

Exegetical Notes – Ruth 4:13-22

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen for Cornerstone Fellowship
101 Kyllies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320
610-384-1375
charleshjensen@aol.com

Ruth is a story that took place during the days when Israel was ruled by Judges. Those days were a time of moral and religious decline in Israel. The people of Israel were following the mindset of the people who lived around them and frequently ignored the Lord. They wandered into trouble and God sent people to save them from their wandering away from him. These people were called judges.

Ruth is the story of two women, Naomi, a Jewess, who is bitter because of the circumstances of her life and Ruth, her widowed daughter-in-law who is not Jewish. It is the story of how God works in their lives to bring them blessing.

Ruth 4:13-22

Verses 13-15

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. ¹⁴ The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! ¹⁵ He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth."

- Naomi returned to Israel bitter, empty, and without hope. She told the women not to call her Naomi but to call her bitter because YHWH had abandoned her (see chapter 1:20-21).
- Now her circumstances have changed. Ruth, her daughter-in-law, has married Boaz, a wealthy man, and given birth to a son. Boaz is "guardian-redeemer. Through him, Naomi and Ruth are restored to their inheritance and will be cared for.
- The women turn Naomi's curse in chapter one back on her. They point out that she is blessed above others. They pray that Ruth's son will become a great man and will be famous throughout Israel. They point out that YHWH has been caring for Naomi through Ruth and now through Boaz and through Ruth's child. All along, Naomi has been being blessed by God.

Verses 16-17a

¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. ¹⁷ The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

- Naomi became nurse maid to Ruth's son. It was as though he was her own son. The women remarked that YHWH had restored Naomi.

Verses 18-23

¹⁸ This, then, is the family line of Perez:

Perez was the father of Hezron,

¹⁹ Hezron the father of Ram,

Ram the father of Amminadab,

²⁰ Amminadab the father of Nahshon,

Nahshon the father of Salmon,

²¹ Salmon the father of Boaz,

Boaz the father of Obed,

²² Obed the father of Jesse,

and Jesse the father of David.

- The text traces the genealogy of King David through the line of Boaz and Obed. This means that Ruth's son, Obed, is a direct forefather of David and, therefore, a direct forefather of Jesus, Israel's Messiah. This is confirmed in Matthew 1:3-6 and in Luke 3:31-35. It is verified in 1 Chronicles 2:5-15. It means that God's plan for the salvation of humankind was being worked out before the time of Ruth and Naomi but involved Ruth and Naomi. It means that God's blessing was bigger than Ruth or Naomi knew. Even when Naomi thought that she was not being blessed, YHWH was blessing her and all generations after her.
- There is a problem introduced in the genealogy, however. According to Jewish custom one was a Jew only if his mother was Jewish. Ruth, as the book of Ruth tells us many times, was a Moabite. She was not Jewish. Thus Obed, her son, was not Jewish. Though lineage was traced through one's father and Obed was of the line of Boaz, his mother was a Moabite. This shows that in God's plan salvation was never for the Jewish people alone. God's salvation is open to anyone who believes and calls on the name of Jesus.

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