

Ruth: The Story

- The characters:
 - Elimelech: Ruth's father-in-law, probably a wealthy man, whom she likely never met. His name means "God is my King."
 - Naomi: Ruth's mother-in-law, widow of Elimelech. Her name means "blessed."
 - Mahlon and Chilion: children of Elimelech and Naomi. Mahlon means "sickness." Chilion means "wasted / consumed / used up."
 - Orpah: the wife/widow of Chilion.
 - Ruth: the wife/widow of Mahlon.
- The story:
 - The family goes to Moab, intending to **sojourn** there (1:1), but they **continued there** (1:2) for a period of **about ten years** (1:4).
 - During this period, Elimelech dies, the sons get married, and then the sons die. Naomi is all that remains from the original journey.
 - Because Deuteronomy 23:3 prohibits a Moabite from being admitted to the Jewish camp, Ruth and Orpah most likely converted to Judaism prior to the weddings.
 - Naomi tries to convince both daughters to stay in Moab. Orpah remains (while loving her mother-in-law) and Ruth returns.
 - Ruth, through the detailed instruction of her mother-in-law, meets and marries a man named Boaz.
 - Eventually Ruth and Boaz become married and have a son named Obed, who has a son named Jesse, who eventually gives Ruth and Boaz a great-grandson named David, who becomes King.

Ruth: More to the Story

- The book of Ruth is far more than a vignette of life in the period of the Judges with insight into the genealogy of David. It is also far more than a book for spiritualized moral lessons.

- The great meaning of the book of Judges is in its *typology*, which shows, prophetically, the future state of the Jewish nation.
- I know of *no Christian theological system* which does not view the book of Ruth as typology. The question is the *meaning* of typology.
- In the typology of Ruth:
 - Elimelech is the Jewish nation that flees her homeland in order to save her own life.
 - Naomi is Judaism itself – its spiritual condition, its demeanor, its persona.
 - Mahlon and Chilion are the first generation of Jewish exiles.
 - Ruth and Orpah are the succeeding generations of Jews.
 - Part Moabite, part Jew.
 - Wholly committed to Judaism.
 - Partially returning, partially remaining.
 - Boaz represents the Kinsman Redeemer.
 - The **kinsman nearer than I** (Ruth 3:12) is the Law.
 - The instruction toward the Kinsman Redeemer comes from Judaism itself (and, in the end, Jews will be led toward the Redeemer by following the Law).
- In the story of Ruth, there is a redemption of the Land under the name of Elimelech. Ultimately, the land of Israel will be under the name "God is my King!"

Things You May Not Know

- Among the Jewish people today, Ruth is considered the greatest of Jewish converts.
- The Jewish teachers always see Elimelech as a wealthy man, whereas Christian teachers most often see him as a poor man. The Scripture speaks of him as an **Ephrathite**, which is often believed to be a descendent of Ephraim. However, David was of the tribe of Judah, not Ephraim, and his father Jesse was called an Ephrathite in 1 Samuel 17:12. The better understanding is that the word means "fruitful" (in the sense of wealth), and is used of the leading men of the city.

A Mother's Day Application

- "A woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." Proverbs 31:30.
- Ruth was nothing more than *faithful*. In all likelihood, her lasting influence was never known during her lifetime.