

LESSON SEVEN

RUTH

A. **THE HISTORY OF RUTH:**

One of the most beautiful stories in the Bible is the story of Ruth. This story takes place during the judgeship of Gideon. It has special interest to us because it shows the lineage of David. Ruth was the great grandmother of David who began to rule at Hebron in 1010 BC. The last word in the book of Ruth is the word "David" and this reveals the main purpose of the book.

The story of Ruth shows a beautiful picture of a godly life and rewards of pure and true religious faith. Also, in this book, we have a picture of many Hebrew customs of the times: the harvest, the land system of the Hebrews, the maintaining of family rights and also how members of other nations could be converted and brought to know God.

One of the interesting things about the story of Ruth is that Ruth a Gentile, married into a Jewish family, and thereby came into the line of David and through it all Gentiles have been blessed. It is interesting to compare it with the book of Esther, the only other book of the Bible named after a woman. Esther, a Jewess married a Gentile monarch and brought deliverance to the Jewish nation.

The story began with the Israelite family of Elimelech and Naomi moving from Bethlehem to Moab in time of famine. Here in Moab, Elimelech died leaving his wife, Naomi and the two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. Ruth married Mahlon and Orpah married Chilion. Then both sons died leaving all three women now as widows. Naomi hears that there is now plenty to eat back at Bethlehem and decides to return home. She urges her daughters-in-law to remain in Moab and Orpah does this but Ruth continues with Naomi, vowing never to leave her and to accept her mother-in-law's people as her own. Ruth's statement of love and dedication is given in Ruth 1:16-17: *"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: The Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."*

B. **THE RETURN HOME:**

Naomi accompanied by Ruth returned to Bethlehem and reached there at the beginning of barley harvest. They were destitute, arriving home without anything. When the people of the city welcomed her, she said, do not call me Naomi but call me Mara for I went away full but have returned empty. The beautiful thing about this picture is the faithfulness of Ruth to her mother-in-law, her devotion and love during this time of great need and destitution.

C. **RUTH GLEANS IN THE FIELDS:**

Scriptural Reference:

"And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:9-10).

In this passage of Scripture the Lord instructed Israel to leave in the field some of the crop to be gleaned by the strangers and the poor. Naomi and Ruth now were destitute, back home at Bethlehem and Ruth took advantage of this. It was in the barley harvest and Ruth gleaned in the fields. She happened upon the field of Boaz who was a wealthy relative of Elimelech. Boaz had heard of her kindness to Naomi and now ordered his men to see that Ruth had special treatment and kindness while she was gleaning in his fields.

D. RUTH'S MARRIAGE TO BOAZ:

The third and fourth chapters of this book reveal a great deal about the customs of that day, and we learn much in regards to the office of kinsman-redeemer. When Naomi learned that Boaz would be thrashing his barley and that there would be a celebration regarding the harvest, she instructed her daughter-in-law to go in and to lie at the feet of Boaz. This Ruth did and when Boaz discovered her lying at his feet, he acknowledged the duty of a kinsman, and sent Ruth back home with six measures of barley. The next day he called the next of kin who had the first right to redeem the land of Naomi and to marry Ruth. When this kinsman refused, Boaz then was free to redeem the field and to marry Ruth.

E. THE GENEALOGY OF DAVID:

Possibly the main purpose of the book of Ruth is to show how a Gentile woman became one of the ancestors of Jesus Christ. When Boaz married Ruth they had a son whom they called Obed. He was the father of Jesse who was the father of King David. It should be noted that the father of Boaz was Salmon and the mother of Boaz was Rahab the harlot. The fact that David was a descendent from both Ruth and Rahab takes great significance as we consider Jesus Christ taking unto himself a Gentile bride - the church.

