **empty** to **full**, all as per the textual structure above.

## 8. RUTH IS LOCATED DURING THE DECLINE OF THE 'OLD COVENANT'

In contrast with the book of Judges, God's grace and loving-kindness are evident throughout.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**Q1.** How does the writer use 3 simple words to set the scene theologically: *judges, famine, died*:

- *Ruth 1:1-5 In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn[=live as aliens for a while] in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. <sup>2</sup> The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. <sup>3</sup> But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. <sup>4</sup> These took Moabite wives; the name of one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, <sup>5</sup> and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. ESV*

**Q2.** How is Naomi's emptiness expressed in Ruth 1:5?

**Q3.** How are people's names used to diagnose the causes of Naomi's emptiness?

- *Mahlon* v2 = 'sick'.
- *Chilion* v2 = 'pining'.
- *Moab* v1 = 'of his father', i.e. incest recalling Lot and his daughters in Genesis 19:36-38.
- *Elimelech* v2 = 'My God is king.' (irony)
- *Bethlehem* v2 = 'house of bread' (irony)
- *Naomi* v2 = 'pleasant' (irony)
- *Ruth* = 'friendship'

**Q4.** Who shows *kindness* to whom at the various stages of the story?

- 1:17
- 1:22b
- 2:8-9

- 2:11
- 2:20
- 3:10
- 4:6?
- 4:13
- 4:14
- 4:16

The 'go.el', traditionally known as the 'kinsman-redeemer', theme is prominent in the book of Ruth. As nearest male relative, his job was four-fold:

- a) to avenge murders in the family (Numbers 35:19).
- b) to buy back property lost through poverty to keep it in the family (Leviticus 25:25).
- c) to buy back a family member sold into slavery (Leviticus 25:47-49).
- d) Levirate marriage to produce offspring for someone who died without progeny (Deuteronomy 25:5-6)

- *Ruth 2:20 And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed by the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!" Naomi also said to her, "The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers."*

**Q5.** Which of a) to d) did Naomi and Ruth require from their redeemer?

- *Ruth 3:9 He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer."*

**Q6.** Same question as Q5.

- *Ruth 3:13 Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, as the LORD lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning."*

**Q7.** What does Ruth 3:13 teach us about the character of a godly redeemer?

- *Ruth 4:6 Then the redeemer said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it."*

**Q8.** What does Ruth 4:6 teach us about inferior redeemers?

**Q9.** What kind of redeemer do we all need, therefore?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ruth 4:14 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel!"</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Q10.</b> How does the writer connect the redeemer theme to the rest of the Bible in Ruth 4:14-22?</p> <p>4:11 Note the place.</p> <p>4:17 'Obed' means 'servant'. Whose?</p> <p>4:22 The messianic king.</p> <p>Matthew 1:5</p> <p>Matthew 1:21</p>
<p><b>Q11.</b> What is the LORD'S solution to the failure of the old covenant?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4:18-22</li> </ul>

## 9. JESUS IN RUTH?

**Q.** Where is Jesus in Ruth? **A.** Everywhere, but mainly in Bethlehem :)

- Boaz is clearly a 'type' of the LORD, and specifically, of Jesus the redeemer.
- Naomi's son Obed is the new kinsman-redeemer in 4:14 – see the genealogy.
- David is the next famous redeemer, from whom came Jesus the ultimate redeemer.

## 10. AND NOWADAYS?

- We too need a redeemer. Only the best is good enough.
- There are many false or otherwise inadequate or unwilling redeemers to avoid.
- When we exercise loving-kindness it is God's loving-kindness in action:
  - *1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us.*
- Christian 'agape' love is the equivalent of Hebrew 'he.sed' loving-kindness.

## 11. HOMEWORK: READ RUTH