

Ruth

Who, When, Where

Written by Samuel. Samuel was dedicated to God by his mother just after he was born and grew up to become the main prophet in Israel towards the end of the time of the Judges, around 1100BC. He appointed Saul and passed away during Saul's 40 year reign. Because we know that Boaz was king David's great grandfather, we can date Ruth pretty accurately to just after 1200BC.

The story is set mostly in Bethlehem, later known as the "town of David", (as a consequence of this story!). Bethlehem is about 5 km or so from Jerusalem.

The early part of this story is in Moab, just to the east of the Dead Sea.

Summary

So as if the odd collection of people raised up to be judges of Israel wasn't enough. Now God chooses a Moabite woman to marry into what was to become the royal line of Israel, and to become the ancestor of its great kings, and even of the Messiah himself.

Still think God can't use you?

In fact, the odder you are, the more likely it seems God will do great things through you.

Before You Read

So the Moabites were descendants of Moab, the illegitimate son of Lot born from his daughters' act of incest with their father after they fled the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. (Which is what we think created the Dead Sea in the first place).

Back in judges, the Moabites were the enemies of Israel. Now they are living peacefully as neighbours. But it seems an odd place to find the great grandmother of the future kings of Israel.

Key Verses

Ruth 1:16

Ruth said, "Don't urge me to leave you, and to return from following you, for where you go, I will go; and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God[c] my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May Yáhwéh do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me."

Wow, what a powerful statement to make to another person. Especially your mother in law! Ruth showed some exceptional character when she refused to walk away from the family which had become her own.

Walking away when things get tough seems to be a part of modern culture. We change jobs, friends, even spouses because things aren't exactly as we want.

Being a widow in those days was very tough. Ruth was sacrificing a lot to stay. But look how it turned out!

Ruth 1:20

She said to them, "Don't call me Naomi [pleasant]. Call me Mara [bitter] for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me."

Naomi was like us. She thought that suffering famine, losing your husband, and your sons, was a bad thing. To the point that she changed her name to Mara (bitter).

But she was wrong. Without the famine she wouldn't have left Bethlehem. If her husband had lived they would probably have stayed in Moab. If her sons had lived Ruth would never have married Boaz.

How can suffering be good?

Is there any other example you can think of where someone suffering actually turned out to be a good thing?

After You Read

What verses really stood out to you?

How would you summarize this book in a sentence or two? What is it about? What is God trying to say to us?

So is famine a good thing or a bad thing?

Is having your husband die a good thing or a bad thing?

It all comes down to how does the story end. Doesn't it.

If the story ends well and the "bad" things were instrumental in achieving the good outcome, then they were actually good things in the first place.

Our attitude is usually based on NOW. So if we're hungry that's a bad thing. If someone is sick, that's a bad thing.

But in God's view, it depends on the outcome. So much so that having his son beaten, tortured and executed was a good thing.

We need to have God's perspective. We need to have his patience. We need to focus on the end result not the journey getting there.

In the end God wants to conform your character into that of his son. Are you willing? Or are you just going to grumble and whinge all the way like the Israelites did in the wilderness?

In what way is Boaz like Yeshua (the Messiah)? How is his role as a kinsman redeemer like the role of the Messiah?

In that case, how are you like Ruth?

How amazing is it that the stories of God are woven on so many levels at once?