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JESUS IN THE BOOK OF RUTH

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INTRODUCTION

Today we are going to look at the book of Ruth and how the character, nature, and redemption story of Christ are hidden in the book of Ruth.

THE BOOK OF RUTH

The book of Ruth is a short book. It only has 4 chapters.

Chapter 1 - Naomi widowed

Chapter 2 – Ruth meets Boaz

Chapter 3 - Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing Floor

Chapter 4 – Boaz redeems Ruth

A QUICK SUMMARY OF THE STORY

The book of Ruth is filled with suspense, romance and prophecy. The events of Ruth occurred during the period of the judges, about a century before David became king of Israel. The story of Ruth is a prophetic arrow pointing to events coming in the future. The book of Ruth begins with an Israelite family — Elimelech, Naomi (his wife) and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion — living in Moab. Originally from Bethlehem of Judah, the family left the land of its inheritance because of a famine. But tragedy soon struck. Elimelech died. Both of Naomi's sons married Moabite women, and within 10 years, the sons died also, leaving Naomi and her daughters-in-law outside the kin group of her husband. It is hard for us as modern readers to comprehend the hopeless situation in which the three women found themselves. They lacked the intimacy of a family, which is a tragic situation at any time and place, cut off from its protection and provision. Completely dependent on the generosity of others, they faced starvation or worse.

Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem, her home town. She asked her two Moabite daughters in law to remain in their home country, but Ruth refused. Ruth returned to Israel after God again provided food for His people there. Naomi was a survivor, but she was returning with nothing. Ruth left the gods of Moab behind and chose to put her fate in the hands of Naomi's God and His people without any idea of how things would work out. For her, there was no turning back. Naomi was deeply discouraged. She was certain that "the hand of the Lord" (Ruth 1:13) had turned against her. She believed that God himself had made her life bitter (Ruth 1:20). In the midst of their loss, God was orchestrating an amazing plan that generations later would affect all of humanity through the coming of God's chosen Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Upon arriving in Bethlehem, Naomi sends Ruth to glean in the barley fields of Boaz, a wealthy relative of Naomi to whom they, through a series of divinely appointed circumstances, appeal as their kinsman-redeemer (go el). Boaz took care of them and he later married Ruth.

WHO WAS RUTH?

She was a Moabite, Israel's enemy, yet she was willing to leave her house, family, friends, country, and culture to be with Naomi. Moab was founded on the incestuous relation between Lot and his daughter (Genesis 19:31-32, 36-38). Lot was drunk, and his daughter went into the room and had

intercourse with him. Moab (from my father) was born out of this unholy union. That is where the Moabites come from. This was Ruth's people. They were often at war with Israel (2 Kings 3:24-27).

Ruth 1:16-17, ESV

But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you."

Ruth was a Moabite, she could have stayed and gone back to her own family, her old culture, her old food, and her old gods. Ruth knew that following Naomi, meant sacrificing everything else. We must be willing to forsake everything else to follow after God's purposes for our lives.

Who was Boaz and what is a Kinsman-Redeemer?

THE KINSMAN REDEEMER

WHO WAS BOAZ?

Boaz plays the role as kinsman-redeemer (gō'ēl). Boaz is a relative of Naomi's deceased husband (Ruth 2:1), and Naomi calls Boaz "one of our redeemers" (2:20). He was a very wealthy man. This role stems from Leviticus 25 where a relative can redeem the property and even slaves by bearing the cost himself (25:25-30, 47-55). This redemption would bring restoration to destitution. The redeemer helped the helpless. The kinsman-redeemer is a male relative who, according to various laws of the Pentateuch, had the privilege or responsibility to act on behalf of a relative who was in trouble, danger, or in need. The Hebrew term (go el) for kinsman-redeemer designates one who delivers or rescues (Genesis 48:16; Exodus 6:6) or redeems property or person (Leviticus 27:9-25, 25:47-55). He has the authority to redeem back property that was lost or placed in a compromise due to poverty, debt, etc. To bring the property back into the family, the kinsman-redeemer can buy it back and thereby ensure a blessing for the upcoming generations. The document that outlines the term of the contract for the original sale included everything that is connected with the land, often including the woman, elderly, children, land, animals etc. The contract was written on a scroll and all the witnesses would sign on the document (Jer 32:11). It was rolled up and signed on the outside with the witnesses and the "go-el" and then it was sealed. When something went wrong and the land was lost, the kinsman redeemer (go-el) was the only one that could open the scroll and fulfil the terms to redeem the land back into the family. The kinsman who redeems or vindicates a relative is illustrated most clearly in the book of Ruth, where the kinsman-redeemer is Boaz.

It cannot be coincidental that gō'ēl appears twenty-two times in the Book of Ruth, the precise number that the word appears in Leviticus. Boaz is the ideal kinsman-redeemer described in Leviticus. He was "a worthy man," which, in this context, asserted his honourable reputation. He spoke to his reapers from a posture of blessing, and they responded in kind (Ruth 2:4). During the period of time when Boaz did not realize Ruth's relationship with Naomi but knew only that she was a foreigner, he spoke to her in warm and merciful ways (2:8-9). He even took measures to protect her (2:9, 15). Ruth herself is taken aback at what she calls "favor in your eyes" (2:10, 13).

THE LAW GLEANING

The rules were that if you send your reapers to gather the harvest, they could go through only once. What they missed could be collected by the widows, orphans and destitute. (Lev 19:9, 10; Deut

24:19). Naomi and Ruth are destitute. They did what the poor did, Ruth collected the leftover grain left behind by the reapers.

1. PROPHETIC PICTURE – BOAS POINTS TO JESUS CHRIST

Boaz is a type and is foreshadowing Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, Christ is often regarded as an example of a kinsman-redeemer because, as our brother (Hebrews 2:11), He also redeems us because of our great need, one that only He can satisfy.

- Boaz is the Lord of the Harvest – Jesus is the Lord of the harvest of men.
- Naomi represents Israel because the redemption enabled her to return to the land.
- Ruth represents the gentiles who are redeemed by the Kinsman-Redeemer.

The Kinsman-Redeemer must:

- Be a Kinsman to redeem someone
- Must be able to perform the act of redemption
- Must be willing
- Must assume all the obligations and responsibilities to redeem.

Jesus fulfilled all of these requirements.

2. PROPHETIC PICTURE – GENTILES WILL BE REDEEMED

Ruth was a gentile, poor and unclean, yet Boaz redeemed her and took her as his bride. The gentile nations are spiritually poor and unclean, yet Jesus redeems them and takes them as his bride (those who place their faith in Him.)

3. PROPHETIC PICTURE - BETHLEHEM

The town of Boaz connects us to Jesus. Being of the clan of Elimelech, Boaz was from Bethlehem (Ruth 1:1-2; 2:1, 4). The opening chapter also said Elimelech's family "were Ephrathites," which is associated with Bethlehem in earlier and later Scripture.

Generations after Boaz and Ruth, David came from Bethlehem in Judah (1 Sam 16:1; 17:12). Later out of Bethlehem came Jesus, in fulfillment of the Micah 5:2 prophecy and in keeping with the town of Boaz and David (Matt 2:1-6; Luke 2:4-7). There is a reason why the Gospels of Matthew and Luke deliberately showcased the birthplace of Jesus. They are referencing Jesus' role as Kinsman Redeemer.

The prophet Micah prophesied, "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from old, from ancient days" (Mic 5:2). Judah would be the tribe of the future king, and the Kinsman Redeemer, Jesus will come from Bethlehem, the house of bread. The Bread of Life was born in the house of bread.

4. PROPHETIC PICTURE - ACTS OF KINDNESS

Boaz performed acts of kindness to Ruth. Among the various virtues of Jesus evident in the Four Gospels, his kindness was consistently clear. Jesus moved toward the despised and reached out to the untouchables. Be it a leper, demoniac, tax collector, Samaritan woman, or beggar, they were deliberate targets of Christ's kindness. The understood social boundaries were being redrawn by

the steps he took. Like Boaz, Jesus was not hesitant to extend kindness toward a Gentile (Matt 8:5-13; 15:21-28).

5. PROPHETIC PICTURE – A KEEPER OF THE LAW AND MORE

In the Book of Ruth, Boaz not only kept the Law of Moses, fulfilling his role as Kinsman Redeemer, he exceeded it. The Lord provided for sojourners, the poor, and widows to glean from the leftovers of a field during harvest time (Lev 23:22; Deut 24:17-22). But Boaz permitted Ruth to glean in ways that were not required by the law. He told her to keep close to his reapers (Ruth 2:8), instructed his young men not to touch or rebuke her (2:9, 15), offered her their vessels of water to drink (2:9), invited her to eat with his reapers like she was part of his household (2:14), and he gave her access to the sheaves and bundles that the men and women of the field were already gathering together. The Law of Moses did not require Boaz to do any of these things. Knowing the law, Boaz went beyond the law. He was merciful. In the story he embodied the spirit of the law.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matt 5:17). And as the Sermon unfolds, it is clear that the law is kept not by mere outward obedience but from the heart (e.g., 5:22, 28; 6:3, 6, 18, 21).

6. PROPHETIC PICTURE – AUTHORITY

The owner of the land would sleep at the field in order to guard over his harvest. Naomi realised that Boaz is their kinsman redeemer, so she tells Ruth to go and sleep at his feet. Ruth’s request to “spread the corner of your garment over me” (Ruth 3:9, NIV) had several meanings. The word for “corner” in Hebrew also means “wings,” so Ruth was asking Boaz to spread his wings over her, his protection. She asked him to fulfil his role as kinsman redeemer. The hem (corners) of a man’s garment represented his authority. That is why David felt so bad when he cut the edge of Saul’s garment. The woman with the issue of blood touched the hem of Jesus’ garment, his wings. She touched what represented Jesus’ authority. In Isaiah God speaks about putting his garment over Israel, His authority and protection. Ruth asks Boaz to marry her because he is the kinsman. A nearer kinsman existed and Boaz had to deal with it. He gave Ruth 6 measures of Barley to take to Naomi. It was a message that Boaz would not rest until this issue is resolved. God worked for 6 days and rested on the seventh. Boaz confronts the nearer kinsman, and he passes. He takes off his shoe and gives it to Boaz, a sign that he does not want to take Ruth as his bride. That was a big win for Boaz. Boaz purchases the land for Naomi, and he also purchases Ruth as a bride.

At the big marriage celebration, someone says to them, “may your house be like Perez”. This is a strange prophecy.

Ruth 4:11-12, BSB

“May the LORD make the woman entering your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you be prosperous in Ephrathah and famous in Bethlehem. 12 And may your house become like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring the LORD will give you by this young woman.”

This is not a toast. Genesis 38 tells us about Perez’s birth. Perez was one of the sons of Judah through an illicit affair with his daughter-in-law, Tamar. So, Perez was an illegitimate son of Tamar. In the biblical genealogies, Perez is listed as an ancestor of King David and of Jesus Christ.

Deuteronomy 23:2

“No one born of a forbidden union may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD. “

It takes 10 generations to purge the illegitimacy. If you look at the generations from Perez, the illegitimate child of Tamar, you get exactly 10 generations to David.

- 1 Perez
- 2 Hezron
- 3 Ram
- 4 Amminadab
- 5 Nahshon
- 6 Salmon
- 7 Boaz
- 8 Obed
- 9 Jesse
- 10 **David**

So, in the book of Ruth during the time of the Judges, we find a prophecy showing us that David will be king.

DAVID AND JESUS CAME FROM RUTH

Boaz willingly takes Ruth as his wife, and together they bear a son named Obed, who had a son Jesse, who had a son called David, the forefather of Jesus. Matthew opens with the genealogy of Jesus and in it, we see Ruth mentioned.

CONCLUSION

People often describe the book of Ruth as a love story. But as the story unfolds, we realize that it is about more than the love between two people. It's about God's amazing love for all humankind. The story of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 1–4) is one of the most moving accounts in the Bible.

For Christians, the book of Ruth represents an early sign that the Messiah would liberate all of humankind, not solely Jews, and that Gentiles would join God's community of redeemed people in the mission of restoring God's lost children back into full relationship with Him. Jesus came to the spiritually destitute, those enslaved to sin and in helpless estate. Then, at incredible cost to himself, Jesus redeemed sinners (Rom 3:24; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14). He came to set the captive free and proclaim the year of Jubilee (Luke 4:18-19). Jesus was not the first redeemer from Bethlehem and Judah, but he was the greatest.

In order to understand Revelation 5 (the opening of the scroll and seals), you need to understand the Book of Ruth. It is the title deeds to the earth. The conditions to purchase the land back is on the scroll.

Revelation 5:1-5, ESV

1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?”

3 And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it,

4 and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

5 And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

There is a rolled-up scroll written on the front and back and no one in heaven or on earth can open the scroll, except the Messiah himself, the Kinsman Redeemer. We see this pattern in the book of Ruth. Jesus is the kinsman of humanity. There is no redemption outside of Christ.