

Who was Obed in the Bible?

The name Obed means “serving” or “worshiping,” and there are several men listed in the Bible named Obed. The most notable Obed in Scripture is the son of Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 4:17; Matthew 1:5).

Obed’s mother, Ruth, was a Moabitess who immigrated to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law, Naomi. Boaz was a landowner who became Ruth’s kinsman-redeemer. Their son Obed is a significant part of biblical history because Obed’s son Jesse became the father of King David (Ruth 4:21-22). Obed’s name is mentioned only in four genealogies, in Ruth, 1 Chronicles, Matthew, and Luke. We know nothing about the life of Obed other than his conception was directly ordained by the Lord: “The Lord enabled [Ruth] to conceive, and she gave birth to a son” (Ruth 4:13); he was cared for by his grandmother (verse 16); Obed’s birth caused great joy in Bethlehem (verses 14-17); and he became the grandfather of a king (verse 22).

For all the lack of personal information we have concerning Obed, he is a vital link in God’s plan to bring salvation to the world. When Naomi’s husband and two sons died, it looked like her husband’s family line had come to a dead end. But God choose a non-Israelite, a bachelor farmer, and a series of “coincidences” to eventually bring David into the world. Jesus is often referred to by the messianic title “Son of David” (e.g., Matthew 9:27; 12:23), and David is often titled “son of Jesse” (1 Chronicles 10:14; Psalm 72:20; Acts 13:22). Since Jesse was the son of Obed, Obed’s name is forever linked with the promised Messiah of Israel (Matthew 1:1).

Other, lesser-known Obeds in Scripture include the following:

- Obed-edom, the Gittite (2 Samuel 6:10). As David was bringing the Ark of the Covenant

from Kiriath Jearim to Jerusalem, a man named Uzzah was killed by God for touching the ark. The procession to Jerusalem stopped, and the ark was taken to the nearby house of Obed-edom for safe-keeping for three months. Obed-edom treated the ark with reverence, and the Lord blessed his entire household (verse 11).

- Obed, a son of Ephlal (1 Chronicles 2:37-38).
- Obed, a Judaite. This Obed was the father of Azariah, one of the captains who helped Jehoiada conquer the wicked queen Athaliah (2 Chronicles 23:1).
- Obed, one of David's mighty men (1 Chronicles 11:47).
- Obed, son of Shemaiah. This Obed is the grandson of Obed-edom. He was also a gatekeeper of the temple (1 Chronicles 26:7) and a “capable” man with “the strength to do the work” (verse 8).