

## THE BIG READ (39)

### Jesus in Ruth

#### A. Introduction

1. Every book of the Bible has one dominating theme – Jesus is the Christ.

“Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’”  
(Luke 24:45-47)

Jesus is the Christ who will suffer and die.

Jesus is the Christ who will rise from the dead on the third day.

Jesus is the Christ who will forgive the sins of all who repent.

Jesus is the Christ who will be preached to the nations.

2. The Old Testament that Jesus read contained the same 39 books as our English Bibles but was arranged in a different order.

It had three sections – the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

“Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” (Luke 24:44)

The Law (of Moses) contains the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

The Prophets are divided into two parts: Former and Latter.

The Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings) gives us God’s perspective on the history of Israel from the conquest of the Promised Land until their exile from it.

The Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Book of the Twelve) explains why the history of Israel turned out the way it did.

The final section of the Old Testament is the Writings.

Whereas the Prophets looked back to what happened to Israel and why it happened in order to call the nation to repent and return to God, the Writings looked forward to the hope that was coming to those who repent, through a King like David, and showed those who did, how to live faithfully in all of life’s circumstances as they waited for His arrival.

This means that though the books found in the Writings sections were written at different points in Israel’s history, it was after the Babylonian exile was over, that they were collected together to give the remnant hope and guidance as they waited.

The oldest list of books in the Hebrew Bible (Baba Bathra 14b-15a) places the books that make up the Writings in the following order: Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles.

3. Ruth’s appearance at the start of the Writings in the Hebrew Bible might seem surprising.

We are more familiar with its placement between Judges and 1 Samuel, because that is where the Greek Old Testament, which our English Bible’s follow, places it.

The reason Ruth appears there is because the events of the book occur during the time of the Judges, so in terms of chronology, it makes sense for Ruth to be next to Judges.

“In the days when the judges ruled...” (Ruth 1:1)

Not only that, the book ends by showing that Ruth was David's great-grandmother, and so Ruth serves as a fitting introduction to 1 Samuel, which will tell the story of Israel's greatest King.

"And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David." (Ruth 4:17)

But placing Ruth between Judges and 1 Samuel, instead of at the start of the Writings, I think, causes us to lose something.

Firstly, in the narrative flow, it is out place. Going from Judges into 1 Samuel seems to fit better.

Secondly, by placing it at the start of the Writings, Ruth provides a bridge from the exile of the Prophets to the hope found in the Writings.

Thirdly, Ruth is an excellent introduction to the Psalms, which is all about the 'David' who is coming (see Psalm 1 and 2).

## **B. Getting Started with Ruth**

### **1. Ruth takes place during a dark period of Israel's history, the period when the Judges ruled.**

Most likely the author (who is anonymous) wrote this short story down when Saul, the first king of Israel, was on the throne, but David had been anointed to be the next king.

The genealogy at the end of chapter 4 shows that David was descended from the royal line of Judah, as Perez was Judah's son from his relationship with Tamar.

"This, then, is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David." (Ruth 4:18-22)

So originally Ruth would have had most probably the purpose of demonstrating the legitimacy of David's future kingship to the people of Israel.

But now, with Ruth placed at the start of the Writings, it was addressing the remnant of Israelites, following the Babylonian exile.

The issue for them was not whether David was a legitimate King or not, as his reign had already taken place.

What message did Ruth have for them?

It had a message of hope for Israel, and not just for Israel, for the nations as well.

### **2. The book of Ruth told them the story of how God preserved David's ancestors during a time of exile, through a redeemer from Bethlehem, Boaz.**

These ancestors of David that God preserved, included Naomi (a Jew) and Ruth (a Gentile).

Through this story, God was saying to the remnant of Israel after the Babylonian exile, that what He did for David's ancestors during that time of exile is what He would do for them, and also for Gentiles who made God their God, like Ruth did, now.

He would preserve them through a new redeemer from Bethlehem.

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old, from ancient times." (Micah 5:2)

So what Boaz was for Naomi and Ruth, this new David to come would be for Israel and ultimately the world.



"But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." (Ruth 1:16)

So Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem; but they return empty. They had no food and no family heir.

They needed a redeemer.

### 3. In Ruth 2 and 3 we see the appearance of a Redeemer.

Boaz is mentioned before he appears in the story, and he is identified as a possible redeemer.

"Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side from the clan of Elimelech, a man of standing, whose name was Boaz." (Ruth 2:1)

It just so happened that Ruth went gleaning for food in the field belonging to Boaz.

"So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech." (Ruth 2:3)

Boaz made sure that plenty of food was left behind, by the harvesters, for Ruth to collect.

When Ruth told Naomi whose field she had been gleaning in, Naomi realised who Boaz was.

"The LORD bless him!" Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative: he is one of our kinsman-redeemers." (Ruth 2:20)

After some time had passed, according to the custom of the day, Ruth asked Boaz to be her redeemer, by marrying her, and providing for her a son who would continue Elimelech's family line going.

"I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer." (Ruth 3:9)

Boaz was willing to be her redeemer, but because there was an older living relative, he could not do so, unless the relative gave his consent.

"Although it is true that I am near of kin, there is a kinsman-redeemer nearer than I. Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to redeem, good; let him redeem. But if he is not willing, as surely as the LORD lives I will do it." (Ruth 3:12-13)

### 4. In Ruth 4 we see the rescue of a Redeemer.

Boaz redeems the family estate of Elimelech and marries Ruth.

"So the kinsman-redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it yourself." And he removed his sandal. Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from the town records." (Ruth 4:8-10)

The redemption is complete as God gives Boaz and Ruth a son.

"So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, and the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son." (Ruth 4:13)

Naomi and Ruth, who returned empty of food and a family heir, now are full of food and have a family heir, through their redeemer from Bethlehem.

## **D. Jesus in Ruth**

### 1. Jesus is the future David pictured in Boaz.

Like Boaz, Jesus is obedient to the law – he left the gleanings for the alien, he followed the marriage inheritances laws.

Like Boaz, Jesus is a kinsman-redeemer – he willingly sacrificed his own interests to redeem his relative.

Like Boaz, Jesus is a bridegroom – he marries the bride who he has redeemed.

### 2. Jesus is future David descended from Boaz.

The book of Ruth ends with a genealogy of 10 names.

This is the line of promise (see Genesis 5:1-32, 11:10-26).

This is the line of the future King who will rule and redeem.

“Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar... Boaz was the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David... and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.” (Matthew 1:2-3, 5-6, 16)

What will this future King be like? We'll find out in the next book of the Writings – the Psalms.