

THE BOOK OF RUTH

"Blessing in Bethlehem"

Ruth 4:13-22

Introduction

1. This is the final chapter of a small but important book in the Old Testament. It has taken a mere 80 verses to come to the major thrust of the book. The story is now complete.

2. Earlier in this chapter, the nearer unnamed kinsman said it was impossible for him to redeem the land and Ruth (v. 6). The decision was up to Boaz, a more distant kinsman to fulfill the redeemer role. He promised to fulfill this obligation if the first did not (3:13). He did (4:8). All kinds of well wishes were then given to Boaz and Ruth (vv. 11, 12).

3. The present study brings the climax of the whole record. Here is the simple rationale for the account to be found in the Bible: it is that blessing might flow from Bethlehem. And it does. It comes in these ways:

1. THROUGH A CONCEPTION v. 13.

Included in this are the following:

a. Ruth taken

This indicates the facts of the case. Boaz did not hesitate to perform his duty.

b. Ruth married

While formal marriage similar to moderns is not noted, Boaz did take Ruth as wife.

c. Ruth received

Earlier Ruth asked Boaz for marriage (3:9). She desired Boaz to assume a responsibility toward her. Now Boaz does this. It must be noted that this act of marriage follows the expression of marriage (1 Cor. 7:1-2).

d. Ruth conceived

This is indeed an act of God. It is true there is no specific evidence concerning Boaz' age when he married Ruth. However, Jewish tradition says he was an octogenarian. This is entirely possible since Ruth probably took place during the days of the Judges. It is possible it was during the days of Ehud who judged Israel for 80 years (Judges 3:30). Longevity was common then. For Ruth to conceive from a man of such age is indeed God's work (cf. Gen. 17:17).

e. Ruth delivered

The record is simple but firm: Ruth bore a son and his name is given as Obed, a servant (vv. 13, 17).

2. THROUGH AN ADMIRATION

This situation came about:

a. Because of God's blessing

Actually, the Lord is blessed because of what He has done for Naomi. The birth of Obed was a day of unusual blessing for Naomi. Obed became for Naomi a kinsman (goel) and this means she now had a deliverer.

b. Because of Obed's blessing

Obed gave four specific services to Naomi: 1) Notoriety (v. 14c). This means the name of the family would be maintained. 2) Restoration (v. 15). All that Naomi had lost was now regained. 3) Nourishment (v. 15). Obed would sustain Naomi and keep her. 4) Comfort (v. 16). Naomi actually claimed Obed as her own son and nursed him, hence she was comforted by him.

c. Because of Ruth's blessing

As the daughter-in-law to Naomi, Ruth loved her mother-in-law very much. This is better than for a woman to have seven sons, which is a picture of riches (1 Sam. 2:5).

NOTE: It is the women (cf. v. 11) who praise Naomi for

all these events which have taken place. Blessing certainly did flow in Bethlehem for her (cf. 1:6).

3. THROUGH A CONNECTION

This relates to the genealogical record given of:

a. Obed

The birth of Obed is the signal for the final few verses of the book. The name Obed means "servant" and cannot be construed to mean "servant of Jehovah" as some would desire. He is allied to Naomi, apparently because he maintains her cause in family tradition.

b. David

This is the key of it all. The Book of Ruth is in the Scriptures to give God's divine account of how David's ancestry fits into the biblical record. Furthermore, David is the key figure for Israel's future, too (Ezek. 34:34). This is possible because of the covenant which God made unilaterally with him (2 Sam. 7:4-17).

c. Parez

This man represents Judah (Gen. 38:29). Saul was from Benjamin (1 Sam. 9:1, 2). He could not fit into God's program for Israel's ultimate future (cf. Gen. 49:10). So, the history is given to show that David comes through Obed and ultimately is linked with Parez (Judah). But all this is important only because the Messiah will come through this man David (Matt. 1:1). Hence, the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1-3) which promises a future for the Jews is linked here with the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:4-17) and all of this is shown to be linked with the forebearers of the Messiah Jesus.

Conclusion Blessing came to Bethlehem when Obed was born. Blessing came to the world when the future progeny of Obed came to Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1-12). All of this is wonderful, but it has no significance until the blessing comes to you personally (Gal. 3:14). May this be true in your life today.