
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1, 2023

Deep Dive: God Preserves His Purposes

The story of a remnant in the days of failure

History Repeats Itself

- The accounts in the Book of the Judges are a tragic story of repeated failure. For 340 years, generation after generation failed to fulfill the purpose for which the LORD God had brought them into the Promised Land.

God Preserves His Purposes

- In the midst of repeated generational failure, the Holy Spirit reveals, through the story of Ruth and Boaz, how God preserves “the purposes of His heart through all generations”—despite the recurring failure of those generations.

*The statement
“Again the
Israelites did evil
in the sight
of the LORD . . .”
occurs seven times
in the accounts of
the Judges—and
many more times
in the following
centuries.*

- The story of Boaz and Ruth takes place in the early days of the accounts of the Judges. We know this because the father of Boaz was Salmon and his mother was Rahab.

Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab).

Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth).

Obed was the father of Jesse.

Jesse was the father of King David.

Matthew 1.5-6a

- We also know that already the Israelites had acted with evil in the sight of the Lord because the curses Moses had predicted (Deuteronomy 28) were already being fulfilled.

In the days when the judges ruled in Israel, a severe famine came upon the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah left his home and went to live in the country of Moab, taking his wife and two sons with him.

Ruth 1.1

An Eternally Determining Present

*But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever,
the purposes of his heart through all generations.*

Psalm 33.11

- We have previously stated that the plans and purposes of God began before human history and have an *eternally determining fulfillment* for all humanity at the conclusion of human history .

- However, it is also true that, because every generation and every person within each generation has a God-assigned role to fulfill, the plans and purposes of God also have an eternally determining fulfillment in the *present*.

- These truths converge in the story of Boaz and Ruth. We find their story placed directly in the mainstream of Old Testament salvation and messianic history.¹ Therefore, their lives are directly linked to the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”² and, thus, the destiny of those whose names are written in the Book of Life of the Lamb.³

¹ Matthew 1.1-17 ² John 1.29 ³ Revelation 13.8

The Story of a Remnant

- The story of Boaz and Ruth is also a story of a remnant and how God sustains His purposes through unfaithful generations. Their story reveals what it takes to be part of the remnant through which God continues “the purposes of His heart through all generations.”

Covenant Allegiance

- Ruth comes into the story of Israel through a forbidden marriage. And yet, even in the failure of two generations (Elimelech and his sons), Ruth, in her heart (even if in limited understanding), became connected to the destiny ordained for Israel by the covenant-keeping God.

- Note the extreme nature of her words and their parallel to the vows of marriage covenant—

But Ruth replied, “Don’t ask me to leave you and turn back. 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. Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!” (1.16-17)

- Ruth was adamant about forsaking every other aspect of identity related to country, heritage, and culture. She embraced an absolute identity with Israel (even if it was poorly represented by an embittered Naomi). In faith, she was willing to go wherever and into whatever circumstances that decision would lead her.

- Ruth's heart had received the grace of God with such transforming effect that no cost or difficulty was so intimidating as to make her shrink back.
- Ruth of Moab becomes the testimony of one who possesses an undivided heart of covenant allegiance to the purposes of God.

Covenant Faithfulness

- In Isaiah, God declared that He makes known the end from the beginning. In the story of Boaz and Ruth we discover that, despite the unfaithfulness of generations, God had embedded what was necessary for His redemptive purposes to continue through a faithful remnant.

- In going to Moab, Elimelech had abandoned and forfeited his assigned place in Israel. God, however, in the *Book of Instruction*, had provided a means for the redemption of that forfeited heritage through the actions of a redeemer-kinsman.¹

¹ see Leviticus 25.23-28; Deuteronomy 25.5-10

- When the nearest kinsman declined to fulfill that obligation, Boaz demonstrated a heart of covenant faithfulness to the laws that God had put in place through Moses. Whatever other plans Boaz may have had for his future, he set them aside to fulfill the requirements of the Law. Like Joshua, he was obedient to all of the demands of the covenant commanded by Moses.

*Then Naomi said,
“Wait, my
daughter, until
you find out what
happens. For the
man will not rest
until the matter is
settled today.”*

Ruth 3.18

Covenant Capacity

- Walking in covenant faithfulness accomplishes a work of grace that creates within us the capacity to be used by God to fulfill His purposes.
- Covenant allegiance on Ruth's part led to covenant direction on God's part; He ordained her into the next step of His purposes for her: to glean in the fields of Boaz.

- Marrying a Moabite woman was not in Boaz's plans, but it was in God's plans and it was God's purpose for their (Boaz and Ruth) generation. Faithfulness to fulfill the Law of Moses placed Boaz in the spiritual position that the redemptive purposes of God could be executed through him.

- The story of Ruth's covenant allegiance and Boaz's covenant faithfulness reveals that we can never go any further into God's blessing and purpose than where we are in our covenant commitment to Him.

A Beautiful New Testament Fulfillment

- In Boaz and Ruth, ancestors of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 1.5b), we see Jew and Gentile, brought together as one in Christ (see Ephesians 2.11-18), a beautiful fulfillment of God's purposes reclaimed and God's ultimate promise given to Abraham fulfilled: *"and through your seed all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me"* (Genesis 22.18; cf. Galatians 3.16).