

Ruth - Introduction

A. Literature of Ruth

1. Well written, simple story of love in a rural setting
2. Style: Symmetry of form, convincing characterization, restraint, dignity, gentle repetitive style
3. A good model in the art of story telling

B. History in Ruth

1. General Observations

- a. Definite historical connections (1.1; 4.22)
- b. Written during reign of King David (1011-971 BC)
 - 1) David is mentioned, Solomon is not
 - 2) May have been part of King's "birth record"
- c. Author is not known
- d. Omits terrible events of period of Judges
- e. Only "good side" of characters are recorded

2. Names of Characters, may have been invented by author:

- a. Ruth = "friendship, association"
- b. Naomi = "pleasant one"
- c. Mara = "bitter"
- d. Elimelek = "God (Melek) is King"
- e. Orpah = "neck"
- f. Mahlon = "weakly"
- g. Chilion = "sickly"
- h. Boaz = "in him is strength"

3. Place in the Canon of Scripture

- a. Hebrew – Read at Pentecost, among "sacred writings"
- b. Christian – follows "Judges," same historical period

4. Gleaning "to gather"

- a. Instituted by Mosaic Law (Lev 19.9; 23.22; Deut 24.19)
- b. Provides for poor, fatherless, widows, strangers
- c. Done by Gideon (Judg 8.2)
- d. Sermon illustration of Jeremiah (Jer 6.9; 49.9,10)
- e. Biblical imagery of "fruit"

5. Land Inheritance

- a. Land given to Israelite families entering Canaan
(Numbers 26.52-56; Josh 13)
- b. Naomi had lost husband Elimelech's land through poverty; before or after going to Moab
- c. If male heir dies, land remains in family
(Num 27.1-11; 36)
- d. "Levirate" Law - brother of dead man should marry his brother's widow
 - 1) Refusal is possible (Deut 25.5-10)
 - 2) Onan is shameful (Gen 38.8-10)
 - 3) Duty extends to next of kin (Ruth 3.13, 4.3)
 - 4) Used by Sadducees to trick Jesus (Matt 22.23)
- e. "Goel" (Hebrew) – kinsman redeemer; holds land in trust for a future inheritor

- 1) Money needed to repurchase sold land (Lev 25.25)
- 2) God is ultimate "goel" in Jubilee (Isa 61)

4) Must be willing to marry wife of dead kinsman

2. "Hesed" (Hebrew) = "strong, loving kindness" (1.8; 2.20; 3.10)
 - a. Covenant description of Grace (Ex 15.7; Deut 7.9)
 - b. As Ruth freely received, she freely gave

C. Theology of Ruth

1. God

- a. Each character professes a lively faith in God (1.16; 2.4,7,19; 3.10)
- b. Basic conviction of story: "as the Lord lives"
 - 1) He is very near
 - 2) He is intimately involved in people's lives
 - 3) He disciplines, through famine
 - 4) He graciously provides for all who trust in Him

c. Names of God

- 1) "Elohim" (1.16; 2.12) General name for God
- 2) "Yahweh" God's covenant name / used 18 times
- 3) "El Shaddai" (1.20,21) God Almighty

2. Redemption / word used 20 times

- a. "Yahweh" is the "Goel" of Israel
 - 1) Israel is His possession (Ex 19.5)
 - 2) He dwells in their midst (Ex 25.8)
 - 3) He delivers, provides for, and protects
- b. Boaz the "Goel" – Foreshadows Jesus our Redeemer
 - 1) Must be a blood relative
 - 2) Must have money to purchase the inheritance
 - 3) Must be willing to buy back lost inheritance

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