

RUTH

- 1 of 2 books in the Bible named after a woman.
- Only book in the Bible named after a non-Jew.
- Took place during the period of the Judges, a time where everyone does what is right in his own eyes.

One-sentence summary the 4 chapters (85 verses) of **Ruth**:

Delivered Out Of The Miry Clay And Set Firmly Upon A Rock.



Delivered Out Of The Miry Clay

Ruth is really a story about God's gracious rescue of Elimelech's family from extinction. The story reports how famine sent that family into exile in Moab. There in Moab, death threatened to wipe out the whole family. Not only did they face the agony of subsistence living as aliens in a foreign land, but also the tragic prospect of ceasing to exist altogether. At the end of ten years in Moab, all that was left were 3 helpless and vulnerable widows – *Naomi, Orpah* and *Ruth*. The three widows were later reduced to just two – just *Naomi* and *Ruth*. So we read in **1:22** of two hungry, helpless and hopeless widows arriving at Bethlehem. Very marvelously, God undertook a rescue operation in two phases.

Phase 1: *God met their immediate needs by providing food for them.*

Their immediate needs were food, for they need to survive. Immediately God moves to meet that need. God provided food for them, and that not by drips and drops, but in some kind of an abundance. Read **2:14**, and then **2:17-18** to see that this is so.

And God met the immediate needs of this family through two persons -- *first*, through the courage and commitment of *Ruth* and *secondly*, through the generosity and kindness of *Boaz*.

Phase 2: *God met their long-term needs by providing a son in the family.*

This is the focus of **Chapter 3 & 4**. And the climax is to be found in **4:14-15**. Once again, through *Ruth* and *Boaz*, God works to provide and to bless this family. Through the marriage of *Ruth* to *Boaz*,

Elimelech (though dead) now has a son, an heir to inherit his property and to carry on the family name. At the same time, this son shall also be the one who shall provide for Naomi in her later years. Therefore, we read in **4:17**, the ladies in congratulating Naomi, says this, "*There is a son born to Naomi.*" This boy, whom we know in the same verse that he is called Obed, shall be a son to Naomi. In other words, he will play the role that Mahlon and Chilion were supposed to play, were they alive. He will provide for Naomi in her later years, and in this, we see how God moves to meet the long-term needs of this very ordinary family.

So, at the beginning of the story, the family was deep in the horrible pit, down in the miry clay. But as we work our ways through the chapters and verses, we see how God brought them out of the horrible pit and delivered them from the miry clay.



Set Firmly Upon A Rock.

God did not just deliver them out of the miry clay and then place them on level ground. No, but He placed them *firmly upon a rock*. As we read **Ruth**, we see how the early tragedies are being reversed and turned into blessings. We see how this very ordinary family of Elimelech triumph over tragedies in their lives. But we must not stop there. Because the book of **Ruth** does not stop there, and would not allow us to stop there. The book of **Ruth** ends very interestingly with a genealogy!

The baby born to *Boaz* and *Ruth* was called Obed. Obed is the father of Jesse, and Jesse is the father of David! In other words, the triumph of this family over tragedies give to Israel its very famous shepherd-king, King David, the man after God's own heart! The elderly widow who suffered so much in the early parts of this account, she did not just have a son at the end. She became the honoured ancestress of that leading family that gives to Israel King David, arguably its best king. And *Ruth*, that young, vulnerable widow from Moab, she became the very human instrument to bring Obed into this world, who in turn brought David into this world, and who in turn (finally) brought the Christ, the Messiah, the Saviour of sinners, into this world!!!

Who would have thought of such an ending? God did not just delivered them from the miry clay, but He also set them firmly upon a rock. This is the God of the Bible. He does not just work all things together for the good of His people.

Very often, in working all things together, He makes us, not just conquerors, but more than conquerors in them. Very often, He does not just turned tragedies into triumphs, but gives us more than we could imagine and dared to ask, that our mouths can only be filled with His praises!! This is the God of the Bible, the God who loves to act in this way. Not just a deliverance from the miry clay. But also a firm setting upon a rock!

Lessons:

Homework

A key Hebrew word in Ruth is *hesed*. Find out what is it and how we can do *hesed* in our daily life.