



Bible Readers Club

Covenant Presbyterian Church

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Ruth & 1 Samuel 1-12 1 Samuel 13-31

Dear Friends,

Ruth

Set in the time of the Judges, Ruth is a beautiful story of redemption, and it offers a God-centered hope that transcends the downward spiral of Israel's history in the period of the judges. Ruth is a non-Jewish Moabite woman married to a Jewish man who dies. Declaring "where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God," she then goes with her also-widowed mother-in-law Naomi back to her hometown of Bethlehem.

Within Jewish laws were rights and responsibilities for "kinsman-redeemers" to defend and provide for any other who was destitute or a victim of injustice and to provide an heir for a male relative who died without children. Through a series of dramatic events involving especially these non-obligatory "kinsman-redeemer" laws, a relative named Boaz makes the costly choice to rescue Ruth (and so also Naomi) from her precarious social position as a single woman. He marries her, and they have a son named Obed.

One of the reasons, many believe, that this short view into Jewish life in the time of the Judges was included in the Hebrew Bible is that Obed turns out to be the father of Jesse who becomes the father of David, the great hero-king of Israel. Note, then, that the blood line leading to David (and from him to a "Son of David" who is the Greater King, a man called Jesus of Nazareth!) includes this non-Jewish woman with a book named for her.

1 Samuel

The Book of 1 Samuel presents the Prophet Samuel as the key figure as Israel moves from being a loose confederation of tribes sharing a common heritage and a commonly-forgotten monotheistic faith and becomes a unified nation with its own king. The failure of the priesthood of the time, the contrasting faithfulness of Samuel's mother, Hannah, his amazing call to ministry from God, and his constant reminder that

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faithfulness to God was the essential ingredient for Israel's success mark the early chapters of this enthralling book.

In 1 Samuel we will witness Israel's catastrophic attempt to turn the Living God into their own good luck charm by using His Ark of the Covenant as an instrument of warfare. We will watch Israel's first king, Saul, as he tragically fails to serve in obedience to God. And especially we will be introduced to the little shepherd boy David whose trust in Yahweh God will empower him to slay giants and eventually make him Israel's greatest king. We will see David at his best as God's appointed leader increasing in power and public acclaim as he runs for his life from King Saul yet refuses to do harm to "the Lord's anointed king." Meanwhile Saul's own life and power spin out of control toward ruin, and the book ends with his tragic death.

I pray that Ruth's story, and that of Samuel and Saul and David, brings insight and encouragement to you concerning the goodness of our Great Redeemer.

- Pastor Jay

Notes