

Shadows of Christ & His Bride

Lesson #32

Ruth: Background

Sept. 24, 2025

The Book of Ruth and the Book of Genesis share some parallels and familiar themes. The Book of Genesis is the story of outsiders who because of their fidelity to God are able to overcome famine and infertility. The story of Ruth largely parallels this story.

A. God's people leave the Land of Promise due to a Famine.

- Abraham left the Promised Land and fled to Egypt because of a famine. Gen. 12:10
- Jacob's family left the Promised Land and fled to Egypt because of a famine.
- Elimelech's family left the Promised Land and fled to Moab because of a famine.

B. The going forth and return of God's people.

- Abraham left the Promised Land and went to Egypt. Then he returned.
- Naomi left the Promised Land and went to Moab. Then she returned.

C. Ruth's Journey Parallels Abraham's Initial Journey

Both figures undertake a journey to an unknown land. Ruth's decision to leave her native Moab and go with Naomi echoes the Genesis 12:1 call to Abraham:

"Go forth from your country and your father's house to the land that I will show you."

Ruth 1:16 Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live.

Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.

D. Crisis of Infertility

- Genesis is filled with instances of barrenness and the threat to the continuation of the family line, a crisis also faced by Naomi in Ruth, who has no surviving sons.

E. Foreign Gentile wives were grafted into the Covenant Community.

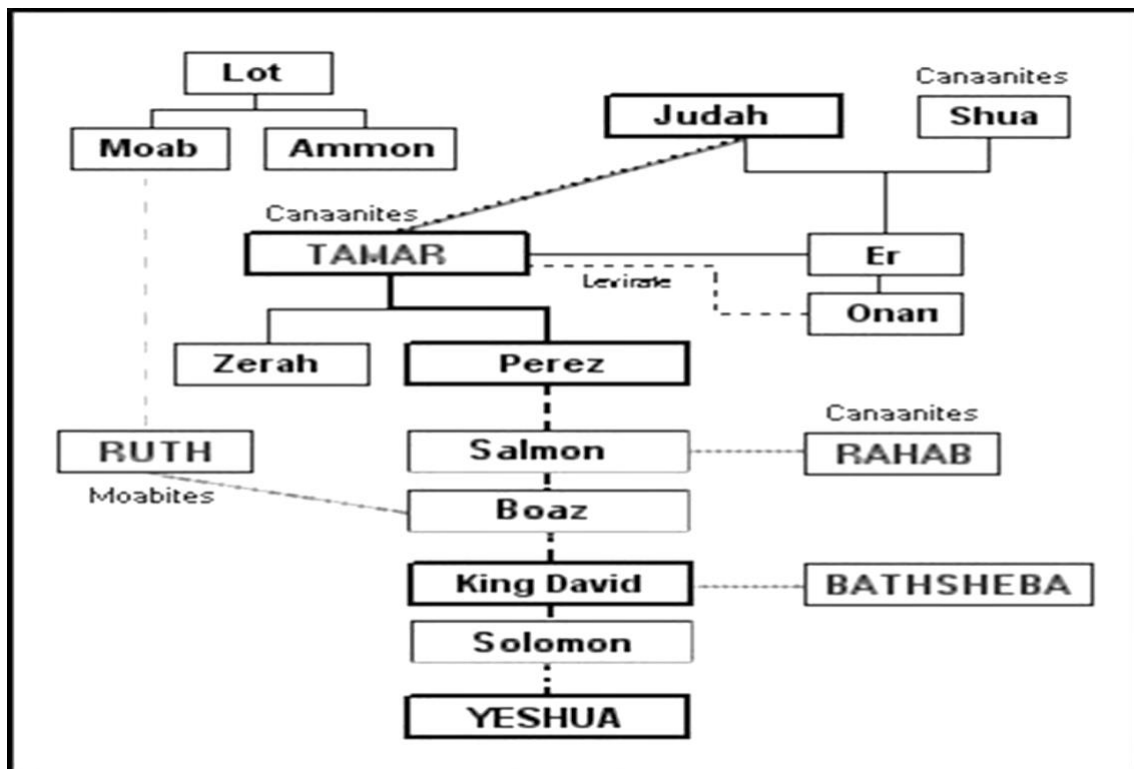
- Ruth, the Moabite, was grafted into the Covenant Community.
- Joseph's wife, Asenath, an Egyptian pagan, was grafted into the Covenant Community.

F. The Gentile wives bore children who played significant roles in Israel.

- Joseph marries Asenath. Her children, Ephraim and Manasseh, receive Joseph's double portion blessing. They become 2 full tribes of the 12 tribes of Israel.
- Ruth, a Moabite Gentile, married Boaz. Became great-grandparents of King David.

G. A widow bears the promised seed.

- Ruth gives birth to Obed whose line leads to King David and ultimately to Jesus Christ. Ruth is listed in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1.
- Tamar was a widow who bore Perez whose line leads to Boaz to King David and ultimately to Jesus Christ. Tamar is listed in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1.



H. Genesis lays the groundwork for the entire Bible, particularly the story of Israel. Ruth actively Bridges The Gap between the era of tribal Israel and the nation under The Davidic monarchy, serving as a vital link in the royal lineage that leads to Jesus Christ.

Genesis is broken into 10 sections that all start with the phrase,

- "These are the generations of" which is followed by a genealogy.
- Offspring in Hebrew = zera. It is used 49 times.
- The family line is a major theme of Genesis.

Key: Genesis is essentially the Abraham family saga.

The consistent use of offspring is the answer to the great crisis of Genesis. There is an unresolved tragedy at the beginning of Genesis.

- Adam and Eve listen to the words of the serpent rather than God.
- In judgment of Adam & Eve, God is withholding a great benefit from them.
- Result: Adam & Eve are exiled from God's presence.
 - The project God had started for humanity to fill and multiply the earth and expand God's kingdom is in danger.

God's solution: Gen. 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

- Proto-evangelium which means "First Gospel." First prophetic hint of the coming of Jesus Christ, who would ultimately conquer sin and death.

After his fall, man was not abandoned by God. God calls him and in a mysterious way heralds the coming victory over evil and his restoration from his fall.

This is the first announcement of:

- the Messiah and Redeemer,
- of a Battle between the serpent and the woman and of the final victory of a descendant [offspring, seed, zera] of hers.

The offspring of Eve is vitally important because it will lead to a specific, particular offspring that will at last defeat the serpent. He will end the battle that has been raging between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent.

Key: Ruth is part of this war as Elimelech's line moves to the point of extinction.

He is from the tribe of Judah. Both of his sons died before they had any sons.

Revelation graphically illustrates this drama using imagery from the Old Testament to picture this war between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman.

Rev. 12:1-5a Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ² Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. ⁴ His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

⁵She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron.

John uses much symbolic language to show: The whole story of Israel, all the struggles with fertility and family lines are part of Satan's war to stop the birth of the offspring that is destined to crush his head.

Jacob pronounces a blessing on each of his twelve sons in the order they were born.

Consider the first four: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah.

- These prophecies: Which son will receive the kingship?
- Abraham's family was promised a great nation.
- The nation was promised a kingdom and a king who would be king of the whole earth.

First-born Birthright: Leader or Patriarch of Family, Spiritual Leader, Double Portion

We would expect, because of the culture of the time, that the first born would naturally become the king.

However, Reuben is passed over by the kingship because he defiled his father's bed. This was considered a blatant attempt to take his father's place. As a result he is disqualified from the kingship. Simeon and Levi are also passed over for the kingship because they had used their power in a violent way massacring an entire town because of what one of the leaders of the town had done to their sister.

Gen. 49:10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet,
Until Shiloh [Jesus Christ] comes; And to Him *shall* be the obedience of the people.

This is a further development of the Genesis 3:15 promise giving us more details about the one who would crush the serpent's head.

Why is the kingship passed to Judah? Judah's father, Jacob, had two wives:

- Jacob was tricked into marrying Leah.
- Rachel, the one Jacob loved, could not have children.

Leah tried to earn the love of Jacob by bearing children.

- #1 Reuben: The Lord has looked on my affliction and now my husband will love me.
- #2 Simeon: The Lord has heard that I was hated and has given me another son.
- #3 Levi: Hoping that now my husband will be attached to me,
because I have borne him three sons.
- #4 Judah: When she names Judah there is a change.

"This time I will praise the Lord." Leah has learned to rise above the competition. Instead of seeking her husband's approval she rests in the praise of the Lord.

Many years after 10 of Jacob's sons sold Joseph into slavery, Joseph was exalted to a high position under Pharaoh. A famine forces Jacob's sons to go to Egypt to buy grain.

To test their loyalty, Joseph threatens to imprison Rachel's other son Benjamin.

Judah, knowing that Benjamin was his father's favorite, begs Joseph to imprison him instead. Judah sacrifices his freedom because of his love for his father.

Judah is characterized by resting in the praise of God and by offering himself as a substitute because of his love for another.

This gives us a clue as to the features about the character of the king who is to come.

The idea of service and sacrifice tell us something about power and the Kingdom of God. Power corrupts! This is the kind of power we see manifested by Reuben or the violence demonstrated by Levi and Simeon.

- Their rejection by God is the rejection of the tyrannical exercise of power.

Power and authority in the kingdom of God is quite different. Some of the disciples get in a fight over their position when Jesus imposes the kingdom they have been waiting for.

Jesus clearly denounces their idea and challenges them with His conception of kingship.

Jesus says, "You know those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you.

But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." [Mark 10:42-45]

- Power does not take the form by manipulation in search of advantage like Reuben.
- Power does not take the form of violence like Simeon and Levi.

Power takes the form of self-sacrifice like Judah.

- The line of the Messiah is saved in the story of Ruth by a baby named Obed, servant.

Genealogies and the repeated use of offspring are both used for a reason. Their use signals the advancement to the solution that will resolve the crisis of the exile of humanity from the Garden & the potential end of God's project. The Book of Ruth adopts the language of Genesis. This is a signal that this story is another part of this drama:
by advancing the story toward the OFFSPRING who will defeat the serpent,
return humanity from its exile, and set up His Kingdom

Why the extended genealogy?

Ruth 4:17-22 There is a son born to Naomi." And they called his name Obed.

[servant, worshiper] He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

¹⁸ Now this is the genealogy of Perez: Perez begot Hezron; ¹⁹ Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; ²⁰ Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon;

²¹ Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed; ²² Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.

The short genealogy in Ruth 4:17 makes the longer one in 4:18 - 22 technically unnecessary within the framework of the story. The longer one is a strategic effort to weave Ruth's story into the narrative of Genesis and into the future hope of the prophets.

One purpose: Establish the bloodline and pedigree of King David.

Perez was a son of the patriarch Judah [and Tamar]. Boaz was a descendant of Judah.

Boaz married Ruth, and their son, Obed, was the grandfather of David.

G. Campbell Morgan "In this final word of the book there is manifest the Divine moment in the history of the chosen people. Thus, the kingly line was ordered in the midst of infidelity, through faithful souls. God was soon to allow Israel to have kings.

By way of preparation, the book of Ruth introduces the kingly line.

Boaz and Ruth are the ancestors of King David, through whom came the Savior-King."

Ruth 4:18 begins: "These are the generations of..." is identical to the same phrase that divides the book of Genesis into ten parts. [Gen. 2:4; Gen. 6:9; Gen. 10:1; Gen. 11:10; Gen. 11:27;

Gen. 25:12; Gen. 25:19; Gen. 36:1; Gen. 36:9, Gen. 37:2.]

It occurs one other time in the Torah [Num. 3:1; #11].

This key phrase in Ruth 4:18 is the 12th occurrence in the entire Old Testament. Coincidence?

➤ Twelve is symbolic of the unified tribes of Israel.

The Book of Ruth points to the future king of Israel who will unify the tribes in one kingdom.

Note: Ruth 4:18 - 22 is a ten-person genealogy. The Bible records only two other ten-person genealogies. Genesis 5 [Adam to Noah] and Genesis 11:10-26 [Shem to Abram].

It is an indication that a new age was beginning:

as it did with Noah, and then with Abraham, so too it would with King David.

The kingship of Israel and ultimately the king of the whole world will come from the line of Judah. This is significant for our story because Boaz and Naomi are from the tribe of Judah. The death of Naomi's sons without children was a threat to this promise. The child that Ruth bears to Boaz is a restoration of this promise. Their child will be the grandfather of King David and the ancestor of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Jesus is the seed who was promised to Adam and Eve who would crush the serpent's head. Jesus is the lion of the tribe of Judah. Jesus is the one to whom shall be the obedience of all the peoples. The Book of Ruth, a story of a rich nobleman who is kind to a poor Moabite, takes on cosmic significance since the result is the preservation of the family line that leads straight to the salvation of the whole world.

The Book of Ruth contains "an Unnamed Servant." Ruth 2:4-7a

And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee.

⁵ Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?

⁶ And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab:

And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves:

- As Boaz is a picture of our Lord Jesus, so the Unnamed servant is a picture of the Holy Spirit. He is there faithfully carrying out the wishes of His Master.
- He is there as the servant of Abraham who went to find a bride for the beloved son, Isaac, a picture of what the Holy Spirit is doing in the world today. He is looking for a Bride for the Son, Jesus.

The Book of Ruth illustrates the devastating plight of widows in the ancient Near East, who were left without financial or social support after losing their husbands.

Bible Background Commentary: Widows in the ancient near East had lost all social status and generally were also without political or economic status. They couldn't own property.

They would equate to the homeless in our American society. Typically, they had no male protector and were therefore economically dependent on society at large.

- When we open the Book of Ruth, we find three of them together.

The Book of Ruth showed the Israelites the loving, faithful nature of their God.

It demonstrates that God responds to His people's cry.

Watching Him provide for Naomi and Ruth, two widows with little prospects for a future, we learn that He cares for the outcasts of society.

God Provided Laws for the Widows & The Poor

Law of Gleaning: passages in Leviticus 19 & 23.

- When you harvested your field, you could not harvest your entire field.
- You must leave the edges of your field unharvested so widows and the poor could come harvest the edges.
- There was no welfare program. Widows and the poor had to work to harvest what was left for them to glean. They were responsible for working to provide for themselves.
- The Covenant Community was responsible for making the gleanings available to them.

God Provided Laws for the Widows

Law of Levirate Marriage Deut. 25:5-6

If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be *married* to a stranger outside *the family*; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. ⁶ And it shall be *that* the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

1. If a man dies without a son, his widowed wife is to marry his brother.
2. This ensures the deceased man's name and lineage are not forgotten.
3. The first son born from this union is considered the son of the deceased brother.

In ancient Israel, the concept of redemption was deeply embedded in the social and religious fabric. Redemption often involved a kinsman-redeemer who had the responsibility to redeem a relative in distress, whether by buying back land, freeing them from slavery, or avenging blood.

- Strong's #1350 *gaal*: Redeem, act as kinsman-redeemer, avenge, ransom, deliver.

The 4 verbs of redemption declared by the LORD GOD.

- I will Free - Deliver - Redeem - Take You to Myself.

Law of the Kinsman Redeemer: Law of Redemption Leviticus 25:47-50

Provision was made in the Law of Moses:

- for the poor person who was forced to sell part of his property or himself into slavery.
1. When Joshua entered the land, the Promised Land was then granted to the 12 tribes.
 2. The land was to stay in each specific tribe.
 3. You could "lease" your land [sell the rights to use the land for a period of time].
 4. In the year of Jubilee, (1) all debts were canceled, (2) all slaves were set free, and (3) the land was returned to the original owner.

The Year of Jubilee is the 50th year, occurring after seven cycles of seven years (49 years) have passed, according to Leviticus 25:9-10. It follows the sabbatical year and includes the proclamation of liberty and release for the land and its inhabitants, as well as the sounding of the shofar. All labor was to cease for one year, and those bound by labor contracts were released from them.

One of the benefits of the Jubilee was that both the land and the people were able to rest.

Key: Physical example of spiritual truth fulfilled in Jesus Christ and will be finished at His 2nd Coming. The debt of sin is canceled, slaves of sin are set free and rulership of the earth will return to Jesus Christ and His bride forever.

5. When you "sold" your land, the title deed would also include the rules for title redemption.

6. There was a procedure which said your next of kin could purchase back the unused years [redeeming the land].

7. He had a right and a responsibility with regard to an impoverished relative.

Jer. 32:6 The Lord told Jeremiah, who was in the court of the guard, that his cousin Hanamel would come to him to sell his field in Anathoth, a town in Benjamin.

➤ Jeremiah purchased the field for seventeen shekels of silver, even though the city was under siege, the land was being taken by the Babylonians, and the people would be taken captive to Babylon. It seemed illogical and futile to invest in the land.

Truth: Faith is obedience in spite of what we see or feel.

➤ Jeremiah stored the deeds in an earthenware jar so that they would last a long time, preserving them as evidence of God's prophecy.

➤ This was a tangible symbol of future hope and restoration, illustrating that God's plan for His people was not ending but was a new beginning.

➤ The title deed would be a scroll on the back of which would detail the procedure for redemption.

➤ The purchase symbolized that God would gather the scattered Israelites back to their land and that they would once again own property there.

➤ Jeremiah's descendants would come back and claim the land.

Kinsman Redeemer had to meet 3 conditions:

a. He had to be a near kinsman.

b. He had to be able to perform the duty.

c. He had to be willing; it was not required.

d. If the kinsman chose not to perform this duty, he had to give the widow his shoe, a symbol of shame. He had failed to do the kinsman's part.

e. Redemption was completed when the price was completely paid.

Wiersbe: The Book of Ruth is the only example of the law of the kinsman-redeemer.

It also shows how other laws of the Mosaic system operated.

It furnishes the link between the tribe of Judah and David.

The genealogy at the end of the book becomes a most important document.

Ruth 4:22 and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse was born David.

Ruth is a love story without the use of the word "love."

Purpose: To present the providential provision of the kinsman-redeemer.

The genealogy at the end of the book is an important link to Christ.

The message of Ruth is about the macro picture of God's Providential Working through Israel to bring the Messiah. God is providentially active at work in the lives within the book but also in the scope of history.

Naomi = Type of Israel

Ruth = Type of Church = Gentile Bride

Boaz = Type of Jesus Christ, Redeemer

Naomi in Moab is in exile and destitute.

Ruth never replaces Naomi. [Church NEVER replaces Israel]

Ruth learns of Boaz's ways through Naomi [Salvation is of the Jews]

Key: Romans 9-11 communicates the idea of the relationship of the Salvation of the Gentiles to that of the Salvation of the Jews. God made a promise to Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. God always intended that salvation would include the Gentiles.

➤ Ruth is a significant figure in Salvation history through her being grafted in.

Theological Emphasis:

The Sovereignty of God: It was in God's sovereign plan that

Ruth returned to Bethlehem with Naomi and married Boaz.

It was also in God's sovereignty that Boaz was the kinsman willing to redeem.

The Kinsman-Redeemer: Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer, was typical of Jesus

in His redemption of man. Resolve to redeem is crucial for redemption.

The Davidic Covenant II Sam. 7: The Davidic Covenant was a contract God made

to establish a king for Israel. Jesus will be King Jesus, King of the World.

At least Seven Major Theological Themes emerge in Ruth.

1. Ruth the Moabitess illustrates that God's redemptive plan extended beyond the Jews to Gentiles. Ruth 2:12
2. Ruth demonstrates that women are co-heirs with men of God's salvation grace. I Pet. 3:7
3. Ruth portrays the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10-11
4. Ruth describes God's sovereign [1:6; 4:13] and providential care [2:3] of seemingly unimportant people at apparently insignificant times which later prove to be monumentally crucial to accomplish God's will.
5. Ruth along with Tamar [Gen. 38], Rahab [Josh. 2] and Bathsheba [II Sam. 11-12] stand in the genealogy of the Messianic line [4:17, 22; cf. Matt. 1:5].

The genealogy of Jesus included several non-Jews. God showed grace to the line of David:

Matt. 1:3 Tamar the Canaanite Matt. 1:5 Rahab the Canaanite harlot

Matt. 1:5 Ruth the Moabitess Matt. 1:6 Bathsheba, probably a Hittite

6. Boaz, as a type of Christ, becomes Ruth's kinsman-redeemer [4:1-12].
7. David's right and thus Christ's right to the throne of Israel is traced back to Judah. [4:18-22; cf. Gen. 49:8-12].

Genesis lays the groundwork for the entire Bible, particularly the story of Israel.

Key: Ruth Bridges The Gap between the era of tribal Israel and the nation under the Davidic monarchy. Ruth serves as a Vital Link in the royal lineage leading to Jesus Christ.

Key: Ruth serves as a bridge between Deuteronomy and I Samuel:

from the anticipation of a king over Israel to the Divine Selection of a monarch.

Interesting: Ruth is the 8th book of the Bible. 8 is the number of a new beginning.

Ruth, a sequel to Judges, was written during: Religious Apostasy

Political Disorganization

Social Chaos

K. C. Way The book of Ruth presents the inspiring journey of God's people from tragedy to triumph. The story is a mirror opposite of Israel's depressing journey from triumph to tragedy presented in the book of Judges.

- Judges is about breaking covenant and leaving *torah*.
- Ruth is about keeping covenant and living *torah*.
- Judges emphasizes Canaanization and curse.
- Ruth emphasizes sanctification and blessing.
- Judges documents acts of self-interest.
- Ruth documents acts of self-sacrifice.
- Judges depicts the lack of kingship.
- Ruth finally depicts the line of kingship.

Ruth 1:1 sets the historical time frame:

Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled...

Judges 21:25 In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.

- Braces the audience for bad news.
- Famine, flight and deaths that leave Naomi empty and bitter.

But then the light begins to shine brightly as God providentially provides fertility, people show kindness to one another, and God rewards His people with present and future blessings. Given the general trend of Israel's faithlessness, one might justifiably wonder how a righteous king like David could emerge. The Book of Ruth effectively answers this question by placing a spotlight on a faithful family in Bethlehem of Judah that will turn out to be David's genealogical and spiritual kin. Ruth's story confirms that God providentially has preserved faithful families and that David emerges from such righteous stock despite the shadowy conditions of pre-monarchic Israel.

Truths: God's work is often unseen in the dark days of the judges.

God's grace acts in the midst of evil

God's strength is greater than any darkness.

God builds His kingdom through the neglected, the ordinary, the overlooked.