

20. Ruth and Devotion

We are bringing in only two primary individuals through the time of the judges, that is, in-between Joshua and Samuel, and that is Gideon, whom we have covered, and Ruth.

While writing the last lesson, I gained a completely new understanding of Ruth and the place of this story in the life of Christ. But to understand Ruth and her role in calling forth Christ into the world, we must first trace out the history of her husband, Boaz.

Salmon, the prince of Judah, the first person to step across the Jordan into the Land, married Rahab of Jericho.

The Timeline of Boaz. We can then see that everything God would teach us through Ruth is the same thing through Rahab. That is, a determination to be with that people whose God is the Lord and a devotion to the man who rescued her, thus becoming the “mother” of Jesus through Boaz.

Joshua and Israel crossed the Jordan in 1422 BC. In order to make all the dates and times line up, Edward Reese places the birth of Boaz at 1396 BC, twenty-six years later.

This would make Boaz 24 when Joshua died in 1372. Boaz was 81 when the civil war decimated the tribe of Benjamin and 128 when Naomi and Ruth settled in Bethlehem.

The Land as God Intended. Then we see that their son, Obed, is 64 years old when Gideon does his thing in 1202 BC, thus the story of Ruth comes first.

We then see that the time of the judges, from 1422 BC until Saul becomes king in 1065, is split into two parts. The first part is relative peace and prosperity from 1422 to 1209 (apostasy). And then overrun by enemies from 1209 BC until David finally defeated the Philistines in 1029.

This shows us that the life of Boaz represents that time of Israel in the promised land closer to what God intended, a time of relative justice and liberty, peace and prosperity.

Ruth and Naomi. Boaz, the forefather of Jesus, represents the life of Christ in the Promised Land, all the abundance God means Church to be. But Boaz serves as the primary part of the background; the real story for us is the relationship between Ruth and Naomi.

Ruth represents the young Church, clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ, about to bring forth life (Obed) into creation. Naomi represents the old Church, now barren and bitter.

But Ruth loves her mother-in-law, and everything she does is for her sake.

Born to Naomi. The words, then, that represent Ruth's attitude towards Naomi and the meaning of the story are these.

Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel! And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him." Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him. Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "There is a son born to Naomi." And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

For the Church. Remember Moses' argument with God, that if God did not bring that entire people into the Promised Land then His testimony before the nations would be destroyed.

If the entire Church does not bring forth the life of God into the knowledge of all, then the testimony against the Lord Jesus is that He has failed.

As Ruth, we know that, and so we bring forth that knowledge of God through us for the sake of an empty Church. This life, Obed, the manchild, coming through us, then, belongs to the

entire Church so that all can say that 2000 years of Christianity HAS borne fruit in the earth and become a blessing to all.

The Few and the Many. And the seventh angel sounded his trumpet and there were great **voices inside of heaven saying, “The kingdom of the cosmos has become [the kingdom] of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign into the seasons of the ages”** (Revelation 11:15).

I do not know what the actual newspaper headlines will be in the unfolding of the firstfruits of God and this transfer of the outward kingdom from death to life. John’s vision suggests 144,000 as the number of the firstfruits, although God is free to mean a symbolic number.

But those entering into Tabernacles are **“a great multitude which no one was able to number”** (Revelation 7:9).

We Are that Ruth. Revelation 7 shows us that the “numbered” firstfruits are marked by God before the winds of judgment blow, and that they are then followed by a people “beyond number.” And all these things are the day-by-day unfolding of human history represented by daily news headlines.

For us, Ruth represents the firstfruits, and Naomi represents the church without number following after, nourished by the “manchild” she now calls her own.

What I mean to say is that these things are very real and now. We are that Ruth, and we are calling our Naomi, all who believe in Jesus across the earth, into LIFE. We never write-off God’s people, for they are beloved to us.

Calling God into Her World. Then we see that Ruth is the one who acts in this story; whereas Boaz simply responds to her action. We, the firstfruits of Christ, are the ones acting in our day, and Jesus, our husband, is simply responding to our call for the sake of the entire Church.

Thus Ruth, even as a female, is the one calling God into her world. Ruth loves Boaz and she loves Obed, but it is Naomi for whom she acts.

And this gives us the background we need to know God-with-us through the story of Ruth.

The Heart. Ruth is a Moabite, descended from incest. Because the Moabites are related to Abraham and Israel, God tells Israel to leave them alone. Yet it is the Moabites that get Israel in trouble with God by teaching the Israelites to sin, at the suggestion of Balaam.

Then, this is one of the many times God Himself pays no attention to the law. God had said, “No Moabite will enter the congregation of the Lord until the tenth generation.” Yet **three** generations later, David is taking Philistines into the Holy of Holies to worship God with him.

But the Lord looks at the heart (the next lesson).

Devotion as Action. In Chapter 1, the issue is the ability to bring forth sons. We then understand that this story is one of the key parts of God’s largest metaphor, the reproduction of life.

Devotion seems to be a passive trait, a receiving, yet we see that it is the strongest action in the story.

“Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever 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. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me.”

Devotion to Father’s Heart. And again we see that this is the attitude of the youngest “move of God,” the one that brings forth the manchild seized into God, towards all the people in all the old “moves of God,” who have become bitter and incapable of bringing forth life.

Yet to Ruth, it was a devotion to an individual older lady who was of a culture very different from hers. And, of course, through Naomi, it was a chosen devotion to the God of Israel.

For us, it is a devotion to God's Heart, that we would not leave out one who belongs to Jesus.

The Abundance of Christ. Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest. – That is, approaching the time of Tabernacles.

Boaz is then described as “a man of great wealth.” Most of the apostasy and oppression in the book of Judges was in the last one-third of that time. For two hundred years, Israel was mostly peaceful and thus prosperous. To us, Boaz represents the Lord Jesus Christ in the present time, as he rested in the abundance and peace wrought by his father, Salman.

Then, Ruth's words can be accurately paraphrased thus. “Let me see if I can catch this man's eye.”

Ruth Wanted Union. Why did Boaz take notice of Ruth? He says why. “It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law... **The Lord repay your work,** and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.”

Then, some people are satisfied with “handfuls on purpose,” a modest level of knowing Christ, but Ruth was NOT.

Ruth wanted union. Ruth wanted all that was Boaz to belong to her and all that she was to belong to Boaz. Ruth wanted to receive his seed and bring forth his life into the world. Yet Ruth wanted all this for the sake of Naomi.

An Attractive Persuasion. Boaz was then “winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.” This was full in the time of Tabernacles.

So Ruth went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her. And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down. Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a **woman was lying at his feet. And he said, “Who are you?” So she answered, “I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a kinsman redeemer.”**

The Real Issue. Let's get the whole picture. When Ruth returns home early the next morning, Naomi says to her, “Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day.”

Now, all of these things apply to our redemption, and can be used to teach our redemption.

But the meaning of redemption, although it is part of the process, is NOT at issue here. Bringing forth abundance of life is the issue. – **“The Lord make (Ruth) ...like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper ...because of the offspring which the Lord will give you from this young woman.”**

The Purpose Is Life. You see, the reason our Naomi, the Church of Jesus Christ through history, is barren is the theology of “go to” heaven. Death has taken from her all hope of bringing forth life herself. She no longer has a view of union with Christ.

The purpose of redemption is NOT redemption. The purpose of union is NOT union. The purpose of redemption resulting in union is to bring forth the life of the knowledge of God into the experience of all creation.

This simple fact of reality was in everyone's mind in the story of Ruth. But our Naomi has forgotten it entirely.

Romantic Love. Now, Boaz was a man of integrity and honor, and he would never have abused Ruth. In fact, Naomi, in her craftiness, was counting on that. And what Ruth did, lying at

Boaz' feet, was very much part of the larger cultural practices that would lead to her marriage with Boaz.

Nonetheless, Ruth's sexual attraction was very much part of this mix. And this is the point of the story.

Ruth, by romantic love, was the protagonist of this story, in drawing from Boaz that seed that would bring forth Obed into the world.

Winning a Husband. Ruth's sexual attraction was pure, and it was covered entirely by proper conduct. Nonetheless, it is the point.

But Ruth's sexual attraction was towards a natural man. Another young woman, much younger than Ruth, a girl who was Ruth's descendant, was much bolder. Ruth used her femininity to win Boaz, but Mary used her femininity to win God.

And here is the sexual attraction by which Mary won the seed of God for her womb. "Behold, I am Your maidservant, let it be to me according to Your word." When we say this to Jesus, we have His undivided attention.

Restoring Love. [Bring in here the story of Neryn and the Guardian of the North, including the conclusions found in *A Highway for God*: "31. Word as Earth" and "32. Sent as Kingdom."]

To quote from "Word as Earth."

"Of truth, the picture given to us by Juliette Marillier, that of little Neryn reaching deep into the heart of the Guardian of Earth in order to find how she could awaken him out of sleep, and then realizing she could cause him to wake up by calling his wife back to him, this picture is the closest to how I understand our role in calling a God of Earth into our world.

“Although it is God’s people whom we are “awakening out from sleep”, there is a sense that we could define the ekenosis in the same way, that of awakening our God “out from sleep,” the sleep of not being known, that is, a God that is LOVE, not known.

“And just the same as with Neryn, we must let our own knowing go deep into the Heart of this Mighty Being, that we might know His Heart in all its joys and sorrows.

“And what is it that will awaken the Heart of Love inside of creation? – Bringing His Beloved back to Him. When He sees her and is ‘reminded’ again of His deep care for her, then we will see a protecting God enter this world for the sake of His Church.”

God’s Response to Love. As far as the experience of this world is concerned, God has ‘been asleep’ for nearly two thousand years.

In just the same way as Ruth, we place ourselves before Him, that He might be drawn to our love for the sake of His Church. And in just the same way as Mary, we say to God, “Look at me! I am beautiful, and I belong to You. Let it be to me according to all that You mean by what You say.”

In this way, we draw God out from our hearts and into our world – His response to our love. And we do so for the sake of the entire Church upon the earth and inside of heaven.

Reading for Next Time. The next lesson is the story of Samuel and David, titled “A Man after God’s Heart.” I have not yet considered how I will divide the life of David and will likely not do so until I write that next lesson.

For the next lesson, read 1 Samuel chapters 1, 3, 8, 13:1-15, 15, and 16.

The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart. – For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

Let's Pray Together. Our prayer this morning is calling our Beloved, the progenitor of life, to enter our world. I brought "the Lord's Prayer" into the JSV and made it the framework of "Sent as Kingdom." It is the same as this story of Ruth, calling a God of life into our world to establish Communities of Christ across the earth.

I will now increase that prayer as our prayer together.

Our Father, You live inside the heavens, the realms of Spirit. Father, we call You to set apart Your name and make it holy in the sight of all mankind. Father, come Your kingdom; become Your desire upon earth even as inside of heaven.

Come Your Kingdom. Father, come Your kingdom; become Your desire upon earth even as inside of heaven.

Give us today our daily bread, Lord Jesus, for You are our Boaz. Cause us to dwell in life together upon the land, that we might know Your abundance in all things. Father, release our obligations even as we release the obligations of others. Father, BE all Love between us that our favor given to one another might be You in Person.

And Father, plant Your Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, in us as every Word that You speak, that we might bring forth the knowledge of God into our world.

Become Your Desire. Father, come Your kingdom; become Your desire upon earth even as inside of heaven.

Father, do not bring us into testing, but rescue us from toilsome labor. Father, break all remnants of the curse from off our daily life and prove the abundance of Christ upon us. Father, prove Jesus faithful and true through our daily life together and cause all the work of our hands to overflow with the abundance of God.

Father, become Your Desire inside of us. Become Your Desire through us towards Your Church. Father, Your Church all across the earth, cause her to KNOW You.

Be All That You Are. Father, look at us, for we are Your Bride, and we are beautiful. We know that Your bowels long over us. Father, plant Your Seed inside of us, the Lord Jesus Christ as every Word You speak, and become through us the revelation of Your glory.

Lord Jesus, BE all that You ARE and mean by every Word God speaks in us and as us and through us. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory into the ages. Let it be so; it is so.

Let it be so, THROUGH us as You speak; IT IS SO!