

The Books of Ruth and 1 Samuel 1-7

- I. CHAPTER ONE: RUTH RENOUNCING.
- A. During a famine, a Bethlehem citizen named Elimelech (which means, "God is King"), his wife Naomi ("the sweet one") and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion ("sick" and "pining") leave Palestine and go into Moab (Ruth 1:1-2).
 - B. The two boys marry, but soon tragedy strikes, for at first the father dies, and then both sons, leaving three saddened widows (1:3-5).
 - C. Naomi decides to return to Palestine and is accompanied by her older daughter-in-law, Ruth. Naomi attempts to persuade Ruth to go back to her own home. Ruth's answer must be counted as one of the most beautiful statements ever to come from the human mouth. She says (in Ruth 1:16-17):
 - D. Ruth and Naomi begin their difficult trip, walking nearly 100 miles and crossing mountains a mile high. Upon their return, a disillusioned Naomi instructs her old neighbors to call her "Mara," which means, "bitter," and not Naomi (1:20-22).
- II. CHAPTER TWO: RUTH REQUESTING.
- A. Ruth goes out to glean wheat and, in the providence of God, picks a field belonging to Boaz, a near relative of Elimelech (2:1-3). Boaz was the son of the ex-harlot, Rahab (Mt. 1:5).
 - B. Boaz sees her and apparently falls in love with her. He treats her kindly and orders his hired hands to do the same (2:15-16).
 - C. Ruth brings home some thirty pounds of barley and reports the kindness of Boaz to Naomi, who immediately begins planning a wedding (2:19-23).
- III. CHAPTER THREE: RUTH RESTING.
- A. Naomi sends Ruth to Boaz with instructions for her to assume a position at his feet. This has been looked upon by some as an immoral act, but no one who knew the custom of Israel and the ancient oriental world would make such a claim. According to Hebrew law, Ruth was entitled to call upon her nearest of kin to fulfill the various duties of a kinsman redeemer. By this course of action, Ruth was doing just this. Boaz understood fully her request to: "spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman" (3:9). From this point on, Boaz took the necessary steps to marry Ruth.
 - B. Boaz then explains to Ruth why he had not proposed marriage to her before this time: "There is a kinsman nearer than I" (3:12).
 - C. Ruth returns home to Naomi with a full report. Naomi reassures her concerning Boaz (3:18).
- IV. CHAPTER FOUR: RUTH REAPING.
- A. Boaz called a council meeting to determine whether the nearest kinsman (who may have been a brother to Elimelech) wanted to assume his obligations (4:1-4). Note: Boaz's heart must have dropped to his knees when the man said, "I will redeem it" (4:4). But Boaz continues the meeting, saying: "What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance" (4:5). With a great sigh of relief, and no doubt a silent prayer of thanksgiving to God, Boaz hears the nearest kinsman conclude: "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it" (4:6).
 - B. The issue was no longer in doubt. Boaz would now marry Ruth. To confirm this decision, the man plucked off his shoe. It was the custom at that time in Israel for a man transferring a right of purchase to pull off his sandal and hand it to the other party. This publicly validated the transaction (4:7-10).

1 SAMUEL 1-7

- I. A DEDICATED MOTHER-HANNAH (1 SAMUEL 1:1--2:11, 18-21).
- A. The account begins when a barren woman stands weeping and praying at the altar in Shiloh. Her name was Hannah. We note her prayer in 1 Samuel 1:11. We observe several factors in this request:
 - 1. Part of Hannah's sorrow was due to constant ridicule from her husband's other wife, Peninnah (1:6).
 - 2. Hannah vows that if a son is given to her, she will raise him as a Nazarite. Thus her boy, Samuel, would become one of the three Nazarites mentioned in the Bible. The other two were Samson (Jdg. 13) and John the Baptist (Lk. 1).
 - 3. In her soul's agony, Hannah moves her lips, but makes no audible sound, which causes the old high priest Eli (who has been secretly watching her) to conclude that she is drunk (1:12-13).
 - B. Upon being rebuked for this supposed drunkenness, Hannah immediately denies the charge and then shares with Eli the true nature of her heartache. The old priest thereupon reassures her that God will indeed answer her prayer (1:14-18).
 - C. In the course of time God did "remember" Hannah (compare with Gen. 8:1) with a son whom she called Samuel. When he was weaned (probably at two or three years of age) Hannah brought him to Eli to dedicate him to God (1 Sam. 1:26-28).

- D. After the dedication, Hannah utters a beautiful ode of praise which appears to be the basis of Mary's song found in Luke 1:46-55 (See 1 Sam. 2:1-11). In this remarkable prayer Hannah mentions a number of God's divine attributes.
 - 1. His holiness (2:2).
 - 2. His omniscience (2:3).
 - 3. His omnipotence (2:7).
 - 4. His mercy (2:8).
 - 5. His faithfulness (2:9).
 - 6. His justice (2:10).
 - 7. His Messiah (2:10).

II. AN UNDISCIPLINED PRIEST--ELI (1 SAMUEL 2:12-17, 22-36; 4:1-22).

- A. A sad note is now introduced concerning the priestly sons of Eli. According to the sacred account:
 - 1. They were unsaved (2:12).
 - 2. They regarded Belial as the true God (2:12).
 - 3. They stole the offerings from God (2:13-14).
 - 4. They bullied the people of God (2:14).
 - 5. They committed adultery right in the tabernacle (2:22).
 - 6. They caused God's people to transgress (2:17, 24).
- B. Eli attempts to correct this by a mild and weak "slap on the wrist," but his wicked sons remain unmoved and unrepentant (2:22-25).
- C. Eli was warned by an unnamed prophet of God concerning the following:
 - 1. That his two wicked sons would both die on the same day (2:34).
 - 2. That God would raise up a faithful priest (2:35).
- D. God revealed himself to Samuel one night as the boy lay in his bed in the Temple. The bulk of this divine message was the future judgment of Eli's household. The next morning a reluctant Samuel relates all this to Eli (3:1-18).
- E. Samuel is now elevated by God to the office of a prophet (3:19-21).
- F. After this, Israel is soundly defeated by the Philistines. During the battle, the Ark of the Covenant is captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are killed (4:1-11).
- G. The tragic news is brought back to Shiloh, which results in the deaths of Eli and his daughter-in-law, who with her dying breath names her newborn son Ichabod, meaning "the glory of the Lord has departed from Israel" (4:14, 18-22).

III. SOME FRUSTRATED PHILISTINES (1 SAMUEL 5-6).

- A. The captured Ark of the Covenant proved a curse among the Philistines wherever it was taken.
 - 1. At Ashdod, it destroyed the statue of the idol god Dagon and smote the people with boils (5:1-7).
 - 2. At Gath it wrought great destruction and similar boils (5:8-9).
 - 3. At Ekron it brought great fear and more boils (5:10).
- B. The ark is then placed by the Philistines on a wooden cart hitched to two cows. On this cart are also placed five golden mice (6:1-11).
- C. The ark is carried to an Israelite town called Beth-shemesh, where it is first received with great rejoicing, but later brings great sorrow, for some foolish men look into the ark and cause a divine punishment from God (6:12-19).
- D. From Beth-shemesh, the ark is taken to another Israelite town named Kirjath-jearim. Here it was to remain for twenty years (7:1-2).

IV. A CIRCUIT-RIDING PREACHER--SAMUEL (1 SAMUEL 7).

- A. At this time the great prophet and priest Samuel gathers all of Israel at Mizpeh (another town in Palestine) for a great revival (7:3-6).
- B. When the Philistines hear of this gathering, they mobilize their armies and prepare to attack. But at Samuel's cry, God steps in and utterly routs the Philistines (7:7-15).