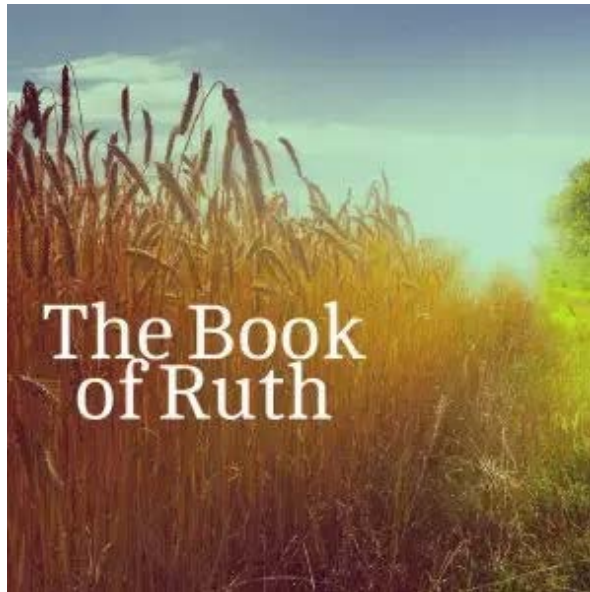


## The Book of Ruth



**INTRODUCTION:** The Book of Ruth is balm at the end of the Book of Judges.

- It is an introduction to the events which follow this book, namely the election of David and his reign.
- It reveals the foreign element in David's ancestry....and of course, that of Christ Himself the Son of David.
- After the national degeneration at the time of Judges we are shown that the true faith in Yahweh & His Covenant survived in individuals and families, the first remnant of Israel.
- Therefore, the story of Ruth and Naomi are VIP for the future, telling true believers not to give up, even when the nation as a whole fails God.
  
- This is the only book in the bible where the hero is a) a woman and b) a foreigner!
- It is the only book which illustrates Yahweh's acceptance of foreigners, not only into His Covenant, but also into His plans for the Chosen People.
  
- This book illustrates God's loving-kindness (HESED of the Covenant) to all people. The fact that He chose Israel didn't mean that He didn't love all of His children. **God wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth: 1 Tim 2:4**
- This book shows how God challenges the way we think, and our customs and laws.... Cf Isaiah 55: 8-10 **My ways are not your ways; my thoughts are not your thoughts. My ways differ from yours as the heavens differ from the earth...**

This is a **prophetic book**: there is the historical story illustrating the ancestry of David, yet the main characters are all types and symbols pointing to the future.

**NAOMI**: The wife of Elimelech [Eli = God; Melech = my king. The name means 'God is my King' She had two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. She belonged to the tribe of Judah and lived in Bethlehem. Naomi = pleasant, but later she will call herself Mara = bitter.

- Naomi represents Israel estranged from God and experiencing chastisement. She goes back to the world and tries to live there.
- Her family thought the world could solve their problems, but it all came to nothing. They experienced both death and disaster. Naomi lost her husband and two sons who left her without any heirs – a true disaster for widows were not cared for by society – so, she left Israel in relative comfort and returned in dire poverty.
- As an individual, the lovely mature Naomi represents the true believers, who, in spite of their circumstances trust God beyond all reason, so they return to the Covenant....to God's Hesed, and His loving provision for them.
- They return to live in God's Divine Will where all happiness and peace reside.
- Once she returns to God she finds that God uses her to bring foreigners into the Covenant and into God's Kingdom, and she took her place in the ancestry of Christ.
- The Father of the prodigal son was waiting for his return: Lk 15

**RUTH**: is the main character of this book. She comes with great disadvantages: she is not only a foreigner who doesn't know who Yahweh is or what His Covenant is about, but she is also from MOAB, a nation often at war with Israel!

Their ancestor Moab was the son of the oldest of Lot's daughters, born of incest at the time of the destruction of Sodom: Genesis 19:37. At the time of the Exodus and later the kingdom of Moab lay east of the Jordan river (Transjordan). This was east of the Dead Sea and Jericho, where the Israelites, under Joshua, camped before their entrance into the promised Land.

During the Exodus, Balak, king of Moab fought against Israel and hired Balaam to curse Israel for him: Num 22-24, Jos 24:9-. The situation worsened later when Israel conquered Sihon's territory, which he had taken from Moab etc. There was deep animosity between these peoples..... and Ruth was a Moabite!

There was also the prohibition in Deut 23:4 as a major obstacle in Ruth's way: **The Ammonite or Moabite shall never be admitted into the assembly of the Lord even after the 10<sup>th</sup> generation** because of Balaam....

Moab had its own religion, and its chief 'god' was Chemosh – a variation of the worship of Baal, so she would have to make massive changes in her life to become an Israelite and worship the true God.

- Therefore, she prophetically represents the Gentiles who needed to come into the KOG and the Covenant of Jesus, abandoning their false gods: Ephesians 2: 11- 22
- Through her Israel learns that not all Gentiles are 'bad'... that God loves them and wants them in His Kingdom.
- Like Ruth, the Gentiles will accept Israel's God, enter His Covenant and obey His Laws - which would as strange for them as they were for Ruth.
- Ruth is presented as humble, loving, dedicated to marriage, family and God – which was the ideal for all Israelites!
- She became the grandmother of King David thus part of the ancestry of the Messiah!

**BOAZ:** is the other main character in the drama. He is presented as the 'cream' of Israel as distinct from the awful degradation we met with in the Book of Judges.

- He is willing to marry a foreigner in order to obey the Levirate Law concerning his relative Elimelech, Naomi's husband, who has died childless. His motive was obedience to God's Will as stated in the Covenant.
- A VIP point in the prohibition against foreign marriages is given in EX 34:16. It was the fear of Israel rejecting Yahweh in favour of the foreign 'gods'.
- Boaz 'redeems' Ruth at cost to himself.....but Ruth **asked** to be redeemed, therefore indicating that she was becoming an Israelite and submitting to Yahweh and His Covenant. This changed everything!
- Boaz represents Christ, who redeemed the Gentiles at great cost to Himself but the Canaanite woman asked Jesus to include the Gentiles in the KOG: Mt 15:21-28. See also the centurion in Mt 8:5-13, and the Samaritans in Jn 4.

### **DIVINE PROVIDENCE CARES FOR ALL**

Behind the story of Ruth and Naomi is the revelation of God's Divine Providence for all of His children – and our response to it. Divine providence is a term used to indicate God's Omnipresence in our lives: **In Him we live and move and have our being: Acts 17:28.**

True believers experience God's presence and activity in their daily lives and this transforms the hum-drum of daily activity into an adventure with God.

- The world tries to control people through fear. Trust in divine providence (DP) calms our fears, and brings us tranquility, joy and peace.
  - The world seeks security in many things, but DP gives us security freely
  - In our present society where disasters, fears and tragedies are common it is VIP to know how to 'take God's Hand' daily in order to reach our potential in due time.
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- God our Creator and Lord upholds, directs, disposes and governs all creation and every creature that He has brought into existence by His Love. He governs everything and everyone by His infinite Wisdom, Goodness, Power and Justice: Ps 11: 1-7
  - All creatures depend on Him for their existence: Ps 104:27
  - Prayer regarding DP: Ps 121

### Distinguish between GENERAL DP and SPECIAL DP

General DP refers to God's governance of the Universe and all that it entails

Special DP refers to specific experiences of God's intervention in our daily lives

- Faith opens our eyes to be able to discern God's activity – but love, trust and surrender allows us to cooperate.
  - Faith enables us to see the world and daily life from a supernatural perspective.
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- Internet and media challenge our faith telling us to 'follow the science' – good or bad!
  - Our choice is to look from a spiritual or material standpoint, from God's perspective or that of the world.
  - This is VIP now that our generation is poised for massive events like the appearance of the Antichrist, the Warning, the 3 dark days, financial collapse, nuclear war.....the take-over of AI, transhumanism etc.
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- Then there is the moral collapse of society, the slaughter of the innocents, the destruction of marriage and family etc
  - And the chastisements being experienced world-wide, fires, floods, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes in various places etc.
  - Jesus said that we would end up **like the days of Noah**: Mt 24:37-39, but we are worse than Sodom because they were only small city states. We are global and we number seven billion! No one in the ancient world could have imagined that number!

- With us, the culture of death has swallowed up what was once 'normal life', with very few super rich people living unnatural lives of indulgence while millions – whole nations – struggle in dire poverty, dying of hunger and disease.....
- THIS challenges our ideas about Divine Providence taking care of everyone! Where is God in all this? Why does He allow it? What would you expect Him to do if He intervened?
- Yet God HAS intervened and told us what to do about it! He put Human beings as 'lord of the earth' when he created us. He told us to look after the earth in Genesis 2.
- He also told us **to love one another as he has loved us:** Jn 13:34
- So, DP for the poor, sick, old and young, and the starving comes **through us! God comes to them through us.** We are His hands and feet for them; we are His heart for them; we are His healing for them..... hence the poor of the world are like Lazarus looking for the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table! Lk 16:19-21
- When the rich West refuses to feed the poor third world it brings severe chastisement upon itself; when it refuses to allow infants to live.... When it euthanises the old....when it destroys family and society.... It calls down God's Justice to set things right upon the earth
- In other words, when we refuse to be good shepherds of His flock then the Good Shepherd deals with the bad shepherds!

### The problem of evil versus Divine Providence

- A pervasive cultural atheism pervades society today – worldwide.
- Humanity has rejected God & Christ our Redeemer in favour of secular 'gods' of science and materialism – even when this 'science' is corrupt and killing people with man-made medicines, and is working to get AI to replace people in the workplace!
- The rejection of God/Church has given a false sense of freedom from God's Commandments, while new secular 'commandments' are promulgated by the courts and governments.
- So, the gods of secularism, materialism, humanism, relativism offer false hope for both security and happiness – sometimes at the cost of their eternal destiny!
- Unfortunately, these so-called 'freedoms' permit hedonism and immorality which have gained acceptance as the truths about God and Christ are consigned to myths.
- Unknown to most, these false gods are empowered by the powers of darkness in high places Eph 6:10-13 who want only the destruction of humanity.

- So, the problem of evil is alive today, stalking our streets, destroying our youth etc

Our faith must be big enough – like that of the BVM – to pronounce our permanent Fiat in the midst of all this crisis. She pronounced her Fiat in a society in crisis also.

### THE TIME OF RUTH

- We can see that our society is no different from that of Ruth, Naomi and Boaz. There was great upheaval in the land. The new Israelite nation coming from the slavery in Egypt, having survived the desert, are now having to become farmers, caring for the land as a settled people.
- Since they did not conquer all the Canaanites in the land they now had to learn to live with them, and became involved in their way of life - which was contrary to that of their Covenant with God.
- Canaanites were focused on prosperity coming from the land – their need for abundant crops, fertile flocks and herds, a fertile marriage to provide for the future etc
- For Canaanites **religion** was **THE KEY** to prosperity, for only God could provide their needs.
- So, they turned to the ancient chief god BAAL, whose name means ‘lord’, or owner, or possessor. This male false god replaced the True God and Creator and Owner of all things, the only One who could provide for us in the world he made for us.
- Because BAAL was called ‘lord’ this caused great confusion for the Chosen people for whom Yahweh was LORD and GOD. They accepted BAAL as the owner of the land and the one to provide its needs.
- Unfortunately, BAAL had a consort called by many names in the bible and outside of it. She is ISHTAR, Ashtar (singular), (the Ashtaroth pleural) .....she was the destroyer of marriage and of relationships between men and women.
- The regular cycles of nature with the barrenness of Winter followed by the fertility of Spring were seen as the sexual relationship between these gods, so, by a process of imitative magic the people did on the ground what they thought was going on in the sky!
- The shrines were built on top of hills – to be close to and seen by ‘heaven’. The ‘worship’ involved orgiastic sexual rites where adults copulated freely, breaking their marriage and Covenant vows.
- The whole process was an inversion of the truth – which revealed that the principalities and powers of evil in high places were behind this so-called ‘worship’ Eph ch 6. These evil spirits merely wanted to destroy all of God’s children, and the Chosen

People in particular in order to prevent God's plan of setting up His Kingdom on earth with its reign of love, joy, peace etc Gal 5:22

- The truth was that Yahweh alone was the Owner of the land that He had already allocated to His Chosen people. He alone could supply their needs – as he had done in the Exodus and in the wilderness for 40 years!
- They are hardly settled in the land when Satan tried to rob them of all their spiritual benefits. Deut 28:1-14 lists the benefits of the Covenant in which the fertility of the soil, cattle, trees and family are all promised freely! What MORE could they want?
- The same has happened today! People have abandoned God to find security and prosperity from other gods...like the banks, economy, Government and the occult, BUT the problem then and now was the same. **It is the presence or absence of God in our lives.**
- Our problems are spiritual.... The fact that God has been banished from public life of our nations. We cannot 'hold hands' with God and idols. Cf 1 Cor 8:1-8; 10:14-22
- Those who follow the false gods think that they can control nature and influence the so-called gods... that they can manipulate the supernatural to their own advantage. Not so!
- The true God – Yahweh – had made Himself known to His Chosen ones from Abraham onwards. In their encounters with God, they discovered that **there is only one God ... that He is Creator and Lord of the Universe.... That even great people like Abraham and Moses were mere nothings in His presence.... Once they met Him they instantly became His servants obeying Him in all things.... That one must not – could not – manipulate the Divine Majesty.... Because God is EL ELOHIM and ADON ADOMIM (God of gods and Lord of lords – which He proved in the Plagues of Egypt).**
- Those spirits behind the false gods are creatures made by God living in rebellion against His Holy Will. They are in perpetual conflict with God and His beloved children. It is only God who can tell His creatures what to do and why for He is responsible for their life and eternal destiny.
- **His way alone leads to the glory of Heaven**
- **This Divine Being revealed Himself fully in the Exodus where He defeated the whole Pantheon of gods in Egypt.... And that He was the Father (origin) of the Chosen People whom He had great plans for.... Since He was the LORD OF HISTORY.... Which is HIS STORY!**

- He revealed that the true response to His intervention in our lives is to obey His commandments: Exodus and the Gospels.... The true way to tell God we love Him is to live a moral and spiritual life in obedience to His Will and Word
- Cf **THE HOLINESS CODE** in Leviticus chapters 17-26, especially ch 19. His holiness code encompasses every aspect of our lives, domestic, social, economic, political and religious.
- Because He the GREAT I AM (**I AM WHO I AM**) every aspect of life is affected by who God is for us because He is omnipresent and omniscient. For believers, the **GOOD LIFE** is that lived in union with God's Will in every instant.... A life which draws its strength and inspiration from Communion with God, both in private and public affairs..... a life which worships God in the depths of one's being as well as in public worship. Jn 4
- **BUT**, in the time of Ruth people were caught in the tension between the Divine Will – which they know from the Covenant and the teaching of Moses – and the false religion all around them..... the mistake made then and now is that **many thought that they could have BOTH!** Because of this we saw in the Book of Judges that they turned to Yahweh in times of military need..... and to BAAL for agricultural success!
- Today many Christians acknowledge the Lord on Sundays and worship the other gods the rest of the week!

**Finally**, the unknown author of Ruth wants to pull us away from a legalistic approach to God's Laws. The Book of Ruth shows that the greatest Law is that of loving God AND neighbour: Mt 22: 37-40 **Jesus said, You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: you must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophets also.**

- Boaz is presented as loving God and his neighbours Elimelech and Naomi through the Levitate Law at cost to himself, because it involved marrying a foreigner.
- The author is also telling those who have strayed from the faith because of BAAL to come back to their first love – YAHWEH. This is also the message of Hosea later in their history.
- Also, that human life is precious to God – AND to History!
- That God's Love is without borders, and that ours should be also.
- And that God's purposes transcend the barriers of Race, colour and Religion.....

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