



Ruth-Esther (Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 9)

Frederic Bush

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This landmark commentary by Dr. Frederick Bush fills a void in Old Testament studies. Ruth and Esther are among the most neglected books in the canon of Holy Scripture. None of the early church fathers wrote a commentary on Esther, and the list of serious contemporary analyses of both Ruth and Esther is woefully short. So pastors and scholars alike will welcome Dr. Bush's thorough treatment of these intriguing texts.

Drawing upon recent studies on the genre and discourse structure of biblical narrative, Bush shows how the loving loyalty of Ruth, the kindness and sagacity of both Boaz and Naomi, and God's gracious provision of fruitfulness for field and womb provide a son to reverse the death and emptiness that had afflicted Naomi. It was an outcome of utmost significance, for it preserved the family line that ultimately led to David. In the course of his investigation, Bush deals at length with the difficult question of the role that the social customs of the levirate law and the redemption of the land play in this powerful story. Bush's careful linguistic study sheds new light on the difficult question of the date of the book.

From its earliest days, the book of Esther has posed huge problems for Bible students. What do you do with a book of the Bible that never overtly speaks of God? Does a book this secular really belong in our Bibles? Some of the ancient rabbis said no. Is it possible that a "proto" version of Esther was amended in the Masoretic Text to make a solid case for the popular feast of Purim? Bush's exhaustive analysis of the literary structure of the book of Esther provides numerous clues that this may be so. While offering numerous insights into the technicalities of language and textual transmission, Bush also uses his expertise in Near Eastern studies to stir our hearts with a fresh look at the courage of Queen Esther and her loyal kinsman Mordecai. Like all the volumes of the Word Biblical Commentary, this commentary has been written for advanced Bible scholars. The clear division of technical notes from more popular explanation and comment sections makes it a useful tool for pastors and serious students of the Word. Readers with widely varying skills will welcome:

- use of the literary tools of narrative poetics and discourse analysis to help determine the theme, purpose, and theology of these stories
- extensive bibliographical sources to aid further study
- application of the tools of linguistic analysis to help in dating the text of the book of Ruth
- perceptive assessments of how both of these books reflect the self-awareness of the Jews as a resilient, resourceful people
- new insights into how and why Esther has come to us in its present form Dr. Bush's perceptive exegesis of these texts will fill a gap on the shelves of Old Testament scholarship.

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