

Parallels in Ruth

The book of Ruth is very much a parable about the redeeming of the Bride of Christ. The characters all have very appropriately meaningful names, and the parts they play reveal who or what they represent in the larger scheme of the Bible, which we can gather through seeing the patterns that recur throughout the Bible.

The book takes place during the barley harvest, which is representative of the time of Pentecost, of the ingathering of Bride.

Name	Meaning of Name	Who/What Represented
Elimelech	God of the King	
Bethlehem	House of Bread (or grain, or food)	God's kingdom
Moab	from the mother's father, referring to the incestuous relationship of Lot and his eldest daughter that resulted in the birth of Moab.	Sin
Naomi	to be a delight, pleasant, agreeable, beauty	God the Father
Mara	bitter, from a root meaning a trickle, as during the distillation process	
Orpah	Mane, back of the neck (stiff-necked)	Those of God's church who did not become the bride – 5 foolish virgins
Ruth	Friend, a female associate, from a root meaning to tend a flock, graze or pasture, shepherd.	The Bride of Christ, Spiritual Israel
Chilion	Pining, destruction, consumption, or failing	
Mahlon	Sick, weak, or afflicted	Physical Israel, before Judah split
Boaz	Fleetness	Christ
Obed	Serving, from a root meaning work in any sense.	
The Un-named Kinsman-redeemer		The tribe/nation of Judah

There is a split that occurs when Orpah does not follow Naomi, but Ruth does (after the pattern of the 5 foolish virgins and 5 wise virgins of Matthew 25).

Gleaning – this is how we gather the word, here a little, there a little (Isaiah 28, 9-13). Christ makes sure extra food falls in our path to gather, as Boaz makes sure to do for Ruth. He also tells her not to glean in any other field – the field of Christ is all we need to be nourished on.

Most occurrences of the word Kinsman in the book of Ruth have the meaning of a Redeemer, not just that of a relative. Boaz redeeming his virtuous woman is symbolic of Christ redeeming his bride, which he comes to marry at Pentecost. The redeemer must be a close relative. Abraham sent to his own country to find a wife for Isaac.

The question comes up, who is the nearer kinsman than Boaz? We are not given a name here (he is referred to only as “so and so” or “such a one”, and who/what does he represent? He is referred to as a brother, and as he is a close relative, this is likely literal, not a figurative brother. Most likely an older brother, since he had a right to the inheritance before Boaz did. He was willing to redeem Elimelech’s property until he found out that Ruth came with the package, then he backed out, saying that he would ruin his own inheritance by doing so. Was he worried about losing what he had through his current wife, that she might disown him? Is this of the same pattern of Esau selling his birthright to Jacob? I do not think so, as Esau despised his birthright (inheritance), and the near kinsman loved his own birthright overly. It doesn’t match up. One commentary I read said that this nearer kinsman was the old covenant, which was not able to redeem us as Christ can in the new covenant. This seems closer, but maybe not all the way there – I think it can go further. Mahlon, Ruth’s first husband, was symbolic of the nation of Israel, whom Christ married first, then later divorced through infidelity. We do not know whether Mahlon [sick, weak or afflicted] was true to Ruth before his death, but the nation of Israel did die in a sense after it’s infidelity to God, as Christ split the nation up into two sister nations. The nearer Kinsman would be Judah, Israel’s sister, whom Christ married after writing Israel a ticket of divorce. Who worships their own inherited traditions instead of God? The Jews, just as the near-kinsman did not want to ruin his own inheritance. Christ also ended this second marriage when he died and allowed in the Gentiles. Would not Ruth be considered a Gentile, coming from Moab? This would leave Boaz, symbolizing Christ, coming to redeem and marry Ruth, who is spiritual Israel. She is the virtuous woman. Neither Mahlon (Israel) or the near-kinsman (Judah) was able to be worthy of producing offspring with Christ. But the opportunity was offered to both of them first.