

Chapter 13: Ruth

Key Terms

- idyll: a simple descriptive work (in prose or poetry) idealizing or romanticizing pastoral scenes and/or a rustic life
- Writings: third division of the Jewish canon, in which Ruth is placed.
- historiography: the writing of history or the product of historical writing; a collection of historical literature.
- Historical Books: Old Testament books Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther
- *hesed*: Hebrew term that describes God's covenant faithfulness, or loyal love, for his people
- Kinsman-Redeemer: closest living relative to a deceased head of household who redeems land sold or otherwise lost by a relative
- Moabites: people group descended from Lot who were enemies of the Israelites

Key Ideas

- God's faithfulness and loyalty stimulated by people's faithfulness and loyalty to one another.
- David's faith shown to be the legacy of his ancestors.
- The light of loyalty dispersed during the apostasy of the Judges period.
- The concept of kinsman-redeemer introduced.

Chapter Summary

Because of its placement within the Hebrew canon, the book of Ruth is not counted as part of the Deuteronomistic history. The dating of the book is uncertain, though a preexilic date gains increasing support. We also cannot be certain of the specific period of the judges during which the book occurred. The literary and dramatic qualities of the book have led to its classification as an idyll.

This book explains how, in the midst of apostasy and disobedience, covenant faithfulness could remain and be passed on to one such as David through his ancestors. We see God's hand of preservation upon those who were obedient, and his loyalty to the covenant.

Two practices built into Israelite society were designed to preserve family and land, the backbones of the covenant: the levirate marriage and land redemption. Both of these practices feature prominently in the book of Ruth. The covenant loyalty of the individuals in the book mirror and express God's own covenant faithfulness.