

A Ray of Hope in Dark Times

While the time-period of the Judges may have been the dark ages of Hebrew history, it wasn't entirely void of good people or righteous actions. We see this is true in the book of Ruth. A story which takes place "...in the days when the judges ruled" (Ruth 1:1), the story of Ruth shows that even in the darkest of times, people can choose God's way instead of partaking in the evil all around them. A brief four chapters, the book of Ruth reads almost like a play, with each chapter a different scene. The book is full of unexpected, yet joyful irony. The story begins when an Israelite family forsakes home and travels to Moab during a time of famine. Naomi (a central character) loses her husband and both sons in Moab. Choosing to return to Israel, one of her daughters-in-law, Ruth, chooses to go with her. Prospects are bleak for two widow women in Israel, especially when one of them is a Moabitess! Chapters 2-4 detail the incredible events that unfold, however, which lead to the salvation of Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth. Not only do they find provision, but a man named Boaz acts as a kinsmen-redeemer, and becomes Ruth's husband. Throughout the story we see faithfulness, purity, and integrity on full display. All of these are unique characteristics during the time of the Judges! A story that begins with the makings of a tragedy ends as one of the most joyful books in all the Bible! A true love story, Ruth is not only a touching tale, but one that teaches Christians important lessons. Like Ruth, we may live in a time of spiritual darkness and depravity, but that doesn't mean we can't shine the light of the Lord. If we'll be faithful and pure like Ruth, we too can be saved by our Kinsmen-Redeemer—Jesus Christ!



Who's Grandma???

The book of Ruth isn't just a touching story, nor is it just a story about good people in a bad time. It was also written to shine the light on an important Israelite genealogy. At the very end of the book, we find a shocking revelation. After Boaz and Ruth married, they had a son they named Obed. Later on Obed had a son named Jesse, who became the father of eight sons. The youngest son was named David. That's right – that's King David! Who would have imagined that a lowly Moabite widow would end up in the most important genealogy in Israel? For that matter, she's part of the most important genealogy in the world! As a great-grandmother to David, Ruth is also an ancestor of Jesus, and she is one of four women named or alluded to in Matthew genealogy (Mt. 1:5). Even the most unlikely people can be part of God's great plans when they submit to His will and are faithful to the Lord.

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The Story of Ruth is certainly a historical narrative, but it also paints an interesting picture of God's scheme of redemption through time. Some of the main characters seem fit pictures and representations of this grand scheme:

Naomi: portrays Israel as they disperse, but then return.

Orpah: Portrays the mass of unbelieving Israel that chose to remain with the world.

Ruth: Portrays the remnant of true Israel (Jew and Gentile) that would be redeemed.

Boaz: Portrays Christ as the Kinsman Redeemer, Lord of Harvest, and giver of bread and rest.

Nearer-Kinsman: Portrays the Law, which was not fully sufficient to save, especially for the Gentile.

"That You May Grow Thereby..."

A weekly Bible reading plan



Judges 17-21; Ruth 1-4 Hope Shines Through

Overview

As we saw last week, the era of the Judges was a dark age in Hebrew history. The final chapters of the book show just how dark the period was. Judges 17-21 are some of the darkest and most troubling chapters in all the Bible. In these chapters we learn the awful lows the nation sank to during this time. It's not clear exactly when these events took place, and they didn't necessarily take place after Samson's life. It seems likely that chapters 1-16 tell the story of the Judges themselves, and chapters 17-21 function like an appendix, simply highlighting how awful things became in Israel during this era. These chapters remind us of how truly awful sin is, and what can happen when mankind continues down the course of "doing right in his own eyes."

Suggested Reading Schedule

Monday: Judges 17-18

Tuesday: Judges 19-20

Wednesday: Judges 21

Thursday: Ruth 1-2

Friday: Ruth 3-4

Questions

1. Who did Micah use as a priest before he met the Levite? _____
2. Where did the tribe of Dan relocate to? _____
3. Where did the Levite, his concubine, and his servant stay the night? _____
4. Which tribe was this city a part of? _____
5. The actions of the people in Judges 19 are very similar to the actions of the people of what ancient cities? _____
6. "In those days there was no king in _____; everyone did what was _____ in his own _____"

Who's Grandson???

Judges 17 and 18 tell a tragic story of idolatry. An Ephraimite named Micah hires a travelling Levite to be his own personal priest. Later, when the tribe of Dan passes through on their way to a different territory, they offer the Levite a "raise," so he becomes their priest. Micah was an idolater; the Danites were idolaters; and this Levite was happy to go along with them in their sin! Toward the end of the story, we learn who this Levite is. The NKJV says he was, "Jonathan the Son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh." (18:30) There's strong manuscript evidence that the final name should actually read...Moses! (some English translations such as ESV, CSB, and NIV use Moses in 18:30) Gershom was a son of Moses, who was of course a Levite. But, that means the grandson of Moses became an idolatrous priest for profit! Extreme righteousness in one generation doesn't ensure it for the next. We must do our best to raise our children in the Lord, but each of us must also make our own choice to follow the Lord!

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