

The Bible From 20,000 Feet Part 30

Ruth Part 1

Tuesday Night Bible Study, July 7, 2009

--OUTLINE:

--BACKGROUND CONCEPTS FOR THE BOOK OF RUTH

--OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF RUTH WITH SELECT INSIGHTS INTO IT'S DEEPER MEANING
(in part 31 we'll focus on the full picture of the deeper level of symbolism in the book of Ruth)

--BACKGROUND CONCEPTS FOR THE BOOK OF RUTH

--the Law of Redemption:

--the Mosaic Law stated that all debts in Israel were cancelled every 7 years and all land that was sold was returned to the original owner (or their family) every 50 years during the Year of Jubilee; families that sold themselves as indentured servants were also freed during the Year of Jubilee.

--the Mosaic Law also included the Law of Redemption which provided a way for property to be "redeemed" and returned to the original owner before the Year of Jubilee by a relative paying the debt on the property; indentured servants could also be redeemed in this way.

--redemption: "deliverence by payment of a price" (Nelson's Bible Dictionary)

--these laws were designed to help prevent poverty in Israel, and they also pointed to the reality that everything belonged to God...

--Leviticus 25:23-24 "The land must not be sold permanently because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants. Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land."

--under Joshua, God gave specific regions to each tribe, and by the land reverting back to the original owners the original tribal structure was preserved.

--the law stated that indentured servants were to be treated with dignity because they too ultimately belonged to the Lord...

--Leviticus 25:53-55: "[*speaking of indentured servants, God said*] you must see to it that his owner does not rule over him ruthlessly. 54 Even if he is not redeemed in any of these ways, he and his children are to be released in the Year of Jubilee, 55 **for the Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants**, whom I brought out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God."

--what a stark contrast this is to many cultures throughout the ages and even in certain areas of the world today where slaves are treated as animals with no rights.

--ultimately the entire world belongs to God, but the land of Israel is the only place that He specifically calls His own because He has set aside that land for the special purpose of serving as a home base, so to speak, to complete His plan of salvation...

--the land of Israel is the place where Jesus was born, lived, and died for our sins; the place where the church (the spiritual body of Christ) was born; the place where Christ will return, and from where He will rule over the entire world during the Millennial Kingdom.

--the Levirate Marriage:

--God instituted this practice under the Mosaic Law in Deuteronomy 25:5-10

--under this law, if a husband died and left his wife without any children, a near relative of the deceased husband would marry the widow in order for her to bear children to be an heir to the deceased husband's property. The law was also designed to provide for the welfare of widows. The near kinsman wasn't required to enter into this marriage, but if he was asked and refused it was considered to be a great dishonor.

--this type of marriage was a common practice among many cultures of that day and was first mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 38:8

--in Matthew 22:23-28 the Sadducees, who taught there was no resurrection, used the law of Levirate Marriage to ask Jesus a trick question about the concept of life after death...

--If there is life after death, they reasoned, then the law of the Levirate Marriage would result in a contradiction as a woman who was married twice on earth could not be married to two people at the same time in heaven.

--Jesus replied to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven." (Matthew 22:29-30)

--the Kinsman-Redeemer:

--the Kinsman-Redeemer was the near relative ("kinsman") who was qualified to act as a redeemer under the Law of Redemption or to be a husband in a Levirate Marriage

--if a widow entering a Levirate Marriage had family property that had been sold, the Kinsman Redeemer husband had to redeem her family property in order to marry her so that their children would inherit the family property and keep it in the tribe of the deceased husband, and thus preserve the original tribal structure that God ordained.

--"types and shadows":

--throughout the Old Testament different aspects of the ministry of Christ are foreshadowed through people and events.

--Hebrews 10:1 speaks of the law as a "shadow" of a greater reality that would come through the ministry of Christ.

--Romans 5:14 refers to these foreshadows as "types" of Christ

--Hebrews 9:9 speaks of the law as being "symbolic for the present time..." until the ministry of Christ.

--in the book of Ruth there is a deep level of symbolism that points to Christ in a powerful way!
--Boaz is a type of Christ, Ruth is a type of the church (the spiritual body of Christ), and Naomi is a type of Israel.

--in the context of the downward spiral of Israel seen in the book of Judges, the book of Ruth is a beautiful, refreshing illustration and foreshadow of the reason God is preserving Israel – to fulfill His plan of salvation through Christ whose birth and second return are linked to Israel's existence!

--we'll look at various aspects of this symbolism through our study of Ruth, but the most powerful foreshadow is found in the reality of the law of redemption and the levirate marriage...

--Boaz redeemed Ruth's property (paid the price to buy back her family property) so that she could be his bride.

--Christ redeemed us (paid the price for our debt of sin) so that we could be His bride... and enter an eternal marriage relationship with Him!

--seeing salvation in Christ through the love story of Ruth highlights the element of love in the gospel... the heart of the gospel is the deep, tender love of an eternal marriage between us and God!

--which is one reason there won't be human marriage in heaven... as Jesus said, "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven." (Matthew 22:29-30)

--in heaven we will sit at the "marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9)

--OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF RUTH WITH SELECT INSIGHTS INTO IT'S DEEPER MEANING

--1:1 Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. 2 The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi...

--Elimelech and Naomi's two sons both married Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah

--then Elimelech and his two sons died, leaving three widows in Moab, Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah

--1:6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had visited His people by giving them bread.

--Naomi then tried to talk her daughter-in-laws into staying in Moab because she thought it would be difficult for them to find husbands in Israel, probably because they were Moabites...

--Moabites were a nation cursed by God and Israel's perennial enemy.

--we'll look at the deeper significance of Ruth's Moabite ethnicity in part 31

1:13: Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me! [figuratively speaking since she lost her husband and two sons] 14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and **Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.** 15 And she said, "Look, **your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.**" 16 But Ruth said: "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.** 17 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." 18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her. 19 Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem.

--we'll look at the significance of these statements in conjunction with chapter 2:11-12

1:19 ... And it happened, when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was excited because of them; and the women said, "Is this Naomi?" 20 But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. 21 I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

--Naomi was focused on the negative in her life, but little did she know how God was working underneath the surface, and that soon everything would be turned around in a wonderful way that she could have never imagined (not just Ruth's redemption by Boaz but how the testimony of their lives would point to Christ!)

--application in our lives... how often do we focus on the negative in our lives when God is working beneath the surface in ways far greater than we could imagine?

--the greatest way that He is working is preparing our eternal future with Him!

1:22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. **Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.** 2:1 There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz. 2 So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor."

--The Law of Gleaning: "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger." (Leviticus 19:9-10)

--glean: "to pick up grain left by harvesters"

--providentially, Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest, and Ruth unknowingly gleaned in a field belonging to someone who could qualify to be her kinsman redeemer.

And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." 3 Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And **she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz...** 5 Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" [he noticed her] 6 So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, "It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. 7 And she said [that is, Ruth had previously told Boaz's servant], 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house." [Ruth proved to be a virtuous woman, not only in her loyalty to Naomi but also in her work ethic]

--it would have been clear to Boaz that he was a near kinsman because of Ruth's relation to Naomi, but being that he was a generation older than Ruth, it was not appropriate that he approach her and offer to be her kinsman; she had to approach him and ask him.

--Boaz did, however, show great kindness to Ruth...

8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. 9 Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn." 10 So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

11 And Boaz answered and said to her, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. 12 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.**"

--Ruth was on this providential path because she chose to forsake the false gods of her native land and turn to the Lord (in contrast to her sister-in-law, as Naomi told her, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods..." -1:15)

--when she left Moab, it appeared that prosperity awaited her sister in Moab (better prospects for a husband) and poverty and hardship awaited her and Naomi in Bethlehem, but it turned out to be just the opposite!

--it is the same in our lives... Matthew 6:33-34: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

13 Then she said [to Boaz], "Let me find favor in your sight, my lord; for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants." 14 Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, **"Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar."**

--Boaz gave her a gourmet snack of bread and wine, which was also symbolic... as we'll see in part 31.

So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her; and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back. 15 And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves [the area that had not been harvested yet... the law of gleaning only required landowners to let the poor gather from the field after reapers passed through it], and do not reproach her. 16 Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."

--Boaz goes way out of His way to show kindness to Ruth – "Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her"

--the way that Boaz shows kindness to Ruth and waits for her to ask him to be her Kinsman Redeemer is symbolic of how the Lord showed kindness to us before we were saved... He waits patiently for us to turn to Him as "His kindness leads us to repentance..." (Romans 2:4)

17 So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. 18 Then she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied. 19 And her mother-in-law said to her, "Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you."

--to Naomi it appeared as if Ruth had just won the lottery because of how much barley she brought back and the joy she no doubt displayed.

So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, "The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz." [Ruth was oblivious to the significance of his relation to her family] 20 Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Blessed be he of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!" And Naomi said to her, "This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives."

--not only did Ruth stumble upon a kinsman who was qualified to provide redemption, but she found great favor in his sight.

--while Ruth was naive and didn't know the significance of Boaz's relation to her family, Naomi immediately knew and then went on to explain what Ruth needed to do to ask Boaz to be her Kinsman Redeemer.

6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her. ... 10 [Boaz's answer...] Then he said, "Blessed are you of the LORD, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. 11 And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman. 12 Now it is true that I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I."

--under the Law of Redemption and Levirate Marriage, the near kinsman was not obligated to act as the Kinsman Redeemer, and since there was a nearer of kin he had to be given the opportunity first.

--for some reason the nearer kinsman was unwilling to be the Kinsman Redeemer so the opportunity passed to Boaz and he accepted.

--Boaz evidently thought that Ruth could have attracted a wealthy younger person, but Ruth was spiritually minded and chose the path of marriage through the Law of Redemption...

--another symbolic highlight... Ruth chose Boaz and forsook options that could have been more appealing to her flesh, and when we choose to follow Christ, of whom Boaz was symbolic, when we become His bride, we forsake the world and things more appealing to our flesh...

--and because Ruth chose to marry Boaz she became a key link in God's plan of salvation, for Boaz and Ruth had a son... "4:13 the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son... 17... And they called his name Obed. **He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.** ... 19 [*the book of Ruth ends with the genealogy of King David who is the key figure of the next section of Israel's history*] 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."

--and not only was Ruth an ancestor of King David, but if you continue following the genealogy after David you eventually reach Jesus...

--genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1:1-16: "... Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was **Rahab**, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was **Ruth**, Obed the father of Jesse, 6 and Jesse the father of King David. ... 16 and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ."

--perhaps one reason Boaz had a heart for Ruth (a Gentile of the cursed Moabites) was because Boaz's mother was the Gentile harlot Rahab who turned to the Lord in faith as Ruth did! (Hebrews 11:31)

--in conclusion, to summarize the book of Ruth... Boaz and Ruth's child formed a link in the genealogy of Christ and their life formed a picture of salvation in Christ... which we'll explore further next week in part 31.

--Boaz redeemed Ruth's property (paid the price to buy back her property) so that she could be his bride.

--Christ redeemed us (paid the price for our debt of sin) so that we could be His bride...and enter an eternal marriage relationship with Him!

--the heart of the gospel is the deep, tender love of an eternal marriage!