

The Book of Ruth

Chapter 1

Introduction

- The story is the Divine Providence that honored the faith of a Moabite woman and placed her in the royal lineage of Israel and of the Messiah (Matthew 1:15).
 - A heritage of faith is greater than any heritage of bloodline.
 - It is a wonderful example of God fulfilling his promise to bless the Gentiles (Genesis 12:3, Psalms 22:27, Isaiah 49:6, and many more)
- Tradition says that this book was written by Samuel.
 - vs. 1:1, 4:7, 4:18-22 prove it is written long after the events recorded.
- Reese dates the events of this book between 1309 and 1299 B.C.
 - For reference, he dates the birth of David to 1085 B.C.
- Reese also places it during the eighty-year peace following Ehud's victory against Moab in Judges 3:15-30, which makes a lot of sense to me.

Notes on Chapter 1

- The meaning of names in this book are of special note, those of the first verses:
 - Elimelech, father – “my God is king”
 - Naomi, mother – “my delight”
 - Mahlon, son – “sickly”
 - Chilion, son – “pining one”
 - Orpah, daughter-in-law – “gazelle”
 - Ruth, daughter-in-law – “friend”
 - Bethlehem – “house of bread”
 - Moab – “of his father”, referring to their incestuous origins – Genesis 19:37.
- vs. 1 – When times got hard, this Jewish family forsook the Promised Land for greener pastures among the heathen.
- vs. 2 – Ephrath/Ephratah (“fruitful”) is an ancient name for Bethlehem (Genesis 35:16,19), which may also speak to the family's wealth.
- vs. 3 – A terrible choice bears bitter fruit with the death of Elimelech.
- vs. 4 – Further mistakes as the sons take pagan wives (Deuteronomy 7:3, 23:3)
- vs. 5 – Further tragedy as the sons die with no heirs.
- vs. 6-7 – Reading between the lines, it appears that Naomi not only lost her husband and sons but also any wealth. She appears to have no real home and is returning to Israel for food.
- vs. 8 – Naomi releases her daughters-in-law from any obligation to follow her. To turn back would be to forsake God (vs. 15) and to go forward would be to embrace Him and the Jewish religion/identity.

- vs. 9 – In the ancient world the welfare of a woman is almost always tied to her marriage.
- vs. 11-13 – The Jewish custom called *yibbum* (a form of levirate marriage) allowed for a brother or other close relative to take a widow as a wife – Deuteronomy 25:5-10
 - Reese says Ruth is 30 years old.
- vs. 14-15 – Orpah goes back to Moab and her people.
- vs. 16-17 – one of the most beautiful passages of Scripture. Ruth expresses more faith than any of her in-laws have ever displayed.
- vs. 19 – What a contrast Naomi’s arrival is compared to her departure years before.
- vs. 20 – The change from Naomi (“my delight”) to Mara (“sad, bitter”) expresses the toll of her family’s mistakes has taken on her.
 - Note that this verse is the only time she is called that. While she had lost her joy and now wallowed in bitterness, God will return her joy.
- vs. 21 – barley harvest – traditionally begins after Passover, so this is roughly April.