

“Relative Redemption”

An Inductive Study of the Book of Ruth

Study 1: “Is God Still There?”

Ruth 1

A. Background of the Book

1. Is there any indication in the book of who the author is? ¹
2. There is at least one clue as to the setting of the historical narrative. What is it? (Ruth 1:1)
3. There are other clues related to, if not the date of writing, at least some editorial activity afterwards. Elucidate the clues:
 - a. Ruth 4:7
 - b. Ruth 4:17-22

B. Disruptive Forces. Ruth 1:1-5

1. What is the setting of this historical narrative? 1:1
2. Why was there a famine in the land of Israel? (1:1 cf. Deut. 28:1-5, 12 with Deut. 28:15, 23-24)
3. A certain man left Bethlehem in Judah and departed across the Jordan River to which country? 1:1
 - a. In your opinion was he justified in departing?
 - b. Was Abram (later Abraham) justified in departing from Canaan to Egypt because of a famine? (Gen. 12:10-20)

¹ Authorship: Typically, Hebrew authors do not announce their presence. For the record, the Babylonian Talmud [attributed authorship to Samuel](#). It is the opinion of WordExplain that Samuel is as good a guess as any for the authorship of the book. At least he is well-known and has a name. The hints of a later date (Ruth 4:7 and 4:17-22) do not mean that Samuel could not have written the book. After all, Samuel was the one who anointed David to be king before he died. Though he did not live to see David reign, he had to have known that he would reign some day. Alternatively, the words of Ruth 4:17-22 may mean simply that a later editor put the book in its final form. That editorial activity would not preclude that a single author such as Samuel could not have written the original narrative.

- c. What was an unintended consequence ² of Abram's departure into Egypt? (Gen. 16:1-15, cf. Gen. 25:12-18)
4. List the people who departed from Judah to Moab. Ruth 1:2
5. What sad event overtook the family? Ruth 1:3
6. As they came of age, Naomi's two sons married two Moabite women. Ruth 1:4
 - a. What were their names?
 - b. How do you imagine Naomi felt about this? (Cf. Neh. 13:23-27)
7. After ten years, what additional tragedy befell Naomi and her family? Ruth 1:4-5
8. How do you imagine Naomi felt?

C. Returning Choices. Ruth 1:6-18

1. Naomi determined to return to the land of Judah. Ruth 1:6-7.
 - a. Why?
 - b. Who was accompanying her?
 - c. What can you deduce about the culture surrounding marriage in the Middle East in that era?
2. On the way, Naomi attempted to dissuade her two daughters-in-law from following her. What were the reasons she gave? Ruth 1:8-9
3. What was their initial response? Ruth 1:10
4. Naomi did not content herself with their answer. What additional leverage did she place upon her daughters-in-law to return to their own country? Ruth 1:11-13a

² Ruth 1:1 (letter c) – unintended consequence: Ishmael is the father of the Arab peoples. Abram's departure into Egypt, where he secured an Egyptian slave girl for his wife Sarai has not been at all beneficial for the chosen people of Israel. Arabs are, generally speaking, are among Israel's most relentless and ruthless enemies.

5. What was Naomi's view of how God had treated her? Ruth 1:13b
6. What was Orpah's response this time? Ruth 1:14a
7. What was Ruth's response? Ruth 1:14b
8. For the third time, Naomi tried to persuade Ruth to leave. This time it was peer pressure. Ruth 1:15
9. Ruth, rather forcefully, asked Naomi to cease trying to dissuade her. Then Ruth made six astonishing commitments to Naomi. What were they? Ruth 1:16-17a
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
 - f. _____
10. Then, Ruth made a very serious vow to Naomi. What was it? Ruth 1:17b
11. What effect did Ruth's forceful speech have upon Naomi? Ruth 1:18

D. The Bittersweet Return to Bethlehem. Ruth 1:19-22

1. What reaction did the unlikely pair produce when they arrived in Bethlehem? Ruth 1:19a
2. What did the women say? Ruth 1:19b (What do you suppose was their tone of voice? What might have caused their apparent surprise, if not disbelief?)
3. What name did Naomi forbid them to use? Ruth 1:20a. What did her given name mean?
4. What name did she ask them to call her? Ruth 1:20b.
 - a. What did this new name mean?

- b. Why did she justify her change in names?
5. How did she further justify her name-change? Ruth 1:21
6. What adjectives would you use to describe Naomi's attitude in general and her attitude toward God?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
7. Do you believe she was justified in her view of God and His sovereignty in her life? Why or why not?
8. What lessons or applications can we deduce from this chapter of Ruth?
 - a. About obedience?
 - b. About consequences?
 - c. About hardship for believers? (Today, for Christians)
9. One of the unexplained mysteries of Ruth 1 is the difference between Naomi's reaction and Ruth's.
 - a. Once Naomi and Ruth met each other, Ruth went through the identical difficulties that Naomi did.
 - b. Yet the reactions of the two were polar opposites.
 - 1) How would you describe Ruth's reactions to God?
 - 2) How would you contrast Naomi's reactions to God/
 - c. How do you account for the difference in their reactions?

10. The last verse of the chapter is a sort of summary by the author. Ruth 1:22
 - a. How does he describe Ruth? Do you have any idea how often this description is given of Ruth in the entire book?
 - b. The author doesn't stop with a single adjective. He states that she (singular) returned (to Judah) from a foreign country.
 - 1) What country is that?
 - 2) Do you have any idea how many times the name of that country is mentioned in the entire book of Ruth?
 - 3) Are you aware that Moabites were under a curse? (See Deut. 23:6.)
 - c. How is Ruth's response a God's treatment of her in this book an amazing example of God's grace to non-Jewish people?
11. The first chapter of Ruth closes with the time notice that it was the beginning of what? Ruth 1:22
12. Is this a token of the sovereignty of God that is displayed in this historical narrative? Why or why not?

E. Reflecting on Ruth 1.

1. What have you learned from this first chapter of Ruth about the dealings of God with people?
2. What have you learned about the responses of different people to trouble in their lives?
3. What have you learned about the grace of God in this chapter?
4. How have you struggled with trouble in your life?
5. Have you grown in your commitment to God, like Ruth?
6. Or have you become bitter, like Naomi?

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