

## ***READING RUTH***

### RUTH OVERVIEW

- Author: Unknown
- Date: Likely during the reign of King David (1010-970 B.C.)
- Theme: Redemption
- Significant features: The book demonstrates the function of one who will redeem another — even a Gentile! — so Boaz becomes a type of Christ, picturing Christ’s work to redeem sinners.
- Key verses: 1:16; 4:14
- Key chapter: 4

### THEME

The theme of Ruth may be summed up by the word “redemption.” Gleason Archer writes, “Perhaps most important of all, this brief narrative is designed to exhibit the function of the... ‘kinsman, redeemer.’” [*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 267.]

Additionally, there is an emphasis placed on the fact that Ruth is a foreigner (1:22; 2:2, 6, 10, 21; 4:5, 10), thereby illustrating the fact that Gentiles are in the overall plan of God as well as His chosen nation of Israel. It is also important to notice that Ruth became the great-grandmother to David, and consequently an ancestor of Jesus Christ. [Paul Enns, *Ruth*, 13-14.]

And while the typology of the book may not be considered a theme, it is most certainly an important aspect in the book of Ruth [see below].

### PURPOSE

What is the reason for the writing of the book? What is its purpose? It is...

a story of a loyal, disinterested relationship which secured its just reward. The upright, considerate, and industrious Boaz was a model Israelite. It demonstrates an overruling Providence and the all-embracing love of God, illustrating the fact made explicit in Acts 10:34-35...it is a story of ordinary people...it speaks a word of hope to the hopeless, the desolate and the bereaved. [A. E. Cundall, *ZPEB*, 5: 176.]

### TYPOLOGY

Typology in the Bible usually points in some way to Christ, but rarely is it so clearly evident as in the short book of Ruth. This led one writer to say: “The rich underlying typology of this idyll makes the book of Ruth more than a pastoral story of love. It is an important link in the unfolding account of redemption, presenting in figure our Lord as the great Kinsman-Redeemer in general....It presents an important link in the Messianic family.” [Merrill Unger, *Unger’s*

*Bible Handbook*, 181.] There is primarily one major type in the book, which subsequently involves many other types. That is, Boaz is portrayed throughout the book of Ruth as a type of Christ. A more complete discussion follows.

### BOAZ AS A TYPE OF CHRIST

The typology in this book, as mentioned above, is highly visual. Predominantly, the typology centers on the character of Boaz, who is typical of Christ. This idea that Boaz is a type of Christ can be seen in five different ways. First, the redeemer must be a near kinsman (Ruth 2:1,3,20; John 1:14, Heb. 2). Secondly, the redeemer must be willing to redeem (Ruth 2:8, 3:11; Heb. 10:17, John 10:28). Also, the redeemer must be able to redeem (Ruth 2:1; Christ because He is the Son of God). Additionally, the redeemer must be able to free himself (Boaz never had to sell his property or himself; Christ is free from the curse of sin). And finally, the redeemer must have the price of redemption (Ruth 2:1; 1 Peter 1:18-19). [Donald Campbell, class notes on Ruth, 2.]

### VALUES IN RUTH

According to Campbell, there are several different kinds of values that are exhibited throughout this short, narrative book. Among these are:

1. Literary Value: “Ruth is a lovely pastoral idyll, the tale of a friendship between two women, and the grand climax up to which all is working in the birth of a baby (W.G. Scroogie)”
2. Historical value:
  - A. “To demonstrate that during the period of the judges, there was not universal pollution. It shows faithfulness among infidelity.
  - B. “It is a link showing how God led on to the next stage from the judges to monarchy. The last word of the book is the key (‘David’).”
  - C. “The genealogy also provides a link in the family history of Jesus Christ. ‘The blood of Ruth ran in the veins of Jesus Christ’ (Lee).”
3. Doctrinal value:
  - A. “To show that Gentiles are not outside the scope of redeeming love.”
  - B. “To show the law of the kinsman redeemer in action.”
4. Moral value: “The book gives a high ideal of wedlock. Married life is treated in chapter four as a sacred and lofty companionship.” [Each of these ideas came from Campbell, 1.]

## CONCLUSION

The book of Ruth is important for several reasons. First, it is typical of the work of Jesus Christ as the Christian's Kinsman-Redeemer, and it also illustrates the fact that God has a plan for the Gentiles as well as His chosen nation of Israel. And finally, it provides several values for the reader, both doctrinal and practical.

## ***Bibliography***

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