Insights From Ruth

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Introduction

One of the ways I've been studying the Word of God is by making a list of everything that each book of the Bible teaches. This has resulted in more than a thousand pages of material. Although it's interesting and I've learned a lot from writing it, that's a lot of bullet points to read through!

The purpose of this book is to extract the most interesting insights from that massive list. This isn't intended to summarize each book of the Bible because that's what my "Chapter Summary of the Bible" is for. It's also not intended to list the major points of each book because you're probably already familiar with them. Finally, it's not intended to offer in-depth commentary because that's what my regular commentary is for. This book is simply a collection of points that I found interesting.

I hope there's some material here that you find edifying.

Jon Cooper
4/29/2024

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Ruth

- This story takes place in the days when the judges ruled (Ruth 1:1). That means it happened before the reign of King Saul.

- God has the power to give bread to nations (Ruth 1:6). He can both send a famine and end it.

- Naomi believed the reason her husband and sons were dead was because the hand of the Lord was against her (Ruth 1:13). However, the death of her husband led to her return to Bethlehem, which is where Ruth met and married Boaz – the great-grandfather of David (and one of the ancestors of the Messiah).

- Naomi told the people of Bethlehem not to call her "naomi", which means "pleasant". Instead she told them to call her "mara", which means "bitter". Naomi believed that God had treated her very bitterly and afflicted her (Ruth 1:20-21). However, Naomi couldn't see what God was doing. Not only did all of her suffering lead to the birth of David, but David was in the line of the Messiah. If God had given Naomi the life she wanted history would have been radically different (and not in a good way).

- Ruth 1:22 goes to great pains to emphasize the fact that Ruth was a foreigner from Moab. It actually says that Ruth was a Moabitess from Moab, just in case you missed it. The book doesn't want you to overlook the fact that this story isn't about a godly Jewish woman; it's about a foreigner who rejected her gods and chose to serve the Lord (Ruth 1:16). This is a story about a Jewish man who took a Gentile bride – just like Christ, who took the Gentile church as His bride.

- Naomi had a rich relative: Boaz (Ruth 2:1). However, it

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seems Naomi didn't call upon Boaz when she returned to Bethlehem or try to use his wealth to her advantage, even though she was so poor that she apparently depended on her daughter-in-law to provide food for their household (Ruth 2:2). Ruth just happened to meet Boaz by chance.

- No one went to Ruth's house and gave her free food. Instead she had to go into the field and harvest it herself (Ruth 2:3). If she hadn't had to go harvest her own food then this story wouldn't have happened.

- There's a lot of "coincidences" in this story. A famine just happened to take place in Israel. Elimelech just happened to go to Moab. Naomi just happened to have two sons. Both of Naomi's sons just happened to die. Ruth just happened to go with Naomi back to Bethlehem. Naomi just happened to have a rich relative. Ruth just happened to go to one of his fields. Boaz just happened to visit his field on the day when Ruth came to glean. The providence of God is *very* strong in this book.

- The servant who was in charge of the field of Boaz called Ruth the Moabite damsel who came from Moab (Ruth 2:6). This book is really going out of its way to emphasize the fact that Ruth was a Moabite.

- Boaz first met Ruth when she was working in one of his fields to get food for her mother in law (Ruth 2:8). That means he first saw her when she was hard at work.

- The reason Boaz was kind to Ruth was because when her husband died she left her people to stay with Naomi, and left Moab to come to Israel. Ruth left everything she knew to go to a land she had never seen before. She left all of her people to travel to a new land where she knew

no one – all so she could take care of Naomi, her mother-in-law. That made a huge impression on Boaz (Ruth 2:11).

- Ruth harvested an ephah of barley (Ruth 2:17). That's about a bushel, or 35 liters. She carried all of that barley back to Bethlehem by herself.

- Naomi told Ruth that Boaz was a relative (Ruth 2:20). It seems no one mentioned that fact to her until after she met Boaz and returned to Naomi.

- Naomi is the one who took action to push Ruth to marry Boaz (Ruth 3:1-4). It was her plan. If Ruth and Boaz had been left to their own devices they would never have gotten together.

- Boaz didn't approach Ruth. Instead Ruth followed the instructions of her mother-in-law and approached Boaz (Ruth 3:6). She instigated the relationship, not him.

- Boaz said that Ruth had showed him great kindness because she hadn't chased after young men (Ruth 3:10). This is one of several hints that Boaz was much older than Ruth.

- The reason Boaz was willing to carry out the role of the near kinsman for Ruth and marry her was because she was a woman of virtue (Ruth 3:11).

- This book doesn't tell us the name of the person who was a nearer relative to Ruth than Boaz. The only thing we know about him is that he refused to do what the Mosaic Law required him to do, which was perform the duty of the near kinsman and marry Ruth. Instead of doing what God commanded, he came up with a ridiculous excuse (Ruth 4:6). This man didn't honor the Lord, so the only thing God recorded about him was his act of

disobedience.

- Boaz found 10 witnesses to witness his interaction with the near kinsman (Ruth 4:2).

- Boaz didn't start the conversation with the near kinsman by talking about Ruth. Instead he talked about a piece of land that Naomi was selling (Ruth 4:4). When the kinsman expressed interest in the land but not in Ruth, it became obvious he lacked integrity. The kinsman was motivated by greed, not obedience to the Law.

- The word "redeem" is used five times in Ruth 4:4. Boaz wanted Ruth, his Gentile bride, to be *redeemed*.

- When the near kinsman refused to obey the Mosaic Law and marry Ruth, he robbed himself of a tremendous blessing. In reality his inheritance was marred by *not* taking Ruth, and it would have been greatly enhanced if he had taken her. The blessing of God went to the person who obeyed His Law and acted as Ruth's redeemer, instead of the person who disobeyed Him.

- Boaz purchased all that once belonged to Elimelech from Naomi. He also purchased everything that once belonged to her two sons (Ruth 4:9).

- According to Ruth 4:11, when Rachel and Leah bore children to Jacob they built up his house. The act of having children was considered to be building up the person's house because the house was the *family*, not the building in which they lived.

- After Ruth married Boaz she conceived and bore a son. She had no children from her previous husband but she did have a child with Boaz. Why? Ruth 4:13 says it's because God "gave her conception". God was the one

who caused her to conceive and have a son. This book teaches that children come from God. He can withhold children (as He did in Ruth's first marriage) or give them (as He did in Ruth's second marriage).

- This book seems to have been written after David was born because it mentions him by name (Ruth 4:22).