

EPILOGUE

The books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth were not written merely to tell the story of what happened in the years covered by the narrative. If this were so, the story would be very incomplete. Many more details should have been given in order to give the reader a full perspective of the era. Neither were the books written to tell a life story of the heroes and heroines of the period. The book of Ruth would be especially incomplete in this regard. Her story is not told completely at all. Many questions are left unanswered. How did Ruth die? How long did she live? Where was she buried? Nothing is said about these details of her life at all.

Ruth fits in between the books of Judges and Samuel like a bone in a socket. Probably the events which are recorded in these four chapters occurred during the time of Gideon. The final verses of the book reach down to the time of David. Hence, the book reaches back into the middle of the time of the Judges and reaches far down into the time of Samuel.

Israel gloried in David. He was not only a man after God's own heart, but he was a man who captured the hearts of the people. They sang of him. They ascribed more honor to him than they did to their first king, King Saul.

The people gloried in the house of David. His house was to be established forever. As long as there was a throne on which a king might sit in Jerusalem, there was a man from the loins of David to sit on that throne. Like the woman from Tekoah, they looked to David as "an angel of God" (II Samuel 14:17).

David captured the city of the Jebusites. The narrative in the book of Judges makes a last mention of this city with a note of despair and contempt. The city was

STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

in the hands of the Jebusites, and a Levite from the north passed the city by in scorn and fear. He would rather spend the night in a nearby hamlet of Benjamin than to risk his life and reputation by stopping in the wicked city of the Canaanites. Although this Levite met a terrible fate at the hand of wicked Israelites, his attitude nevertheless reflects the disdain which the men of the time felt for the city now known as the Holy City.

When David took Jerusalem from the Jebusites, he made it his capital. From this central location, he ruled for thirty-three years of his life, and in it he firmly established the throne of Solomon, his heir and successor. With pride, the people came to refer to Jerusalem as the City of David. Bethlehem, Ruth's adopted home, was the home of David. Centuries later, wise men from the East journeyed through the streets of the town in search of Him whom they called the king of the Jews. Bringing treasures and gifts of distinction, these strange visitors symbolize the adoration of wise men of all ages from all countries.

On the hills where David must have practiced the use of his sling, shepherds sat as they heard the angels sing. The Son of God was born where Ruth gave birth to Obed.

The history of these three books—Joshua, Judges, and Ruth—is only a brief part of the total account of God's dealings with men. It is a part of His Story, the story of redemption. The love story of Ruth couched in the setting of the time when Israel had no king is but a dim reflection of the love story of God who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

In similar fashion, the story of Joshua's leading the people into the Promised Land of Canaan is typical of the great Saviour who will eventually lead His people into the promised land of heaven. The story of Joshua is so suggestive of the final triumphal entry of God's people into

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eternal rest that the pages of the book of Hebrews are in part a rather full exposition of this analogy. In fact, the translators of the King James Version use the names of Jesus and Joshua interchangeably in Hebrews 4:8. The Authorized Version reads as follows: "For if Jesus had given them rest, God would not speak later of another day." The American Standard Version changes the word *Jesus* to *Joshua*. Joshua's name in Greek is the same as the Greek for the English name, Jesus. Joshua gave the people of Israel rest by leading them into the land of Canaan. Jesus will give His faithful followers rest when He comes back to welcome them into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

All through these historical books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth the modern-day reader is constantly finding issues which are relevant to his own times. Answers to some of his problems are found in his reflections over the causes and results of events recorded in this part of the Bible. At the same time, his eyes are lifted over the horizon of the hills of Judea to see the coming of the Christ. Even beyond these hills, his vision is directed to anticipate the time when the son of David comes again. The end of the story of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth has not yet been written.