

Talks – Ruth, romance and revelation – myfishbites.com

Ruth, romance and revelations

This is a talk on the romance of Ruth and God's message in it all – from the book of Ruth! Thanks for much of this content must go to Chuck Missler and Khouse, but it's so good, I wanted to share it more widely!

This talk takes parts from the Bible as we walk through – you can add some Bible bits in that seem right or you can get people to read it all the week before... well, if you're a very optimistic youth or student leader!!

Romance

The book of Ruth is a great romance. Most blokes may want to switch off here, but stay with it.. One day it will be worth it – we've got a lot to learn! The story of Ruth is a great romance and it would make a great movie, which could easily be updated. Forget the best romantic movies you've ever (or never) seen, this one is amazing!

Commitment

In Chapter 1 of Ruth we find that Ruth makes a commitment to her mother-in-law, to stay with her and to learn from her, follow her God. Very often the first thing God is looking for is for us to commit to him. Many people aren't very committed. So God will honour you if you always try to do what you say and follow God no matter what! We'll see later how Naomi reflects Israel. A commitment to Israel is a good idea for us!

Ruth 1.17 – Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."

Genesis 38

There was a tradition called the 'Levirate Marriage'. In this, a woman whose husband died could ask or be married by her husband's brother so that the woman could have a child. In Genesis we find Tamar, whose husband died, having a child (deceptively) with her father-in-law who had failed to provide her with a husband after her own husband died. All a bit seedy, but this kept the line of Judah going (in the line to Jesus!)

Building on this kind of tradition, the Hebrews had something similar called "Go'el" (see Jeremiah 32.8-12 for more) which meant that any rights someone had that they were unable to perform, could and should be taken up by a next of kin (like a brother). This person would have to 'redeem' (purchase) land that had to be sold. It developed to mean that the "go'el" would also have to raise offspring if the original person died without any children. Phew! This is important, because we'll see more about this later!

However, also hidden in the original Hebrew text of Genesis 38 are five names in order. These are found each time in 3 characters, each of which are at exactly 49 letter intervals in the text. In order, these words are: Boaz, Ruth, Obed, Jesse and David. This is the exact line between Boaz and King David, and in line to the Messiah – Jesus!

Chapter 2

In Chapter 2 of Ruth, we find that Ruth goes to a field to pick up leftover grain. This was a tradition that had been established under the Jewish Law. When people picked up grain, the poor were able to pick up bits from behind. Ruth 'just happened' to choose the field of Boaz. We say 'just happened' because the Bible tells us that a man's steps are ordained by God (Proverbs 20.24) and so are a woman's... In many ways, you can picture the movie where the handsome Boaz, this noble yet single man (no doubt looking for the right woman) looks up and sees Ruth. The Bible does say in Genesis (talking about Adam and Eve) that God 'brought the woman to the man' – this is exactly what God did here. Clearly, Boaz and Ruth clicked. Listen, if you're looking for the right man or woman to marry, just stay faithful and let God make it happen – you'll know!!

Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, "Who does that young woman belong to?"

In modern days, someone may say, "Who's that new girl here. She's fit, where did she come from?!!" (Or something like that!) The attraction seems to be both ways between Boaz and Ruth.

For the lads, lessons from Ruth 2

Boaz does lots of things for Ruth and so lads, this is quite a good pattern to check out:

1. Boaz went to speak to Ruth. You can't get to know someone you don't speak to!
2. He tells her to hang around in that field and not go somewhere else. In modern day terms, this is like saying, "stick around, there's lots of good people in this church, I'm happy to help you."
3. He told the other men not to lay a finger on Ruth (protecting her)
4. He gave her great favour to drink and eat. He even made sure she had extra. He went beyond what was normal to value her and care for her, making her know she was special.
5. In verses 11 and 12, Boaz commended her, made her feel valuable and engaged with her for who she was, getting to know (or at least try!) the inner woman.
6. When Ruth got home, Naomi, her mother-in-law asked, "*Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!*" Lads – take note of the phrase, "who took notice of you." Every woman needs to know she is valuable and beautiful. Notice her – compliment her – value her!

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, Naomi realises it would be good for Ruth to ask Boaz to marry her. This would also help return Naomi's land to her, as well as being a good thing for Ruth – and Boaz! If you can see that something is a good thing and it's in line with God's will then pray, then go for it, asking God to stop it if it isn't right. The people who go forward in life are those who take opportunities and don't let fear hold them back. Be like Ruth and be someone who goes for it!

Ruth is obedient to her mother-in-law, Naomi and does exactly what she says. Note that when God asks you to do something, we should obey exactly! Ruth lay down at Boaz's feet as Naomi had said. Ruth then asked Boaz to "spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer of our family" (verse 9). This wasn't a sexual move, it

was her making known her desire for marriage. Some people wrongly believe this was sexual – usually secular commentators. But this is completely untrue. We know this because there is no clue of Ruth asking for or any actual sexual activity in the text – but Boaz acts very honourably in agreeing to look after her and going out of his way to do so.

So why did Ruth ask him to spread the corner of his garment over her? The ‘hem of the garment’ showed the level of importance of a person. This is why in the New Testament that the woman that had problems with her period wanted to touch Jesus’ garment. She recognised the authority he had. Additionally, we know that there was a custom of covering a bride with a ‘tallith’, or fringed garment (see Ezekiel 16:8). This is still part of Jewish matrimonial rituals to this day. Ruth was asking Boaz to fulfil his duty, as a “Go’el” to marry her and take care of her, to ‘cover’ her and protect her.

Boaz was blown away as clearly he was older than Ruth. He’d found a Godly woman and made sure that he made his intentions clear to marry her. But, there was a problem, a twist in the plot! Someone else had a claim to be the kinsman-redeemer if they so wished. The marriage would be on hold until Boaz could sort this out.

In verses 16-18, we read, “Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her and added, “He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, ‘Don’t go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’” Then Naomi said, “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.”

The six measures of barley meant that Boaz would go to work on sorting this, just as in the same way God ‘worked’ to make the world in 6 days. Boaz would not rest until this was sorted.

Chapter 4

Boaz was very clever. He told the kinsman-redeemer that Naomi had returned and was going to sell her land. The nearest kinsman said he would redeem the land. Then Boaz threw the curve ball – oh, by the way, if you want to redeem the land, you have to marry Ruth as part of the deal... The kinsman wouldn’t do this as he didn’t want to risk losing his own estate. So, in sight of the other people watching on at the town gate (the place of business, a bit like the shopping centre today), the kinsman redeemer removed his shoe, showing that he couldn’t fulfil the deal but handed it to Boaz to fulfil.

So Boaz married Ruth – the end of a beautiful love story.

God’s love for us

Before moving on, let’s read something interesting in Matthew 1.3, Matthew 1.5-6 and then Matthew 1.16. This is the genealogy (the line) of Jesus:

Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron,

Hezron the father of Ram...

...Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah’s wife...

...and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

We know from the Colossians 3.11 that we are now one in Christ – we have been made new. Jesus came to this earth as a baby, born to a woman publicly suspected of adultery, without a home, in what was effectively a feeding area for animals. Very quickly he had to flee to another country and become a refugee. The line of Jesus includes some interesting characters – people who sinned in all kinds of ways and people who were rejected. On the Cross, Jesus ‘became sin’ and paid the price so that we could have life in him (if we say yes to Jesus). Jesus identifies with all your pain, your sin, rejection and hurt. He never sinned, but he loves us so much that he was born in a line of people who sinned – prostitutes (Rahab, mother of Boaz), those who slept with their father-in-law (Tamar) etc. He does the same for us – he wants to use you and me to bring his love to others, to spread his fame, name and glory.

The great thing for Ruth is that she (and her husband and sons) became part of the line to Jesus. This is why the story is such a beautiful story. It’s about love, but it’s also about God’s massive love for you and me.

Revelations and deeper meanings behind the story of Ruth

The picture in the book of Ruth is of a kinsman-redeemer (Boaz, the son of Rahab, who represents Jesus) who willingly goes out of his way to marry Ruth (the gentile bride) while Naomi also benefits (the representation of Israel). Note that Ruth does not replace Naomi. Nor has the church replaced Israel.

Jesus was our “kinsman-redeemer”. So this means, he paid the price on the Cross to enable us to be right with God (if we choose to say yes to Jesus). Ruth was a gentile and so she reflects the gentile ‘bride’ of Revelation, the church. But Naomi is still there, a Jew born in Bethlehem. She represents Israel. God hasn’t finished with Israel.

Let’s look at these interesting facts behind the facts of Ruth (from Chuck Missler, Genesis DVD or download) which will give much more (and more complex!) background to all these points!

1. In order to bring Ruth to Naomi, Naomi had to be exiled from her own land. The same happened for Israel which was exiled from their own land for a time.
2. What the law could not do, grace did (Romans 8.3). The kinsman (legal redeemer) didn’t redeem Ruth, but grace in the form of Boaz did.
3. Ruth does not replace Naomi. The church has not replaced Israel.
4. Ruth learns of Boaz’s ways through Naomi. In John 4.22, Jesus said to the woman at the well, *“You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, **for salvation is from the Jews.**”* (emphasis added)

5. Naomi meets Boaz through Ruth. Many Jews have come to faith through the church as well as in many other ways – these are called “Messianic Jews”. The Bible tells us that God will move in a mighty way in Israel to turn the hearts of the Jewish people back to the true Messiah, Yeshua.

6. No matter how much Boaz loved Ruth, he had to await her move. Jesus loves you and me, but he needs us to respond to him and accept him. As Christians we must love and show that love to Jesus – we do this by obeying him, helped by the Holy Spirit in us.

7. Boaz, not Ruth confronts the ‘Nearer Kinsman’. One day, Jesus will defeat Satan. In fact, Galatians tells us he’s already done it. Matthew tells us Jesus says, “It is finished.” But at the end, Satan will be destroyed once and for all.

Credits – ‘The Book of Genesis. An Expository Commentary.’ Volume Two, DVD Volume Seven (also available as a download). Dr Chuck Missler. Koinonia House, www.khouse.org