

a lesson:

ON THE BOOK OF RUTH

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12/17/2006 AD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

II. A MESSAGE OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR MEN IN ALL AGES

III. THE GENTILE RUTH DEDICATES HERSELF TO NAOMI, ISRAEL & JEHOVAH

IV. THE GOOD FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUS LOYALTY TO GOD & HIS PEOPLE

V. THE MERCY OF GOD THE CORE OF THE BOOK OF RUTH

VI. REFERENCES

I. INTRODUCTION

Scofield places the Book of RUTH as from 1322 to 1312 BC, over a period of 10 years.¹ Interestingly, the events recorded in RUTH, if Scofield's dating is correct, occur sometime after the death of the Judge Ehud and the deliverance of Israel by the Judges Deborah and Barak.² If RUTH is a testimony of a two god-fearing women and one righteous man, it is in stark contrast to the moral decay of ancient Israel generally. For this was a time in ancient Israel that was very much like our present age in The West. Like now, it was a time of great religious apostasy; of the setting up of false idols in the lives of men; of the oppression of the weak, vulnerable and innocent; of the corruption of religious and social institutions; of the suffering of the people of GOD by the hand of evil from within and from without; of the terrible misery brought upon the people's own heads by their own sins; of the casting away of The Law of GOD.

II. A MESSAGE OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR MEN IN ALL AGES

Yet here is a record of 3 people of GOD – Naomi, Ruth and Boaz – who though surrounded by wickedness, yet stand out to us for their obedience to The Law of GOD, for their personal righteousness and for their tender love for others! It is a reminder that GOD always reserves unto Himself people who have not bent the knee to Baal in every generation. It is a reminder that, as Saint Paul records in ROMANS 8:28, "...all things work together for good to them that love GOD, to them who are the called according to His purpose!"³ The Book of RUTH documents that, as Howard puts it, "...the period of The Judges was not characterized totally by chaos, that GOD was still in control, that human virtues such as kindness and loyalty still had a place in Israel, and that an exemplary king was about to be raised up!"⁴ Indeed, this is also a message for our own time and place, as for any age when it seems for a time that evil prevails and the righteous might be forever cast down!

¹ 1, Scofield, The Book of RUTH, introductory comments, page 315.

² 1, Scofield, JUDGES 4, date given, page 291.

³ 2, Bible Works, KJV, ROMANS 8:28.

⁴ 3, Old Testament Historical Books, RUTH, page 125, paragraph 2.

III. THE GENTILE RUTH DEDICATES HERSELF TO NAOMI, ISRAEL & JEHOVAH

A certain Israelite named Elimelech moved his wife Naomi and his two sons in a time of a great famine to the land of Moab. In that alien nation, Elimelech's sons each married Moabite women. But in that strange land Naomi saw her husband and both of her sons die. Of her two Gentile daughter-in-laws', Orpah with Naomi's blessing returned to her pagan family, but Ruth vowed to remain with Naomi as she returned to Israel to seek her sustenance. For we read in RUTH 1:16, "And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy GOD my GOD!"⁵ And as a result of Ruth's virtuous and righteous choices – in binding herself to her mother-in-law and to The LORD - both she and Naomi are rescued by the god-fearing Boaz.

IV. THE GOOD FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUS LOYALTY TO GOD & HIS PEOPLE

Ruth was a Gentile who, by GOD's Providence and her righteous loyalty, was saved from destitution and death. There were immediate, distant and eternal consequences to Ruth's righteous loyalty to her widow mother-in-law Naomi: Firstly, she saved herself and her mother-in-law Naomi, who was a Jew. Secondly, she brought the love of a virtuous wife to the arms of a lonely Jewish man named Boaz. Thirdly, as RUTH 4:17 records, "...There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David."⁶ Fourthly, this Gentile woman who worshipped GOD in humble earnestness, came to be brought into the very bloodline of The King of The Universe Incarnate, JESUS CHRIST as an ancestor of King David. Howard thus comments that "The Book of RUTH is concerned with the Davidic line, and I SAMUEL [next] introduces the monarchy and David's selection as GOD's choice for the [earthly] position [of king of Israel]."⁷

The fourth consequence of Ruth's righteous loyalty that is most striking is a picture of the then yet future hope for all men to be grafted into the People of GOD through JESUS The Messiah. It is a picture of lost Gentile pagans joining the nation of

⁵ 2, Bible Works, KJV, RUTH 1:16.

⁶ 2, Bible Works, KJV, RUTH 4:17.

⁷ 3, Old Testament Historical Books, RUTH, page 130, paragraph 3.

Israel as fellow children of The LORD. And it is a picture of the coming of The Church, in Which both Jew and Gentile would come to be together called the very Sons and Daughters of The Almighty by The Body and Blood of JESUS CHRIST! This is why Saint Peter writes of how at The Cross lost men – both Gentile and Jew - are now made reconciled to GOD as in I PETER 2:9-10, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of GOD: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy!”⁸

Further, we find that Boaz is prophetically a typological picture of The Lamb of GOD – JESUS CHRIST - Who is The Kinsman Redeemer of all the saints of GOD, both Jew and Gentile! Here we see inherently an explanation for why it was necessary that The Messiah be fully GOD Incarnate and also fully man, but without sin. Only a Saviour Who came as The infinite GOD could pay the price for the seemingly infinite sins of fallen men. And only a Saviour Who came as The Perfect Man and without sin could claim us as our Kinsman Redeemer to rescue the faithful from sin, death and damnation!

V. THE MERCY OF GOD THE CORE OF THE BOOK OF RUTH

It is the reflection of GOD’s *mercy* in the heroes in this Book that may well be most striking: Firstly, we find the word “kindly” in RUTH 1:8, when Naomi says to Ruth, “...Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal *kindly* with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.”⁹ Secondly, we find the word “kindness” in RUTH 2:20, where Naomi says to Ruth, “...Blessed be he of the LORD, Who hath not left off His *kindness* to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man [Boaz] is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.”¹⁰ And thirdly, we again find the word “kindness” in RUTH 3:10, when Boaz says to Ruth, “...Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more *kindness* in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.”¹¹

⁸ 2, Bible Works, KJV, I PETER 2:9-10.

⁹ 2, Bible Works, KJV, RUTH 1:8.

¹⁰ 2, Bible Works, KJV, RUTH 2:20.

¹¹ 2, Bible Works, KJV, RUTH 3:10.

As Howard summarizes, RUTH is a reminder of “GOD’s sovereignty and steadfast nature.”¹² In the faithfulness of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz, we see a picture of GOD’s faithfulness. Howard therefore also sees in RUTH the evidence of GOD’s “...loyalty to His people, in His refusal to abandon them, and in His rewarding their faithfulness to Him.”¹³ In RUTH we see lives that reflect GOD’s characteristics of loyalty and commitment: for in Naomi, Ruth and Boaz – as they live out loyalty and commitment to one another, to GOD’s Law and to The Creator Himself – we see shadows of the Image of GOD stamped upon their souls. And above all else, RUTH shows us a reflection of GOD’s “...‘steadfast love,’ [and] ‘kindness.’”¹⁴ This is the “‘kindness’ [and] ‘loving-kindness’” of The Creator.¹⁵ This is the **רַחֲמִים** – CHESED- or *mercy* of GOD!¹⁶

This is the same Divine mercy of GOD that Moses declares in DEUTERONOMY 7:9, “Know therefore that the LORD thy GOD, He is GOD, the faithful GOD, which keepeth covenant and *mercy* with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations!”¹⁷ And this is the same Divine mercy of GOD that caused The Saviour JESUS CHRIST to work His grace of salvation for us His saints; to redeem the lost in His unfathomable mercy; to reveal the very reason why The Messiah came! It is therefore GOD’s mercy that Saint Paul declares in EPHESIANS 2:4-5, “But GOD, Who is rich in *mercy*, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with CHRIST, (by grace ye are saved)!”¹⁸ AMEN.

¹² 3, Old Testament Historical Books, RUTH, Theology of The Book of RUTH, page 133, paragraph 1.

¹³ 3, Old Testament Historical Books, RUTH, Theology of The Book of RUTH, page 133, paragraph 3.

¹⁴ 3, Old Testament Historical Books, RUTH, Theology of The Book of RUTH, page 133, paragraph 3.

¹⁵ 2, Bible Works, ISBE Bible Dictionary, entry 5922, “Mercy; Merciful,” paragraph 2.

¹⁶ 4, Deluxe Bible Collection, RUTH 1:8, Hebrew text, **רַחֲמִים** – CHESED - meaning Divine mercy.

¹⁷ 2, Bible Works, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 7:9.

¹⁸ 2, Bible Works, KJV, EPHESIANS 2:4-5.

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