

Lesson 73

God Blesses Ruth

God blessed Ruth's love and faith by giving her a husband, Boaz.

Overview

Lesson Focus

Ruth proved her loyalty to her mother-in-law, Naomi, and to the God of Israel by returning with Naomi to the land of Israel. God rewarded Ruth's faithfulness by providing a redeemer, Boaz, who married Ruth and took care of her and Naomi. Boaz's redemption of Ruth is a picture of Jesus' redemption of sinners.

Key Passages

Ruth 1:16–17, 2:11–12, 4:13–17; Matthew 1:1; Ephesians 1:7; Galatians 4:4–5

Objectives

Students will be able to:

Compare Boaz's kindness toward Ruth with Jesus' kindness toward sinners.

Identify Ruth's place in the genealogy of Jesus.

Memory Verse

Psalm 34:17–18 When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

During the time of the judges (Ruth 1:1), Naomi and Elimelech, natives of Bethlehem in Judah, with their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, moved to the country of Moab to avoid a famine. Elimelech died in the land of Moab, and afterward the two sons married Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. After about 10 years, the two sons died, leaving Naomi alone with her daughters-in-law.

In that time and culture, life was very difficult for a widow. Naomi told Ruth and Orpah to return to their own people as Naomi intended to return to hers. She explained that she was too old to have more sons, and even if she did, it would take too long for the sons to grow up to be the husbands of her daughters-in-law. Both daughters-in-law protested. Orpah finally did return to her people. But Ruth adamantly refused, declaring determined allegiance not only to Naomi but also to her people and to her God (Ruth 1:16–17). This is to be understood as more than personal loyalty and love to Naomi. Rather, Ruth declared her

intent to forsake her family and the false religion of the Moabites and to attach herself to the true God and his covenant people. In that culture, Ruth took a radical and courageous step. Certainly, she must have loved Naomi, but this kind of commitment to Israel and to God, regardless of the lack of familial connections in Israel, was a nearly certain path to poverty. Though beloved by Ruth, Naomi was not in a position to provide for her material needs. Ruth's courage is much to be admired.

When Ruth and Naomi returned to make their home in Bethlehem, they were in the position of little more than beggars. This was evidenced in the manner Ruth obtained food for them, following harvesting field workers and picking up ("gleaning") what little they dropped as they harvested. It was customary (and commanded in Leviticus 23:22) to allow the poor to gather food this way. The owner of the field, Boaz, compassionately instructed his young men to leave more than usual for Ruth, and Boaz recognized and admired the path this young Moabite woman had followed. His blessing to her makes it clear that she had not only been loyal to Naomi but had also entrusted herself to the Lord God of Israel: "A full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge" (Ruth 2:12).

Boaz was a close relative of Naomi's husband, one who could be expected to take responsibility for the care of Ruth and Naomi. In chapter 3, after being instructed by Naomi, Ruth came to Boaz by night at the threshing floor in a manner intended to show that she wished to be under his care; and Boaz responded favorably, impressed with Ruth's virtue and her kindness in not pursuing younger men. Boaz was apparently much older than Ruth (Ruth 3:10–11).

The account culminates in chapter 4 when Boaz confronted a closer relative of Naomi with the opportunity he had to "redeem"—to buy back into the close family—the land that had belonged to Naomi's husband. The redemption of the land included, by custom in Israel, the responsibility to care for the widow of Elimelech (Naomi). The care also included Ruth since she was part of the family and, because she was a young woman, involved marriage to her for the continuation of the family name (Ruth 4:5). Naomi's closer relative was unwilling to get involved since it would affect the inheritance in his own family. Boaz was willing to marry Ruth, however, and God blessed them with a son (Ruth 4:13). Boaz's redemption and marriage to Ruth led to her occupying a place in Jesus' ancestry. Ruth was the great-grandmother of King David (Ruth 4:17; Matthew 1:1).

Historical/Apologetics Background

The redemption of Ruth by Boaz is a touching story of commitment and compassion, but it is much more than that. Boaz is certainly a type of Christ, our Redeemer. While it was costly for Boaz to redeem Ruth, Jesus Christ paid so much more for his bride. He set aside the privileges of his deity (Godhood) for our benefit (Philippians 2:5–11). For our sakes, he who was rich became poor (2 Corinthians 8:9). He who was without sin became sin for us so that "in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Boaz went beyond the call of duty to show his love and concern for Ruth, and Jesus

more so. Because of Jesus' shed blood, we can have our sins forgiven (Ephesians 1:7) and be adopted into the family of God (Galatians 4:4-5).

Boaz demonstrated a heart of compassion for Naomi and Ruth when he redeemed them from their hopeless situation. According to the laws God gave to Moses, a close relative could redeem (buy back) a family member sold into slavery (Leviticus 25:47-49), land that was sold due to hardship (Leviticus 25:23-28), and the family name through levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). Levirate marriage (meaning "husband's brother") was intended to provide an heir for an Israelite man who died childless. This option applied to unmarried close male relatives, such as brothers and cousins, who wanted to keep the property in the family. In the case of Naomi, Boaz had to defer to a closer relative and give him the option of buying Naomi's land and marrying Ruth. This relative refused because of his own children and gave up his legal right to the land and Ruth (Ruth 4:3-6), clearing the way for Boaz to redeem the land and marry Ruth to raise up an heir for Mahlon (Ruth 4:9-10).

Both Boaz and Ruth are described as "worthy" (Ruth 2:1, 3:11), which shows their godly character. Some may question the scene described at the threshing floor where Ruth lay at Boaz's feet in the night (Ruth 3:6-14). But Ruth's action did not signify any immorality but rather her desire to marry Boaz, a marriage he probably would not have initiated with a younger woman.

It is also significant in this account that Ruth was a Gentile (a non-Israelite). The picture of her being drawn into covenant in the nation of Israel recalls God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:4 that he would be the father of many nations. It also foreshadows God's promise that the Messiah, Jesus, would be a "light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32).

Limited License to Reproduce

A limited, non-exclusive, non-transferable, nonsublicensable license is hereby granted to a single local church or organization to print copies of the PDF materials in the Teacher Digital Resources if 1) you are the original purchaser; 2) you are using the copies for noncommercial purposes (such as for teaching in class) exclusively within your single local church or organization (multi-campus churches, and national/regional denominations are not covered under this license); and 3) you follow the instructions provided in the curriculum pertaining to the printable materials.

This license is for the specific purchaser of the product and does not include affiliated groups or organizations, or other churches or groups in the same denomination as the purchaser, not identified as the actual purchaser. There is no limit to the number of printed copies for use within the single local church or organization which is the actual purchaser. None of the material in this curriculum may be reproduced for any commercial promotion, advertising, or sale of a product or service, or to share with any other persons, churches, groups, or organizations.

The media (audio/video) portions are copyrighted and duplication is prohibited. This license is for materials in the Teacher Digital Resources only and does NOT include reproduction rights for pre-printed teacher books, student guides, student take home sheets, or posters, except on an emergency basis when purchased quantities are not sufficient for a given week.

Bible Version

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.