

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT
LESSON 9 – THE BOOK OF RUTH (THE KINSMAN REDEEMER)

THE BOOK OF RUTH AGAINST THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

It is appropriate that we follow up our series on the Jewish Festivals which all point to both the first and second comings of Christ, with the story of Ruth and the Kinsman Redeemer.

The period of the Judges is one of degradation, sorrow, and judgment against a time in which “...**there was no king in Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes.**”

Then, THE BOOK OF RUTH appears.

The Book of Ruth is one of the most beautiful books in the Bible. It is uniquely positioned post-Judges, much like the first sight of the sumptuous Promised Land following years of wilderness wandering from water hole to water hole. It is Jacob’s well in a dry desert. It is the hope of the “He” of Genesis 3:15 to a dying world.

Ruth stands in direct contrast to the darkness and satanic period of the Judges. The final stories in the Book of Judges are in fact, so intense and violent many theologians have wondered at their inclusion.

That however is the point! GOD desires we understand clearly how dark sin truly is. The Book of Ruth is GOD’s message that the “He” of Genesis 3:15 brings Light out of darkness.

SYMBOLS IN THE BOOK OF RUTH

“In the days the judges ruled” ...a famine (SIN / CORRUPTION OF THE EARTH) occurs in the region of **Bethlehem** (THE FUTURE LOCATION OF NEW BEGINNINGS).

Naomi (Hebrew = PLEASANT LAND) marries Elimelech (Hebrew = GOD IS MY KING).

Note: The symbolism of marriage to GOD (the Church as the Bride of Christ)

Despite what seems to be a positive beginning (symbolic), Naomi and Elimelech have two sons named, Mahol (Hebrew = UNHEALTHY or TO BLOT OUT) and Chilion (Hebrew = PUNY or TO PERISH).

Note: Also, the symbolism of GOD’s drawing us to Him, the marriage relationship being the most intimate symbol possible and yet man is imperfect and evil comes from even the most perfect union with GOD...i.e., getting back to the Garden is only possible through the “He” of Genesis 3:15.

Eventually Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion all three die leaving Naomi deserted with two daughter’s-in-law.

Ruth wishes to return to her kinsmen in Bethlehem. (symbolic of Israel returning to a new birth in Christ). Her daughters-in-law Orpah (Hebrew = FAWN) and Ruth (Hebrew = DESIREABLE) are both Moabites (non-Jews).

Note: Notice how the story, though uniquely Jewish, includes Gentiles going to Bethlehem.

Ruth actually tries to persuade Orpah and Ruth to stay with their Moabite kinsmen (families). Orpah agrees but Ruth refuses to leave Naomi.

Thus, one of the most famous and beautiful passages of scripture in the Bible.

RUTH'S DEDICATION (The King James Version is beautiful)

And Ruth said, intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. Ruth 1:16-17

We are reminded perhaps of Joshua's commitment against what might seem more favorable odds.

But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD. Joshua 24:15

ENTER BOAZ

In the Bethlehem region lives Ruth's kinsman, Boaz (Hebrew = IN HIM IS STRENGTH).

Naomi and Ruth arrive in the little town of Bethlehem. To Naomi the scene must have been nostalgically familiar. To Ruth perhaps scarily foreign. After some second looks, Naomi and the townsfolk recognize each other. They greet with exclamations of excitement and amazement. Then Naomi is showered with questions about her family and their experiences. In the process, Ruth is introduced, and her support of Naomi adored by Ruth's kins-people.

While Naomi and her friends share and savor stories of the past ten years, Ruth gazes beyond the town to the surrounding hills and valleys. The barley fields are ready to be harvested. It is shortly after the Feast of First Fruits. She has a plan. She has learned from Naomi about the gracious GOD-given law that farmers should leave some grain on the edges of their fields for the poor. She decides to start gleaning early the next morning.

Ruth becomes the first Gentile to be part of the first fruits. (symbol)

Ruth sets off for the fields apparently without any clear plan in mind. Perhaps she will test the attitude at each field until she finds one where they will accept her. However, in a small town everybody knows everyone else, and news spreads fast. So when Ruth arrives and asks permission to glean, they already knew who she is and her loyalty to Naomi. It also seems that Ruth unknowingly comes to glean at the field of Boaz, a relative of Naomi.

Even Boaz has heard about Ruth, though he has not yet met her. He enquires about the woman gleaning over there, and his foreman informs him of her identity. Boaz assures her safety by giving orders to his workers. He goes to Ruth and invites her to keep gleaning on his field. Ruth thanks Boaz for his kindness to a foreigner. He responds by acclaiming what she has been doing for Naomi, and expresses his hope that GOD will reward her.

During lunch break, Boaz extends courtesy to Ruth by offering her some of his food and drink. When she resumes work after a break, Boaz orders his reapers to let some extra ears of grain fall for Ruth to pick up. Twice he warns them not to harass her. With this help from Boaz, Ruth does well.

When Ruth arrives home, tired but excited, and shows the results of her hard day's work, Naomi is both amazed and curious. Naomi realizes what is going on.

Naomi explains to Ruth the family tree and those parts of GOD's Law that deals with "redemption" when a family gets into trouble and the clan comes to their rescue (Lev. 25:25). This law ensures that tribes, clans, and families will not lose their land permanently. The Law also provides for family marriages to secure the survival of the family lineage (Deut. 25:5-6).

Within this context, Boaz is a near relative who can both redeem Naomi's land and marry her late son's childless widow.

Ruth follows the advice of Boaz and Naomi to keep gleaning on Boaz's fields in order to prevent harassment by workers on other fields. When the barley harvest is done, she continues gleaning during the wheat harvest as well.

RUTH ASKS BOAZ TO BE HER REDEEMER

Essentially Naomi takes the role of matchmaker. It appears from the story Boaz finds Ruth attractive but that Boaz cannot muster enough courage to propose.

Naomi's plan is tested during the harvest. Ruth waits until the men have finished eating and drinking and are all fast asleep. As master, Boaz probably sleeps some distance away from the others. Ruth sneaks up to him and creeps in under his blanket at his feet. Late in the night, Boaz discovers with a shock that there is a woman at his feet! He tenderly acknowledges that although he is not the first in line to be her redeemer (there is another kins-man who is next in line to take her into his home), he is willing to be her redeemer and that she has acted nobly.

Boaz honors her boldness by praising her support to Naomi, as well as her coming to him first.

Arriving home, Ruth excitedly shares the romantic story with her mother-in-law. Naomi is sure that Boaz will address the problem of the other redeemer that very same day.

Boaz vows that he will redeem her if the other redeemer will back off. When people start to proceed with their daily activities in Bethlehem that day, Boaz is already at the city gate where the town elders gather on weekdays to conduct a people's court.

At the right moment, the Lord leads the other redeemer, as well as ten elders, to the city gate for an important encounter with Boaz. First, he presents the material side of business to them, the redemption of Naomi's property. The other redeemer is quite willing to buy the land, or rather to buy the number of harvests left till the next jubilee year (Lev. 25:15-16).

Knowing his rival's family setup, Boaz then plays his trump card. The redemption of the land is linked to the levirate marriage which means buying the land will include marrying Ruth to provide an heir for her deceased husband. The other redeemer does not see his way open for this aspect of the deal. He gives his sandal to Boaz, thereby symbolizing that he gives up his right of ownership to both the land and the woman. The elders confirm the contract and wish Boaz a blessed and fruitful marriage.

Note: Boaz is the name given to one of the Temple pillars in Solomon's Temple (Solomon is the great-grand-son of Boaz)

SYMBOLS IN THE STORY

BOAZ - symbolizes the “He” of Genesis 3:15 who is Christ our Redeemer. Ironically, Jewish scholars call Boaz the “Kinsmen-Redeemer”.

**There is a redeemer,
Jesus, God's own Son,
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
Holy One,
Jesus my redeemer,
Name above all names,
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
Oh, for sinners slain.**

(Keith Green)

NAOMI - symbolizes Israel through whom the “He” (Boaz) comes. (In the story Naomi is redeemed by Boaz)

RUTH - symbolizes the Gentile Bride (the CHURCH).

AN UNNAMED SERVANT - Ruth is introduced to Boaz by an unnamed servant which symbolizes THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Note: Remember how Isaac disappears from the scene following the sacrifice by his father Abraham? Isaac appears two-chapters later at the well of living water to meet his bride who is introduced by an “unnamed servant”. Here we see the symbolism for the Holy Spirit repeated.

THE REAPERS - When Boaz sees Ruth he instructs his reapers (symbolic of ANGELS) to protect her and drop handfuls of grain (perhaps symbolic of how GOD provides KNOWLEDGE OF HIS PURPOSE through THE WORD).

THE SECRET CODE

There is an interesting code in the middle of the story that is worth noting.

Boaz sends a code to Naomi (6 measures of barley) that is a positive signal that Boaz will *not rest for 6 days work* until he *redeems* Naomi's property rights and thus, allows Boaz to marry Ruth.

- 6 DAYS CREATION BEFORE RESTING – We are currently in the 7th Day of Creation
- REDEMPTION THROUGH THE “HE” OF GENESIS 3:15
- PURCHASE OF THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

THE FINAL MARRIAGE FEAST AND THE SHOCKING WEDDING TOAST

As if GOD wants to literally SHOCK us into understanding that this is not just a love story, the final wedding feast includes one of the strangest toasts to the bride and groom ever heard.

Imagine if the “best man” got up and said:

"I would like to toast the beautiful couple. May your life together be like that of a man who fathered a bastard child and a curse of GOD did not allow that to be restored to GOD's sight for 10 generations of sons!"

And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman. Ruth 4:12

Now imagine that everyone at the feast (being Jewish) realize that the "toast" is referring to a curse by GOD that includes, "a *bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to HIS TENTH GENERATION shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD.*" Deuteronomy 23:2

Boaz is born in the line of Pharez, and the genealogy of Pharez is *cursed* for 10 Generations for bearing a child with his daughter-in-law (appropriate to the story).

What you and I know HOWEVER is that THE "HE" OF GENESIS 3:15 is in THE LINEAGE OF **PHAREZ**.

And, the 10th Generation is someone you will recognize.

THE GENEALOGY OF PHAREZ

1. Pharez	4. Amminadab	7. Boaz
2. Hezron	5. Nahshon	8. Obed
3. Ram	6. Salmon	9. Jesse
10. DAVID (The "He" of Genesis 3:15 comes through the House of David)		

Notice also, that Boaz is the 7th Generation.

FINAL POINT TO MARVEL

The Book of Ruth is **ALWAYS READ** by the Jews at **THE FEAST OF PENTECOST**.

Go figure!