

Timeline of Truth – Introduction to Ruth

Who Wrote Ruth?

The book itself does not say. Jewish tradition as well as the Babylonian Talmud hold Samuel as the author. It is *possible* that Samuel *could* have written it, since he did anoint David as king (1 Sam 16:1-13). However, Samuel may be an unlikely choice since he died (1 Sam 28:3) well before David became king (2 Sam 5).

“The writer is unknown to us, but he may have been Samuel, one of Samuel's contemporaries—David, Solomon, or some other person.” (Thomas Constable, *Notes on Ruth*, 2019 Edition, p. 2)

“What, then, can one infer directly from the book about the author? Obviously, given the book’s literary excellence, one may conclude that its author was a literary artist of the highest order. His linking of David to the Moabitess Ruth implies that he also had access to the lore, whether oral or written, of David’s family. Further, the reference to earlier legal practice (4:7) and the genealogy (4:18-22) might suggest similar access to ancient records kept by the royal court in Jerusalem. If so, he may have been a palace employee, perhaps a scribe.” (Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *The Book of Ruth, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988, p.23)

When Was Ruth Written?

Ruth was written most likely at some time after David became king. David is highlighted twice, by name, which indicates the emphases on his significance.

- **Ruth 4:17** Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "There is a son born to Naomi." And they called his name Obed. He [is] the father of Jesse, the father of David.
- **Ruth 4:22** Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.

“In view of the closing references to David (4:17,22), the earliest possible date would be after David became king of Israel (ca. 1000 B.C.). The reference to the judges (1:1) implies that that historical period had already closed and lay some distance from the narrator’s time. The parenthetical comment about legal custom (4:7) may presume similar chronological distance, though in neither can one be certain how long.” (Hubbard, p.24)

When Would the Events of Ruth Have Taken Place? (What Is the Timing of the Events of Ruth?)

“The date of the story is established by the genealogy given in the closing five verses of the book (Ruth 4:18-22). Ruth is shown to have been David’s great grandmother. David was anointed king in 1010 B.C., at the age of thirty (2 Sam. 5:4,5). This means that he was born in 1040 B.C. Being the youngest of eight sons in his family (1 Sam. 16:10, 11), his father Jesse was born probably at least forty years earlier, or not later than 1080 B.C. Correspondingly, Obed, his father, and Boaz, Obed’s father and husband of Ruth, would have been born prior to this, making the time of Boaz’ vigorous life, as manifested in the story, possibly in the vicinity of 1140 B.C. This places him about the middle of the forty-year peace period, when Gideon served as judge, and nicely before the time of Abimelech and the judgeships of Tola and Jair...” (Leon Wood, *The Distressing Days of the Judges*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975, p. 254).

“Conservative dates for David's lifetime are about 1041-971 B.C. David was the "seventh" son born to his father "Jesse" (1 Chron. 2:12-15), who may have been born 35 years or more earlier. Boaz might have been born about 1150 B.C. and his son, Obed, by Ruth, about 1100 B.C. Since most of the events recorded in Ruth took place shortly before Obed's birth, we might conclude that these events happened around 1100 B.C. This would place Ruth living in Israel during the judgeship of Samson (ca. 1105-1085 B.C.) and the ministry of Samuel (ca. 1115-1021 B.C.).” (Constable, p. 3)

1150 B.C. →	1100 B.C. →	1080 B.C. →	1040 B.C. →	1010 B.C.
				1010 B.C. – David is anointed king, at 30 years of age
			1040 B.C. – David is born	
		1080 B.C. – Latest Jesse (David’s father) would likely have been born		
	1100 B.C. – Possible time of Obed			
1150 B.C. – Possible time of Boaz				

What Is the Key Theme of the Book Ruth?

“Some scholars have concluded that the main theme of Ruth is redemption. Whereas the book illustrates the theological concept of redemption beautifully, its primary purpose appears to have been to reveal how God often works providentially behind the scenes, bringing His will to pass.” (Constable, p. 3)

What Are Other Key Purposes of the Book of Ruth?

- To show God’s care of the needy.
- To show that God rewards those who demonstrate sacrificial love towards the needy.
- To show that David is the rightful king.
- To show God’s grace to Gentiles.

Major Thoughts (Summarized from Thomas Constable, *Notes on Ruth*, 2019 Edition, p. 7-12)

FOUR REVELATIONS:

1. Reveals God's providence in providing a ruler for His people.
2. Reveals God's use of individuals with a dynamic responsiveness of faith toward God to bring his will to pass.
3. Reveals God's faithfulness in providing rest for His people.
4. Reveals God's grace in providing redemption for His people.

THREE VALUES:

Historically, the book ties the patriarchal period to the monarchical period of Israel's history. It does not just go back to the period of the judges, or to the Mosaic era, but all the way back to Perez, the patriarch (4:18-22). This shows that the Davidic dynasty was a fulfillment of the unconditional promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. It did not rest on the conditional Mosaic Covenant.

Morally, the book demonstrates that faith and purity are possible even in a terrible cultural environment. Ruth's and Boaz's faith in God resulted in their excellent moral characters (2:1; 3:11). The power of their faith overcame their backgrounds and environments. They were part of the godly remnant in Israel in their day. This should give parents, who have to rear their children in ungodly environments, hope. Purity is possible in such situations.

Doctrinally, the book illustrates redemption. It also illuminates the character of God, particularly His providential working, His loyal love, and His boundless grace. Note these qualities in the Psalms, too.

THREE MAJOR LESSONS:

First, God uses people who trust Him, and commit themselves to Him, to be a blessing to others. Boaz and Ruth probably did not live to see David's greatness, much less Jesus Christ's. However, God found in them people whom He could use to produce a David. Modern society is very "results conscious." We want instant success, and we grow impatient when we do not see God using us to bless others. We need to remember that we will not see all the fruit of our faith this side of heaven. G. Campbell Morgan wrote, "You may be God's foothold for things of which you cannot dream."

Second, God blesses people who trust Him and commit themselves to Him. Ruth and Boaz were not only a blessing to others, but God personally blessed them. They received rest from God. God's blessing of Ruth came in the form of food, a family, and security. A loving and loyal wife of sterling character, and a son to carry on the name of his family, blessed Boaz's life. I do not know whether he considered Naomi a blessing or not, though I believe she was. One commentator wrote, "This is the best of all mother-in-law stories and should be told repeatedly." Boaz also obtained an added portion of the Promised Land.

While God has not promised Christians the same kinds of blessings that He promised the Israelites, He has promised to bless us. Our present blessings are mainly spiritual (forgiveness, peace, joy, etc.), but we will receive both spiritual and physical blessings at the judgment seat of Christ, if not before. God will reward our faith as He rewarded the faith of Boaz and Ruth.

Third, circumstances do not make or break a believer. Faith does. Boaz was a wealthy man who lived in a spiritually apostate, morally corrupt environment. Nevertheless he overcame his temptations by faith in God. Ruth was a poor Moabite woman and extremely vulnerable. Yet she overcame her temptations by faith, too. From this we learn that circumstances are not determinative. They do not control our spirituality. Our attitude and relationship to God do. That is why it is so important that we maintain a daily intimate relationship with Him. No matter what circumstances we are up against, we can be overcomers like Boaz and Ruth by trusting in, committing ourselves to God, and following Him faithfully.

Some Key Observations from the Book of Ruth:

- The entire book contains only 89 verses. (It can be read in about a 20-minutes.)
- Only the Books of Ruth and Esther are named after women.
- Though it shows the hand of God working on behalf of Jews in exile, the Book of Esther does not mention the God. The Book of Ruth mentions God 23 times.
- In the Hebrew Bible, Ruth was originally attached to the end of the Book of Judges. It was later moved by the Jews in the Writings (Kethubim) after Proverbs, just after Proverbs 31 (the virtuous woman), and just before the Song of Solomon.
- The Book of Ruth tells of a Gentile woman who lives in Israel and marries a Hebrew and in the line of a Jewish king. The Book of Esther tells of a Jewish woman who lives among Gentiles and marries a Gentile king.
- The Jews read the Book of Ruth during the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost).

Questions We Will Seek to Answer: