

JAN-FEB. 2018

Pastor Michael Breznau

RUTH

God's Unstoppable Love

God. Naomi. Ruth.

Does God's love sometimes feel distant? Have loss and pain clouded your vision of God's faithfulness? Do you wonder if He cares? Do you struggle with believing God enough to find Him worth obeying and following?

LOVE: COMPLETE | UNENDING | ALWAYS-AND-FOREVER

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Getting into the "sand" of the story...

Author and Date of Writing

The Talmud (*Bava' Batra* 14b) and other rabbinic literature suggest that the prophet Samuel wrote the book. Conservative scholar, Robert Hubbard, thinks a woman may have written it; however, this is not a very tenable argument for a number of reasons.

Although it is quite likely that Samuel penned this beautiful story, a concrete answer regarding which human author God inspired to record this narrative may elude us until glory. The archaic language seems to point to an early date (10th century BC). This places the historical setting during the times of the judges (cf. 1:1) between 1350 BC to 1051 BC.

Key Literary Features

Known for its literary quality and beauty, the book of Ruth is an exquisite representation of classical Hebrew *narrative* prose. The book is uniquely arranged in four major acts, which are represented in four chapter divisions. All four major acts contain three scenes, aside from the final element of the triad found in chapter four, which is more accurately classified as an epilogue.

While Ruth is the most famous character in the story and the one for which the book is named, the central and most dynamic character is actually Naomi. Ruth (most predominantly) and Boaz demonstrate the kind of loyal love (*chesed* – "covenant love," "loving-kindness," or "grace") that is characteristic of the Lord and, in turn, soften Naomi's heart (and the reader's) toward the sovereign love and faithfulness of God.

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Getting into the "sandals" of the story...

The Central Theme

Contrary to popular belief, this book is not primarily about human love and romance. What's the main point? A: *Despite the dark and difficult circumstances of life, God remains lovingly faithful to His people, and blesses their faithful obedience and self-sacrificial love.*

The book of Ruth is set in a historical context of spiritual darkness and widespread disobedience in the land of Israel ("the days of the judges" - 1:1). While chapters 17-21 in the book of Judges describe an ever-deepening spiral of disobedience and godlessness, and the negative effects thereof, the book of Ruth stands as a lesson in obedience and faithfulness to the Lord, and of His loyal love toward His people.

KEY TERMS AND IDEAS

- ✓ Faithfulness vs. Faithlessness
- ✓ Loyal love vs. Disloyalty
- ✓ Woman of Valor vs. Ruth "The Moabitess"
- ✓ Kinsman-Redeemer vs. "Piloni-Almoni"



