

AGAINST ALL ODDS

PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE: RUTH

Ruth 4:14 (NASV)

I. BACKGROUND

A. COMPOSITION

1. AUTHORSHIP

- a. Anonymous—not indicated in Scripture
- b. Talmudic tradition says Samuel
 - Unlikely—since lineage of David is given at end—to trace kingly lineage
 - Samuel died before David was crowned

2. DATE OF WRITING

- a. Early dating
 - Early monarchical period—early 10th century
 - Book gives lineage down to David
 - Solomon not mentioned
- b. Late dating
 - Traces of Aramaic in book—hints at post-exilic period
 - Text says land redemption was a custom in ‘former times’—**4:7**

B. SETTING/SITUATION

1. DATE OF EVENTS

- a. During the time of Judges—**1:1**
- b. Three generations before David—**4:21-22**
- c. So—mid-to-late 11th century—during time of:
 - Oppression of Ammonites and Philistines—**Jdgs 10:7**
 - Or later under Judge Ibzan in Judah—**Jdgs 12:8**
 - Or later, beginning of renewed Philistine oppression—**Jdgs 13:1**

C. PLACE IN CANON

1. CHRISTIAN CANON

- Third in Historical books

2. HEBREW CANON

- In ‘Writings’—just after Proverbs
- Logical place—after Proverbs 31—the ‘Virtuous Woman’

D. TITLE

- RUTH—FROM ROOT MEANING ‘FRIENDSHIP’ OR ‘ASSOCIATION’

II. BIBLICAL BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

A. ‘LEVIRATE’ MARRIAGE—[DT 25:5-10](#)

5 When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her. 6 It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. 7 But if the man does not desire to take his brother’s wife, then his brother’s wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, ‘My husband’s brother refuses to establish a name for his brother in Israel; he is not willing to perform the duty of a husband’s brother to me.’ 8 Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak to him. And if he persists and says, ‘I do not desire to take her,’ 9 then his brother’s wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, ‘Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother’s house. 10 In Israel his name shall be called, ‘The house of him whose sandal is removed.’

1. EXPLANATION

- Widow—not allowed to marry outside family
- Brother marries childless widow—to have children for his dead brother
- Child takes name of dead brother—to continue family name

2. ‘KINSMAN-REDEEMER’

- Concept expanded by custom—to nearest male relative
- Term used in Ruth was—‘near kinsman’—or ‘kinsman redeemer’
- This term not used in original Deuteronomic law
- But the verb form *is* used in the law for land redemption [below]—in [Lev 25](#)
- Term also can mean—‘avenger’
- First used in Ruth at [2:23](#)—used 13 times in last three chapters

3. ‘LEVIRATE’—TERM

- From Latin—*levir*—meaning ‘husband’s brother’

B. REDEMPTION OF LAND—[LEV 25:25-34](#)

25 *'If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor he has to sell part of his property, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back what his relative has sold. 26 Or in case a man has no kinsman, but so recovers his means as to find sufficient for its redemption, 27 then he shall calculate the years since its sale and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and so return to his property. 28 But if he has not found sufficient means to get it back for himself, then what he has sold shall remain in the hands of its purchaser until the year of jubilee; but at the jubilee it shall revert, that he may return to his property. 29 'Likewise, if a man sells a dwelling house in a walled city, then his redemption right remains valid until a full year from its sale; his right of redemption lasts a full year. 30 But if it is not bought back for him within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city passes permanently to its purchaser throughout his generations; it does not revert in the jubilee. 31 The houses of the villages, however, which have no surrounding wall shall be considered as open fields; they have redemption rights and revert in the jubilee. 32 As for cities of the Levites, the Levites have a permanent right of redemption for the houses of the cities which are their possession. 33 What, therefore, belongs to the Levites may be redeemed and a house sale in the city of this possession reverts in the jubilee, for the houses of the cities of the Levites are their possession among the sons of Israel. 34 But pasture fields of their cities shall not be sold, for that is their perpetual possession.*

1. EXPLANATION

a. Sold, open land/pasture

1. Reverted to owner at Jubilee Year
2. Could be bought back any time before Jubilee Year
3. Price—calculated based of remaining time to Jubilee Year
4. If brother purchases\ d it back—he was the 'Redeemer'—*goel*

b. Sold, city property—in walled city

1. Did not revert to owner at Jubilee Year
2. But could be purchased back—only within one year

2. TRADITION IN RUTH'S DAY

- o Was connected with concept of Levirate marriage

3. BIBLICAL EXAMPLE—**Jer 32:6-15**

a. Hopeless situation

- Zedekiah was King of Judah
- Nebuchadnezzar was attacking Judah

b. Jeremiah redeemed land of cousin Hanameel (son of uncle Shallum)

- Following God's command
- Purpose—to show hope of restoration to Judah

Jer 32:15—*For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.*

C. GLEANING AT HARVEST

Lev 19:9-10—*9 Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God.*

Lev 23:22—*When you reap the harvest of your land, moreover, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field nor gather the gleanings of your harvest; you are to leave them for the needy and the alien. I am the LORD your God.*

III. CULTURAL HISTORY/BACKGROUND

A. MOABITES

1. DESCENDANTS OF LOT—BY OLDER DAUGHTER—**GEN 19:37**
2. LOCATION
 - a. East of Dead Sea—north of Edom—south of Ammon (Jordan)
 - b. Driven there just before Exodus by Amorites—(**Nu 21**)
 - c. Territory where Israel staged before crossing Jordan from wilderness
3. FOUGHT WITH ISRAEL TWICE
 - About 200 years before Ruth—**Jgs 3;12-30**
 - About 80 years after Ruth—**I Sam 14:47**

B. MOAB—TOPOGRAPHY

1. RECEIVED MORE RAINFALL THAN ISRAEL—FROM UPDRAFT OFF DEAD SEA
2. EVEN WHEN ISRAEL WAS IN DROUGHT—SET STAGE FOR *RUTH*

C. WHEAT/BARLEY HARVEST IN JUDEA—APRIL TO JUNE

IV. THEMES

A. REDEMPTION

1. KINSMAN REDEEMER
 - a. Term used 13 times in book
 - b. Points to coming Christ—as Redeemer—who came from same lineage
2. UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION
 - a. God cares for all persons—Ruth epitomizes this in three ways

- Race/nation—Moabitess
- Gender—female/widow
- Social status—lowly/poor

b. Points to universal offer of salvation beyond Israel—in New Testament

B. FAITHFULNESS AND HONORABLE BEHAVIOR

1. FAITHFULNESS

a. Ruth to Naomi

1. Ruth went the extra mile—beyond Orpah—who also showed initial dedication to Naomi
2. Ruth’s pledge was *permanent*—to death—*where you die I will die and be buried*
3. Ruth’s devotion was *total*—even converting to Judaism and abandoning her own gods

b. Naomi to Ruth

1. Self-sacrifice—urging daughters-in-law to re-marry and leave her
2. Her wise and steadfast advice to help Ruth—[and herself!]
3. Relying on God to help them both—giving praise to God for sending Boaz—**2:20**

c. Boaz to Ruth

1. Boaz went beyond what was necessary
 - He could have redeemed the land and married Naomi
 - Since she probably would not have children—it would not jeopardize his estate
 - But by marrying Ruth—he entrusted his estate to her child—[Obed]
2. Boaz went beyond what the nearest kinsman-redeemer was willing to do

d. NOTE: All this contrasted with the faithlessness of Israel—during time of Judges

2. HONORABLE BEHAVIOR

a. Honorable intentions shown by:

- Ruth—honoring her mother-in-law Naomi—beyond what was expected
- Boaz—by not taking advantage of Ruth—on the threshing floor
- By informing the other kinsman-redeemer—of his opportunity to redeem the land
- Boaz’s extra generosity—telling his workers to pull out extra grain for gleaning

b. NOTE: this all contrasted with the self-serving attitudes in the days of Judges

C. ROYAL ANCESTRY

1. KING DAVID—TRACED BACK 3 GENERATIONS
2. OF CHRIST—KING OF KINGS
 - Traced back to David
 - Ruth and Boaz—Obed—and Jesse—listed in [Mt 1:5](#)

V. OUTLINE

A. GENERAL PATTERN

1. LIKE A FOUR ACT PLAY—EACH ACT WITH A DIFFERENT SETTING
2. EACH CHAPTER WITH A ‘PROBLEM-SOLUTION’ FORMAT

B. OUTLINE

1. CHAPTER ONE—ACT ONE—**RUTH AND NAOMI**
 - a. **Setting**—Moab ([1:1-18](#))—then Bethlehem ([1:19-22](#))
 - b. **Problem**—Naomi’s and Ruth’s plight—deaths and despair
 - c. **Solution**—mutual faithfulness and return to Bethlehem
2. CHAPTER TWO—ACT TWO—**RUTH MEETS BOAZ**
 - a. **Setting**—fields of Boaz
 - b. **Problem**—Hunger and poverty
 - c. **Solution**
 1. Permission to glean—and generosity of Boaz
 2. Ruth cares for Naomi
3. CHAPTER THREE—ACT THREE—**A HAPPY SOLUTION**
 - a. **Setting**—threshing floor—seclusion—night-time
 - b. **Problem**
 1. Long term solution for Naomi and Ruth
 2. Boaz—unmarried—and older
 - c. **Solution**
 1. Proposal of Marriage
 2. Boaz cares for Ruth
4. CHAPTER FOUR—ACT FOUR—**REDEMPTION AND MARRIAGE**

- a. **Setting**—city gate—public—daytime
- b. **Problem**—another kinsman redeemer
- c. **Solution**—persistence and commitment by Boaz
- d. **Epilogue**—genealogy of David

VI. EXPOSITION

A. GOD OVERCOMES ALL OBSTACLES TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WILL

1. HIS WILL IS TO REDEEM HUMANKIND

Jn 6:40—*For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.*

2. PROBLEMS IN RUTH

- a. The time of the **Judges**
 - What permanent good can come out of such a corrupt and lawless time when everyone did as he thought right in his own eyes?
- b. **Naomi's Plight**
 - Widow—in foreign land—with nobody to care for her
- c. **Ruth's background**
 - 1. A **widow** with no means—poor and without property
 - 2. A **social outcast** in her own society—for being married to an Israelite
 - 3. A **woman** in a male-dominated society—with no standing
 - 4. A **Moabitess**
 - a. Who were avowed enemies of Israel
 - b. Who had worshipped Chemosh
 - Involving human sacrifice—**II Kgs 3:27**
- d. Another kinsman-redeemer—who could have blocked the marriage

3. HISTORICAL OBSTACLES OUTSIDE RUTH

- a. **MOABITE HISTORY**
 - Ruth would not have existed—apart from Lot's incest with his elder daughter!
- b. **ISRAELITE HISTORY**
 - 1. Tamar and Judah

- a. Boaz would not have existed—without Tamar’s deception of Judah
- b. She bore Perez illegitimately by Judah—after deaths of husbands Er and Onan
- c. Perez was great-great-great-great grandfather of Boaz—**Mt 1:3-5**

2. Rahab

- a. Boaz would not have existed—without God sparing Rahab at Jericho
- b. She was Boaz’s mother by Salmon—Judah’s g/g/g/great grandson through Perez

B. GOD USES INSIGNIFICANT THINGS TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WILL

1. UNIMPORTANT PEOPLE

- o Two forgotten widows—one a foreigner

2. INSIGNIFICANT—NATURAL—COMMONPLACE EVENTS

- a. Unrecorded drought—brought Ruth and Naomi together
- b. Untimely deaths of *both* husbands
- c. Incidental meeting of Boaz and Ruth
- d. ‘Coincidence’ of Boaz being related to Naomi

3. NOTE—THE FRAGILITY OF THESE TURNING POINTS

- a. The hidden causality of God
- b. Not through prophetic utterances or miracles
- c. But through ordinary events—guiding the course of history behind the scenes

C. HOW CHRIST FULFILLED THE ROLE OF REDEEMER

- ❖ A close blood relative
- ❖ Who was able to pay the price of redemption
- ❖ Who was willing to redeem
- ❖ Who was free to choose and act on that decision

1. THE REDEEMER HAD TO BE A CLOSE RELATIVE BY BLOOD

- a. Jesus is related to us by blood—*the Word became flesh*—**Jn 1**
- b. He is related both to God and to us—as the Son of God—and the Son of Man
- c. He descended through the royal line chosen by God to redeem humankind

Rom 1:1-4—*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart from the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and*

who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

2. THE REDEEMER HAD TO BE ABLE TO PAY THE PRICE OF REDEMPTION

- a. The requirement was payment in blood—a sacrifice
- b. A perfect sacrifice—without blemish—thoroughly holy

I Pe 1:18-19—*For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

3. THE REDEEMER HAD TO BE TOTALLY WILLING TO REDEEM

- a. A voluntary—un-coerced—and autonomous act
- b. In perfect line with the will of the Father

Jn 10:17-18—*The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.*

4. REDEEMER HAD TO BE FREE HIMSELF—HAVE A CHOICE TO REDEEM

- a. In the Garden of Gethsemane
 - 1. Jesus did not *want* to die—but *chose* to obey the Father—**Mk 14**—*not My will but Yours*
 - 2. He knew He could call on the Father for 12 legions of angels to rescue Him—**Mt 26**—but he *chose* to make sure Scripture would be fulfilled
- b. Before Pilate—**Jn 18**
 - 1. He *chose* for His kingdom *not* to be an earthly one
 - 2. He knew—His disciples could fight for an earthly kingdom—but He refused to do so
- c. After the feeding of the 5000—**Jn 6**
 - 1. The people wanted to make Him a king
 - 2. But He *chose* to reject this