

Ruth

1A. Outline

This book can be roughly outlined in five scenes at various locations, followed by the narrator's summary of Ruth's place as the grandmother of king David.

In Moab 1:1-18 Ruth's faith and loyalty
In Bethlehem 1:19-22 Theology of Naomi
In the field of Boaz 2:4-7 Character of Boaz
On the threshing floor 3:6-9 Legal plea
At the city gate 4:1-12 Redemption
Narrator's Summary, 4:13-21

Property redemption and marital redemption.

Lev. 25:25-30, 47-55 w/ Jer. 32:1-15 and Deut. 25:5 call for preservation of a posterity in lineage to David and to Christ. The Deuteronomy text does not indicate the marital status of the redeemer; given the information here, we have to remain inconclusive about the matter of polygamy. Furthermore, the laws in the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses) do not define the kinsman redeemer role in the precise way that occurs in the book of Ruth. Apparently, what we have in Ruth is an application by implication from the general principle of kinship redemption. Thus, the kinsman redeemer had a "varitey of duties in support of weakened relatives" (IOT, 132), and Ruth's appeal must be to the spirit and intent of kinship redemption.

2A. What is the main point of the book of Ruth?

1C. Dillard on what it is not

"Be loyal like Ruth and kind like Boaz, and God will reward you." Good overcomes evil for nice people. 133 He calls this analysis "inane," distorting, and a view that "misses the profound theological teaching" (133).

2C. What is it then?

The book relates "the hidden and continuous providence of God" and thus "God's ongoing work in the life of ordinary people." This is accomplished, for example, by the subtlety in its references to God (IOT, 133, 23 times in the book and only twice by the narrator). How so?

1) "There was a famine" (1:1) is balanced by the Lord sent aid to his people providing food (1:6 in the ears of Naomi). God was in control of the famine and its resolution.

2) New husbands would be granted of God (1:8); the loss of husbands and sons was from the Lord (1:13). Even in her distress, Naomi recognizes the hand of the Almighty (1:20).

3) Compare "happened" (2:3; a "chance" meeting in what sense?) with the Lord's kindness (2:20).

4) Compare the appeal for redemption by Ruth and by Boaz in chapters 3-4:12 ends with the elders committing Boaz and Ruth to the Lord that He may make her fruitful like Rachel and Leah (4:11). Note the covenantal flavor of this language (God's blessing was upon the wives of Jacob building up the house of Israel).

5) The summary stresses the Lord's enablement of Ruth to conceive and give birth to a son and an overview of the larger history in which king David is God's gift to his people (4:21; his people, 1:6).

Bottom line on the main point: God is at work bringing about his purposes and fulfilling his covenant to his people. Within history people are being restored to his image (see the loyalty, faith, love of the characters of the book). This is part of a larger historical process through which God is working. It involves kinsman redemption (people are restored ultimately through kinsman redemption for God is at work within a particular people in history). It involves kingship for God's purpose unfolds in the birth of David. God promised to Abraham that "kings

shall come forth from you" (Gen. 17:6). The Ruth account is part of how God brought this promise to fruition.

3A. Broader lessons

1) In light of the backdrop of Judges and the sinfulness of the people of Israel, what do we learn?

The redeemer buys us out from our slavery to sin and our poverty and famine for righteousness in a foreign wilderness land (Moab, a nation descended from incest with Lot and typical of the degradation of sin) outside Eden. God's provision for redemption and restoration comes through people over the centuries, sinful people, great and small (Tamar, Naomi, Ruth & Boaz to David). His salvation is a salvation of sinners, real people in history, through a process that includes many sins that are overcome by grace. Note the women in the genealogy of Christ and the aspersions, especially whore and foreigner (IOT 134).

2) Main point is that Christ is our (NT) kinsmen redeemer, a near relative of Israelites and of those outside (cf. Ruth of Moab). Cf. 2.12 with 3.9 for the idea that Boaz represents the Lord as redeemer, a task that will be completed through the descent of Eve, Abraham, and David ---through Christ our kinsman redeemer.

3) Note Ruth's loyalty, hardwork, love and faith?

She makes claim in this way wisely of ownership by Christ. A friend of sinners can be entreated with hopeful expectation because of his love and ability to redeem.

4) But in overview, it includes people being restored manifesting loyalty, love and devotion to the Lord (Naomi, Ruth, Boaz, workers, the elders). Thus we have a glimpse into God's saving purpose within the lives of ordinary people; in the lives of average people, God is pleased to work out his purposes (this is a welcome note since most of us are regular, average people).

Thus God is accomplishing his purpose in history providentially with a hidden quality behind the scenes. So in the death of Christ which to many in Jerusalem was "just another execution." But here the redeemer receives the knife of Abraham for the deepest stroke that pierced him was the stroke that God, in justice, gave.