

RUTH - A PROPHETIC PARABLE

RUTH - A PROPHETIC PARABLE

RUTH
A PROPHETIC PARABLE

The specific message of Ruth
to the 21st Century Church

SIMON PEASE

“In days to come His people will understand this clearly”

(Jeremiah 23:20, 30:24 – Good News Translation)

Christian Publications International

Copyright © 2020 Simon Pease

All rights reserved.

The right of Simon Pease
to be identified as author of this work
has been asserted by him in accordance with
the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act
1988. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

First published in Great Britain by
Christian Publications International
an imprint of
Buy Research Ltd., Salisbury House, Station Road, Cambridge, CB1 2LA

Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version®.
Copyright © 2005 by Zondervan. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

www.christian-publications-int.com

Readers are encouraged to compare assertions in all CPI books with the clear witness of Scripture. CPI offers this book as a contribution towards continuing study of the inspired Word of God, which the publisher considers to be the final 'court of appeal' in matters of faith and doctrine.

ISBN 978-1-78926-512-5

Printed in Great Britain by Imprint Digital, Exeter
and worldwide by CreateSpace.

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

Acknowledgements	9
Introduction	13
Ruth as a prophetic parable.....	13
Terminology.....	13
Approach to understanding prophetic types	15
Boaz	17
Messiah foreshadowed.....	17
Yeshua, famine and harvest.....	17
Ruth	19
Her relationship to Boaz.....	19
Ruth and Harvest.....	20
Mercy over judgement	22
Naomi	25
Her family and relationship to Boaz	25
Famine and Naomi's family.....	25
Harvest and Naomi	27
Naomi's relationship to Ruth	28
Boaz, Ruth and Naomi	31
Boaz and his approval of Ruth's actions.....	31
Boaz and his workers	32
Kinsman-Redeemer	33
The responsibilities of kinsman-redeemer	33
Covenants and Messiah's two comings.....	34
Prophetic significance of Isaiah 61.....	36
Summary – redemption and kinsman-redeemer.....	40
The other claimant	41

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

Orpah.....	45
Her relationship to Naomi, Ruth and Boaz.....	45
Harvest and Orpah.....	48
Three journeys – A summary.....	49
Final reflections on harvest.....	51
Reflections on the bride.....	53
The Lord’s perspective on the book of Ruth.....	55
Appendix A – Replacement Theology.....	57
Attitudes to the Jews and prophecy.....	57
Replacement Theology – The bigger problem	60
Appendix B – Choosing which God to follow	65
Appendix C – Mapping the character relationships.....	69
Appendix D – A biblical basis for Gentile believers helping Jews	71
Appendix E – Author’s use of terminology	75
Appendix F – Further reading.....	79

PREFACE

The book of Ruth is seen, rightly, as a wonderful romance. In addition, the character Boaz has long been understood as a “type” of Jesus.

But is there a deeper and more urgent sub-text to help believers in the 21st century?

- How does the book of Ruth speak into the often-vexed relationship of Jew to Christian?
- What is the Christian’s fundamental responsibility to Jewish people?
- Who is YOUR “kinsman-redeemer”?
- Is your church a Ruth church – or an Orpah church?

RUTH - A PROPHETIC PARABLE

To Ginny,
in appreciation of your love,
support and encouragement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to give a big “thank you” to all those in the Foundations family who have made helpful suggestions and contributions to this work. They know who they are, and wish, as I do, that all the glory goes to Yeshua.

RUTH - A PROPHETIC PARABLE

FOREWORD

by Rev Alex Jacob, CEO of CMJ

The Biblical story of Ruth has the power to engage with people at many different levels and in many different ways. Over the years there has been a long list of Jewish and Christian writers who have sought to teach from this story. Perhaps the greatest example from the recent past is Don Finto in his book *'Your People Shall Be My People'*.

Today you can add the name of Simon Pease to this list, as Simon has done an excellent job in this little book of presenting the story of Ruth as a 'prophetic parable' and in so doing challenges the Church community to stand in solidarity with the people and nation of Israel.

Simon has a clear Jesus (Yeshua) centred hermeneutic, and he takes great care in dealing with the key characters and cultural background within the story, in order to bring out numerous important spiritual truths.

In Jewish life, Ruth is mostly read during the Feast of Shavuot (Pentecost) but whenever you read the story of Ruth you will be blessed by seeing God's amazing sovereignty worked out through family relationships and expressions of great loss and love. I am sure this book by Simon will encourage many to read the story of Ruth through 'fresh eyes' and will enable many to reflect on the true implications which flow from honouring this text.

Rev Alex Jacob
The Church's Ministry among Jewish People (CMJ)

RUTH - A PROPHETIC PARABLE

INTRODUCTION

RUTH AS A PROPHETIC PARABLE

The book of Ruth is one of the most well-loved in the Bible. Action-packed and fast-moving, it recalls a Gentile woman's sacrificial love for her Jewish mother-in-law, her risky migration to another country, and her life-changing encounter with a man of great kindness and generosity. First and foremost, it is a passionate love story, but it is also about enduring friendship between historical enemies, exceptional faith, and the Lord's power to restore and heal. Like so many great stories, it climaxes in a cliff-hanger of high drama before delivering the desired happy ending. Read in isolation, then, Ruth is an inspirational true romance. But read in an altogether broader context there is a powerful message concerning God's covenantal purposes. Ruth, after all, is one of the ancestors of the Lord Jesus. Beyond this, her true story contains "signs and markers" pointing towards the work of Jesus and into end-time realities. In this light, the story of Ruth is one of pressing concern to our own era.

Not surprisingly, a great deal has been said and written for the benefit of believers concerning the spiritual truths contained in this wonderful gem. Rather than repeating what has already been said, we are going to look at this story from a different perspective – that of a *prophetic parable*. The idea that we shall explore is that the key players in Ruth's story are prophetic *types* for people who are central to the sweep of Biblical revelation. Not only that, there are important messages for believers to not just understand, but consider and act on in response to the Lord's personal leading.

Terminology

Our journey down this path requires us to be considered and accurate in our use of terminology. Unfortunately, much common Christian

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

phraseology tends to cloud our understanding, so I have deliberately chosen to employ some terms which may at first seem alien, but which I believe are ultimately helpful in avoiding confusion. To start with, I have opted to refer to the Lord as Yeshua or Messiah, rather than Jesus or Christ. This is because Yeshua was the Lord's actual name, meaning in Hebrew "the Lord saves", whilst Messiah is a thoroughly Jewish concept and therefore historically and Biblically accurate. The importance of this will become apparent when we explore the important theme of "kinsman-redeemer" in Ruth. We also use the correct term the "Tanach" to describe the Jewish Bible, consisting of the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings (or "Psalms"). The Tanach was how Yeshua described the Scriptures¹, whereas the Christian term "Old Testament" is misleading in many ways, not least because most of God's great Biblical covenants still remain in force today.

A term which causes even more confusion is the word "church" - an unfortunate translation of the Greek "ecclesia". This was due to King James' insistence that the Bible translation bearing his name should emphasise the meeting places for the religious institution of which he was the head, rather than the people of God, whose head is Messiah Yeshua. In the New Testament, "ecclesia" conveys the sense of an assembly, community or gathering of the "called out ones" - in other words it refers to believers. Whilst state or institutional Christianity may include true believers among its congregations, it should be abundantly evident that much of the activity carried out under the umbrella of "church" has little or nothing to do with the Holy Spirit led life of faith in Messiah. For that reason, I have opted to use the terms "Christendom" or "Christianity" to refer to the religion of man, and "believers" or "true believers" to refer to Yeshua's genuine followers. This is not mere hair-splitting, and the reason for this distinction will become clear later.

Yeshua and Boaz are forever associated with "Bethlehem of Judea,"² part of God's covenant gift of land to the Jewish people. Politicians, the

media and theologians may refer to this area as the “West Bank” or “Palestine”, but it was historically part of the nation of Israel which later divided into two kingdoms. Following the San Remo Conference in 1920, the member countries of the League of Nations unanimously established that this (and a territory far greater than modern-day Israel) belongs by international law to the Jewish people.³ A century has now passed since the San Remo Conference affirmed the Balfour Declaration of 1917, yet the international community has consistently refused to live up to its own legal obligations. Therefore, according to Bible prophecy, one day the Lord Himself will put the nations of this world on trial for their illegal actions in seeking to divide His land.⁴ We will therefore refer either to “the land of Israel”, “Judea” or “the land” when discussing the part it plays in the book of Ruth, both literally and in prophetic typology.

Approach to Understanding Prophetic Types

Yeshua made the astonishing claim that the entire Hebrew Bible was about Him, stating that “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”⁵ This, therefore, is the key to unlocking the types, shadows and prophetic parables contained in the book of Ruth. The approach we shall take is to first ask where Yeshua most obviously appears in type – in other words, which character most resembles Him. We will explore the spiritual significance of elements in the story which reflect something of Messiah’s person and ministry. The God of the Bible is passionate about His relationships with people. Therefore, by examining the relationships of the various characters within the story, we can see how the key players are also prophetic types of people groups whose story is important to the Biblical narrative, such as the Jews and believers. These relationships in turn will encourage us to dig deeper into the important spiritual themes which the story touches upon.

An analogy for our approach might therefore be that we are

RUTH - A PROPHETIC PARABLE

following a *breadcrumb trail*. Each breadcrumb leads us another step along the journey. The beauty of this method, I believe, is that it encourages us to dig deeper into Scripture and enjoy the Lord's revelation for ourselves. We can learn to receive more directly from Him rather than simply relying on the insights of others, no matter how valuable they may be. After all, Yeshua said that His Spirit would indwell us to lead us "into all truth"⁶ and remind us of "everything I have said to you".⁷

BOAZ

MESSIAH FORESHADOWED

Most believers, if asked who most closely resembles Yeshua in the story of Ruth, would no doubt reply Boaz. The similarities between him and Yeshua are easy to identify. Boaz is thoroughly righteous, taking care of his own people and welcoming a stranger from a people with a long history of hostility to his own. He is a model of generosity, kindness and compassion. A Jewish man from Bethlehem, of the lineage producing King David and Israel's Messiah, he performs the role of "kinsman-redeemer" regarding his relative Naomi. We shall look at what this means in depth later on.

Let us now introduce one of the most important themes in the book of Ruth.

Yeshua, Famine and Harvest

Famine and harvest are threads which run throughout the narrative. They are the reason behind Elimelech's family leaving the land and Naomi's return with Ruth. So, food is clearly important. This should prompt us to ask what Yeshua has to do with food, and perhaps remind us that He said "I am the bread of life."⁸ Appropriately, Yeshua was born in "Beit Lechem" (Bethlehem), meaning "house of bread". He told His disciples at their last Passover together that the unleavened bread they were to eat represented His body,⁹ and at other times described Himself as living water for people to drink.¹⁰ Yeshua's words are the "words of eternal life",¹¹ Messiah is the "Word of God"¹² and He is the bread that came "from heaven and gives life to the world".¹³ The great Biblical festivals instituted by the Lord in Leviticus 23 were both feasts and "appointed times" of meeting with Him. Being in close fellowship with Him is always something to enjoy and be celebrated! Two of the festivals, First-Fruits and Latter First-Fruits (Pentecost), were

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

specifically associated with harvest.

The Tanach also hints at these relationships by describing a time when there was “a famine of hearing the words of the Lord”¹⁴ in the land. We will explore this theme in depth later, but for now let us simply pose a question. Could, in some way, famine indicate the Lord’s absence, and an abundant harvest His presence?

RUTH

HER RELATIONSHIP TO BOAZ

Ruth is the central figure of the story, which prompts the question of her relationship to Boaz. This leads without too much difficulty to whom she represents in type.

Ruth was a Gentile woman who came to faith in the God of Israel and was drawn by God to Boaz, the man who took her under his protection and married her. Therefore, if Boaz represents Messiah, who does the New Testament say is His bride? The answer is clear - “the called-out ones” (ecclesia, usually translated “church”), who are also described as His body.¹⁵ There is no contradiction between these terms, for a husband and wife become “one flesh”.¹⁶ So, the relationship of Boaz and Ruth is a love story building up towards a marriage. This is exactly how the New Testament portrays Yeshua and His followers.

Are there other clues in the story which confirm this interpretation? Here are a few suggestions:

- Boaz first demonstrates kindness to Ruth. We love the Lord because He “first loved us”.¹⁷
- Ruth is a Gentile. Most believers are Gentile.
- Naomi places Ruth’s child on her lap. This is both literal and a Hebrew idiom referring to adoption. Gentile believers are adopted into God’s family, made “fellow citizens with God’s people”,¹⁸ and “grafted in”¹⁹ to the olive tree with the believing, “natural” Jewish branches.
- Boaz gives everything to Ruth, including His entire inheritance, loving her unconditionally. The Lord Yeshua gives us everything we need and we become sons of God together with Him and co-heirs of His inheritance.
- Ruth gives herself completely to Boaz. True believers live for

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

Messiah and are devoted to Him. This is what it means to be “holy”.

- Ruth was previously married to another man. Believers are those who formerly belonged to this world, but through putting their faith in Messiah have died to their old lives of slavery to sin and live as free people. Ruth’s journey to Israel, leaving her pagan past behind, is another way the story conveys this message.
- Ruth’s decision to help Naomi return to the land requires courage, self-sacrifice and faith. True believers walk with God, for “faith without deeds is dead”.²⁰ Although she may not have understood it at the time, Ruth was following the Lord’s prompting in staying with Naomi. Yeshua leads His followers to the “promised land of salvation” and said that “my sheep listen to my voice”.²¹
- Ruth is commended by Boaz for not running after younger men. She was drawn to his person, standing and character, rather than his outward appearance. It is stated of Yeshua that there was “nothing in his appearance that we should desire him”²² in a passage which goes on to describe his terrible suffering of crucifixion. True believers are those who bow at the foot of the cross and gaze on the broken and bloodied Lord who gave His life for them. There are “younger” and possibly more “showy” religions that are superficially more attractive to a world hostile to the one true God. Yet the plan of salvation, the wisdom of God, is “foolishness” to the world at large.²³

Ruth and Harvest

Ruth’s first encounter with Boaz is during the barley harvest. Yeshua Messiah was raised from the dead on the day of “first fruits” at the beginning of the barley harvest, which was followed by the festival of Shavuot (“Pentecost”), celebrating the start of the wheat harvest and the giving of the Torah. On this day, the Holy Spirit was poured out, because the Word of God and the Spirit are an unbreakable bond.

RUTH - HER RELATIONSHIP TO BOAZ

Believers are born again when they receive the Holy Spirit, who seals us for our future resurrection when we shall become as Messiah. Yeshua also spoke of the salvation of souls as a harvest.²⁴

Boaz helps Ruth by encouraging her not just to glean food from the edges of his fields at harvest time, but even from among the sheaves. Yeshua is the Word of God, and Scripture is the Word of God, therefore “man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord”.²⁵ Scripture is spiritual food. Some believers may be able to live and thrive on the gleanings of the Word of God, living simple lives of faith, but perhaps little more. However, the Lord desires that we should go deeper into His Word - like Ruth, we are also invited to harvest from among the sheaves. A question for personal reflection, therefore, is whether we belong to those who glean at the edges, or instead seek good, solid, spiritual food.²⁶

What might it mean to “go deeper” into the Word of God? Ruth, a Gentile, is found gleaning in a field where the Jewish workers are harvesting the sheaves and leaving the gleanings. Could this perhaps hint at Jewish people potentially having an advantage when it comes to understanding Scripture? As the Bible is a Jewish book, many Jews undoubtedly have a closer connection to its cultural and historical background. The highly respected Bible teacher, David Pawson, has told the story of a Jewish lady who came to faith in Yeshua at one of his meetings. Immediately she began to share insights with him about how the Tanach points to Yeshua in ways he had not considered before! Perhaps we Gentiles are more expansively blessed by our Jewish brothers and sisters in the Lord, in ways that we are presently blind to?

More significantly, Gentile Christian Biblical interpretation has historically been heavily influenced by Greek philosophy, which is completely alien to the intent and meaning of the original authors.^a Is there a need for Gentile believers to unlearn the “traditions of men” by taking advantage of Hebraic methods of interpretive exegesis and, in so doing, be more greatly enriched by the Word of God?

Mercy over Judgement

Ruth is a Moabite, a race of people who were so hostile to the God of Israel that they were barred from fellowship under the covenant terms of the Torah.²⁷ How could Boaz, a righteous, Torah-observant man, take such a woman to be his wife?

Boaz foreshadows Messiah, who loved us whilst we were still God's enemies²⁸ and brought us near through His covenant of grace. There is no greater love than laying down your life for your friends,²⁹ except for sacrificing yourself for your enemies. Yet Yeshua was without sin, meaning that He was obedient to the Torah. So, how can Boaz foreshadow Him whilst apparently setting aside God's command?

Within the Holy of Holies, at the heart of the Jewish Temple was the Ark of the Covenant, containing the tablets of stone on which God engraved the commandments. However, covering them is the "mercy seat", demonstrating that "mercy triumphs over judgement".³⁰ The Lord's desire and practice has always been to favour mercy. The most dramatic demonstration of this in the Gospels is when He saves the life of the woman caught in adultery. Messiah is also someone who is happy to reach out to Gentiles or those not fully Jewish, such as the Samaritan woman at the well. Boaz exhibits precisely these traits. His own mother, Rahab, was a Gentile who was welcomed into the Jewish community because of the faith she demonstrated at the siege of Jericho. He was therefore grateful to the Lord for His grace, and willing to extend this to Ruth.

Finally, Moses prophesied that an even greater prophet would come after him, and that the Jewish people should listen to and obey everything He taught. This implies (and is understood by some Jewish religious teachers to mean) that Messiah would develop the Torah further. This is what Yeshua did with His teaching of "the sermon on the mount", as well as forever changing the way Jews and Gentiles can approach the Lord. In this way too, Boaz prophetically foreshadows Yeshua.

RUTH - HER RELATIONSHIP TO BOAZ

Boaz's admiration and regard for Ruth began when he observed her kindness towards his relative Naomi. If Boaz represents the Lord Yeshua and Ruth believers, are there people which Messiah particularly desires His followers to treat kindly? Of whom is Naomi therefore a prophetic type?

^aSteve Maltz's book "How the Church Lost the Way" examines the intriguing story of how and why Christianity intentionally distanced itself from a Jewish understanding of Scripture, and explores the tragic consequences which resulted from this.

RUTH - A PROPHETIC PARABLE

NAOMI

HER FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIP TO BOAZ

The book of Ruth starts by telling us about the life of Elimelech and his family. Elimelech is a Jewish man living in the land of Israel, who decides to leave with his wife and two sons due to a famine. They go into exile to the land of Moab, where they settle. The two young men marry Gentile women – Ruth and Orpah respectively, but tragedy strikes when they and their father die, leaving Naomi as the only survivor of the original family. In her despair and sense of abandonment, Naomi asks people to call her Mara, meaning “bitter”. Despite her suffering, some good comes from it, for her daughters-in-law are introduced, through her, to the God of Israel.

Using the approach we have taken with Boaz and Ruth, what group of people might Elimelech’s family represent? In type, they are Jewish people who departed Israel when there was a famine of the Word of God (Yeshua Messiah) in the land. Living among the Gentiles, they suffered extreme hardship and few survived. Nevertheless, they made the God of Israel known to Gentiles. Surely this is an uncannily accurate description of Jewish history from the time of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple all the way through to the Holocaust, when two thirds of European Jews were murdered!

Famine and Naomi’s Family

Before we continue Naomi’s story, the typology of famine deserves further reflection. How might this spiritually represent the departure of the “Word of God” from Israel and how it relates to the Jewish dispersion among the Gentile nations? Let us consider this with respect to the three persons of the Godhead.

The Holy Spirit first came to indwell believers when He was poured out in Jerusalem on Jews who heard and received Peter’s call to

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

repentance at Pentecost. Later however, following persecution, Jewish believers were scattered among the Gentiles, to whom they brought the Gospel. Paul's approach to evangelism was initially to preach the Gospel in the Diaspora synagogues, where interested Gentiles also heard his message, but eventually the Gentiles became the focus of his ministry. The book of Acts therefore records how the Holy Spirit shifted His attention from the Jews in Israel to the pagan world.

Yeshua ascended into heaven only weeks after His resurrection, departing the land. At His death, the Temple curtain had been torn open, giving Jew and Gentile direct access to the Father. Jewish historical records indirectly confirm the essential message of the Gospel record. They describe how the scarlet cord^b attached to the Temple door on the Day of Atonement no longer turned white from the time of Messiah's death until the Temple's destruction around forty years later.³¹ Once Messiah had died as an atonement for sin, the Temple sacrifice no longer applied. In effect, Father, Son and Holy Spirit had largely departed from the land within only a few decades after Messiah's death. Therefore, interpreting the literal famine in the book of Ruth in terms of a spiritual famine of the Jewish people in the land of Israel seems appropriate and very poignant.

For those who believe that the church has replaced the Jews, this is where Mara's story (representing Jewish history) should end. "Replacement Theology" is an important subject and its beliefs are indirectly refuted in a number of ways in the Book of Ruth. However, to avoid a lengthy diversion, we address this separately in Appendix A.

^bEvery year, on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the priests would use a scarlet cord to symbolically represent the sins of the people. One part would be attached to the Temple door, and the other tied to a goat. The priests would lay hands on the goat to symbolise transferring the people's guilt and sin to it, before banishing it from the city of Jerusalem and sending it into the wilderness. (This is where we get the term "scapegoat" from). Yeshua's death as the atonement for the sins of the people outside the city walls is the true fulfilment of what the scapegoat prophetically foreshadowed. Until Yeshua's death, the Lord had performed the miracle of turning the scarlet cord attached to the Temple door white, thereby showing that He accepted Temple sacrifice as the basis for forgiveness.

NAOMI – HER FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIP TO BOAZ

Harvest and Naomi

If we hold true to Scripture and maintain that it uses a consistent approach towards prophecy, we should see this principle at work in our study of Naomi. And so we do. Therefore, just as Bible prophecy concerning the judgement and restoration of Israel are both true, so too do we see this reflected in the typology of Naomi's story. She also represents the Jewish remnant who return from exile among the Gentiles to her homeland. Naomi's description of herself as "bitter" hints strongly at the terrible physical, emotional and spiritual pain of those Jews who left Europe for a new homeland in Israel after the Holocaust.

Once back in the land, the Lord begins to restore Naomi's life. It is through Boaz that she regains her home and property. She becomes part of a larger, extended family and is blessed more at the end than the beginning. Likewise, on account of their relationship to Yeshua, the Jewish people will finally receive their inheritance as they settle permanently in their own homeland, and will be blessed more greatly than all nations,³² becoming the heart of an extended spiritual family which includes Gentile believers.

If the departure of Elimelech's family due to famine reflects the Lord's turning from Israel to the Gentiles, Naomi's return to the land at a time of harvest surely also speaks of the Lord's final return to the land and the pouring out of His Spirit on His people. Jews and Gentiles alike must put their faith in Messiah. It is therefore fitting that Naomi, like Ruth, comes to know her redeemer Boaz as a result of a harvest in Israel.

One of the subtleties of Naomi's story is that she, like many of today's Jewish people, returns to the land in desperation yet unbelief. Many Bible prophecies confirm that Jewish trust in Messiah will come later, when they are "grafted back in" to their own root.³³ The "valley of dry bones" dramatically illustrates how the Lord will bring His people out of their "graves" living among the Gentiles and finally bring them to life

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

by putting the breath of His Spirit into them.³⁴

Understanding the Lord's love for the Jewish people and recognising how Naomi prophetically foreshadows them explains Boaz's response to Ruth's care and compassion for her. In type, Yeshua is pleased with believers who treat the Jewish people kindly^c. Let us therefore now consider Ruth and Naomi's relationship to each other.

Naomi's Relationship to Ruth

The relationship between Naomi and Ruth foreshadows the relationship between the Jewish people and Gentile believers.

Whilst believers rightly emphasise their coming into relationship with Yeshua, we all too easily ignore the fact that this would never have happened without the teaching of the Gospel and our receiving the Word of God. We have the Jewish scribes to thank for their meticulous preservation of the Tanach for the blessing of the entire world, and it is from the Jews that Messiah, the apostles and the Gospel message have come. As Yeshua Himself said, "salvation is from the Jews".³⁵ Without the Jewish Scriptures (including the New Testament, which is almost entirely authored by Jews), we would have little or no understanding of Messiah. The story of Ruth reflects this truth in the way that she, a Gentile, first comes to know about the God of Israel through her relationship with the Jewish family of Elimelech.

A vital theme of Scripture, fully developed by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, is that of "one new man" in Messiah.³⁶ God's purpose was always to reach out to all humanity, not just the Jews. Through Messiah the wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile is removed. The relationship of mutual care and affection between Ruth and Naomi

^cIt might be argued that the Lord is pleased when believers extend mercy to any and all, irrespective of background and race. Of course this is true. Yet the Lord has made a particular demand that we are to bless His (chosen) people even when - and perhaps particularly when - they refuse to acknowledge Him. This is an inescapable matter of singular importance to all believers.

NAOMI – HER FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIP TO BOAZ

illustrates this beautifully. They help each other. Just as Naomi plays an essential role in Ruth's introduction to the God of Israel, Ruth's assistance in helping Naomi return to the land followed by her own developing relationship to Boaz is critical to her mother-in-law's restoration. In spiritual type, Gentile believers play an important part in introducing Jewish people to their own Messiah.

Gentile believers are today conflicted over how best to help the Jewish people recognise Yeshua. Should it be through practical help, sharing the Gospel, or both? This question arises in part due to sensitivity concerning the appalling history of Christian anti-Semitism and persecution. Scripture teaches us to share the Gospel with Jew and Gentile, to demonstrate Messiah through how we live, and to help the Jewish people in practical ways in gratitude for the spiritual blessings we have received from them.³⁷ Ruth's story should encourage us, because her assistance to Naomi is of both a practical and spiritual nature. Ultimately, she introduces Naomi to Boaz, but it is the Lord who choreographs the script of her life, so to speak.

Reflecting on this story from a twentieth-century historical perspective, the Jewish return to the land was made possible largely by the efforts of British believers who took Scripture seriously, leading to Lord Balfour's declaration in 1917. Tragically, Britain as a nation has since behaved shamefully toward the Jews. However, this does nothing to diminish the importance of God's sovereign work through people devoted to Him who shared His love for the Jewish people.

Some believers who take Biblical prophecy literally embrace a model for understanding Scripture called "Dispensationalism". Whilst recognising the Lord's prophetic purposes for the Jews, this also tends to divide them from believers, with some teachers regarding the former as having a future on the earth and the latter in heaven. Dispensationalism emphasises this divide by teaching that believers will be "raptured" before the 7-year reign of Anti-Christ, although various New Testament passages appear to contradict this.³⁸ We believe that

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

this division is not “rightly dividing scripture” but in fact *wrongly* divides scripture.

Rather than focusing on the timing of the “rapture”, perhaps the urgent question true Gentile believers should be asking themselves is how they can stand with the Jewish people in times of increasing anti-Semitism, directed not just against Israel but also against those living in the Diaspora? Paul states directly that salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Jewish people jealous”³⁹ (wrongly translated by some as “envious”) in a passage that strongly suggests that the body of Messiah will live in a truly faithful way which provokes Jews to embrace Yeshua. Might this be more likely to happen if the Lord chooses to use believers to help the Jewish people in their time of greatest need, rather than removing us from the world at the first sign of trouble?

We must of course always be careful to understand Scripture on the basis of what it plainly teaches. Types and shadows, though useful, are simply illustrations confirming the Biblical narrative. With that word of caution in mind, what is apparent from the story of Ruth and Naomi is just how much their welfare and blessing is intimately bound up in their close relationship not just to each other, but to Boaz. Their story emphasises “one new man” and is profoundly illustrated by Boaz’s insistence that his marriage to Ruth is part of the arrangement when he offers to redeem Naomi’s property for her. As a result, both Naomi and Ruth are blessed and united together as family with Boaz. For Messiah Yeshua, having both Jewish and Gentile believers as members of His family and restoring the land of Israel to the Jews are an inseparable package deal!

BOAZ, RUTH AND NAOMI

Boaz and his Approval of Ruth's Actions

Christian teachers rightly emphasise the vital importance of Yeshua's mission concerning the way His atoning death opens the way for all people to know God the Father through faith. However, when we look carefully at the very first Gentiles to welcome Yeshua as Messiah, they share a striking characteristic: all acknowledge the Lord's sovereign election of the Jewish people.

The woman at the well is keen to listen to what a Jewish man has to say regarding the Messiah. The Syrian-Phoenician woman seeking deliverance for her daughter humbly recognises that Yeshua's mission is to the Jews first, and is grateful to receive any "crumbs" from Him. Yet even the Lord's crumbs are more than enough, bringing immediate healing for her child.⁴⁰ We are reminded how the gleanings Boaz left for Ruth fed her and Naomi abundantly.

Remarkably, two centurions feature among those who received most from Messiah. The Lord healed the servant of one, whilst the other (Cornelius) was head of the first Gentile family to receive the Holy Spirit. In both cases, the Bible emphasises how these men showed great generosity and love for the Jewish people among whom they lived, despite being high-ranking military personnel in an army of occupation.⁴¹

In all these cases, we see that Father, Son and Holy Spirit loved to respond with generosity and kindness to those who showed concern for the Lord's covenant people. This is a wonderful affirmation of the spiritual message behind Boaz's approval for Ruth's compassion towards Naomi.

Messiah taught a parable about the "sheep and goats" to illustrate His future judgement of the nations, based on their treatment of His "brothers and sisters".⁴² People debate whether this refers to the

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

treatment of people in general, believers, or the Jews. The context and other similar passages in Scripture suggest that Yeshua had the latter in mind.

We include Appendix D for those who wish to consider further the Biblical basis for Gentile believers to show kindness to the Jews.

Boaz and His Workers

Whilst the future prospect of Jew and Gentile united in Messiah is a glorious one, we have to face up to the painful historical reality that “Christendom” has relentlessly persecuted Jewish people and arguably prepared the way for the Holocaust. This obviously causes Jewish people to be wary of anyone identifying as a Christian, including true believers. Distinguishing one from the other takes time.

In the story of Ruth, not all the Jewish people living in Bethlehem are positively disposed towards Ruth, a Moabite whom they would naturally consider an enemy. Boaz therefore has to firmly instruct his workers not to harass her, as well as telling her to glean only on his land.^d

Yeshua likewise has the wisdom and knowledge to heal damaged relationships, replacing hostility with forgiveness and love.

^dGleaning only on God’s land might be a timely warning to our generation about the dangers of multifaith and interfaith initiatives, where people are being encouraged to “glean” in the fields of others!

KINSMAN – REDEEMER

In our study so far, we have looked at the three principal characters of Boaz, Ruth and Naomi, considering whom they foreshadow - Yeshua Messiah, believers, and the Jewish people respectively. We examined their relationships to each other and saw how closely they confirm the Bible's direct teaching regarding them. We also looked at the typological significance of famine and harvest, and considered briefly how the story of Ruth contradicts Replacement Theology.

Earlier we noted that Boaz is a shadow of Yeshua Messiah, and that he is described as “redeemer” with respect to Naomi. The Hebrew term is “ga'al” and is translated in various ways, including “kinsman-redeemer” and “guardian-redeemer”. This is a highly important yet frequently overlooked aspect of Messiah's ministry, therefore we shall spend some time unpacking its significance. As we have come to expect, Boaz's role as “kinsman-redeemer” prophetically foreshadows that of Yeshua.

The Responsibilities of Kinsman-Redeemer

The roles and responsibilities of a Jewish “kinsman-redeemer” are carefully laid out in the Torah, but there are also times in the Tanach when God Himself is described as acting in this capacity with regard to the Jewish people. “Ga'al” means “closest relative” and, as such, he is tasked with protecting and looking after the interests of his family members. In practice this means preserving their inheritance, which includes restoring their land and property, delivering them from slavery and taking vengeance on their enemies.

In the Torah, the Lord ordained that every 50th year was the “Year of Jubilee”, when the ownership of land reverted back to original families, who in many cases had lost ownership through economic

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

hardship.⁴³ Similarly, those who had been forced into slavery would also be freed at the Jubilee.⁴⁴ In addition to these provisions, a “kinsman-redeemer” was able to redeem and return property back to its original owner before the Year of Jubilee.

To redeem something or someone is to pay the price for their debt, which is what Boaz is willing to do to recover Naomi’s property on her behalf. In the Tanach, the God of Israel is described as Israel’s redeemer when He frees them from slavery in Egypt and Babylon.⁴⁵ A careful reading of the Biblical account suggests that the redeemer is none other than Yeshua, the “Angel of the Lord” – the Father’s visible manifestation on earth.^e

In the Tanach, redemption includes forgiveness for accidentally killing someone, providing the person flees to a city of refuge and waits for the death of the high priest.⁴⁶ This speaks powerfully of our redeemer Yeshua, who paid the price of our sins with His precious blood. We are also adopted into His family, making Him our closest relative and protector when we are born again.^f

Covenants and Messiah’s Two Comings

God’s covenants are central to the Biblical narrative. From the Lord’s perspective these are agreements which He has willingly entered into

^eSteve Maltz’s useful book “Jesus Man of Many Names” explores the identity of the “Angel of the Lord” as being Yeshua.

^fAs the “last Adam” Yeshua is “kinsman-redeemer” on behalf of all humanity, not just Jewish people. God’s covenant was always going to be enlarged! With regard to Yeshua therefore, the meaning of “kinsman” is rich indeed. In the act of becoming human, He identified with every human being, for we are all “made in His image”. Being born a Jew, Yeshua is of course a blood relative to the Jewish people (the Bible never states that He has ceased to be Jewish). Most importantly, however, when we put our faith in Him, our proper relationship to God is restored through spiritual birth. Yeshua’s resurrection from the dead to an incorruptible life on the very day of the Jewish festival of “First Fruits” speaks in type of our being “born again” and provides reassurance of our own future resurrection. Therefore, Yeshua is kinsman to every human and He can redeem anyone.

and solemnly promised to keep. They have legal power and are enforced on the strength of the highest name in the universe – His own. The specific terms of the covenants are therefore important. The New Covenant, for example, was originally made with the Jewish people,⁴⁷ but God’s plan was always to enlarge it to include all of humanity. What can sometimes be overlooked, however, are those aspects of the covenants which are specifically related to the Jewish people and not superseded by the New Covenant. According to His covenant with Abraham, for example, the Lord has pledged that the land of Israel will be a permanent possession for the Jewish people – a covenant specifically confirmed by Yeshua.⁴⁸ In doing so, Messiah is acting on their behalf as “kinsman-redeemer” according to the terms of the covenant.

In “Defending the Jewishness of the Gospel”, David Stern is critical of Gentile attempts at Jewish evangelism which fail to acknowledge those aspects of the Biblical message important to religious Jews. These include God’s on-going purposes for the Jewish people⁴⁹ and the restoration of the land of Israel to the Jews. Does this mean then, that there is a different Gospel for the Jews, as taught by “Dual Covenant Theology”? Not at all! There is no question that the Gospel of repentance from sin and trusting in Messiah’s atoning death is of universal importance, applying to Jew and Gentile alike. However, the Bible is also clear that God has made specific additional promises to the Jewish people, which He will fulfil when they turn to Him by welcoming Yeshua as their Messiah.⁵⁰ The story of Ruth illustrates this by showing that, as a result of Naomi coming into relationship with Boaz, her land and property is finally and permanently restored to her. Unlike Jews, Gentile believers rightly never claim land ownership of Israel or Jerusalem. Our inheritance is our reconciliation and relationship to Messiah (as it also is for Jewish believers). The affirmation of this truth, then, is that Ruth is married to Boaz, but not given property of her own.

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

The Lord's complete practical outworking of His plans for Jews and Gentiles is fully accomplished in the combination of Messiah's first and second comings. At His first coming, He died for Jew and for Gentile as the atonement for sin, fulfilling His mission as the "suffering servant". In doing so, He inaugurated the universal Gospel of forgiveness and freedom from slavery to sin, first to the Jew, and then to the Gentile. This was the "year of the Lord's favour". There is a suggestion that when Yeshua read this message from the scroll of Isaiah, it was during the Year of Jubilee, which occurs once every 50 years in the Biblical Jewish calendar and involves the cancelling of debt. We know that Yeshua literally fulfilled the true meaning of the Jewish religious Spring festivals (Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits and Pentecost) to the very day at His first coming, so this is certainly plausible. The cancelling of debt also reminds us of the role of "kinsman-redeemer" with regard to Ruth's story, although its application here is in regard to sin.

Let us now consider Isaiah's message.

Prophetic Significance of Isaiah 61

"He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."⁵¹

At His first coming Yeshua's ministry was one of breath-taking power, setting countless people free through healing, deliverance and forgiveness. He proclaimed "the year of the Lord's favour" to them in

ways that would permanently alter their lives for the better. Most of all, He introduced them to Himself. He has entrusted this on-going ministry on earth to His followers until He returns. Ruth represents, in type, the Gentile believers who make up the vast majority of those who have benefitted from Messiah's first coming. Getting to know Boaz was most certainly "good news"!

After reading this, Yeshua sat down. The rest of Isaiah's prophecy would not apply until the time of His second coming - a time of God's vengeance on the nations for their hatred of the Jews and Israel. This is also when Messiah will restore the "kingdom to Israel", the question His disciples asked Him on the Mount of Olives before His ascension.⁵²

"...and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion - to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour.

They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations. Strangers will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards.

And you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast. Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.

"For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the Lord has blessed."

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.”⁵³

This is a stunning prophecy which deserves careful and prayerful reflection. We draw attention to a few key points:

Regarding the nations:

The Lord’s *vengeance* upon them, their acknowledgement that the Jews are God’s blessed and beloved people, the giving of their wealth to the Jewish people, and their playing a part in the restoration of the land of Israel. The Lord will do this because of His love of *justice*, avenging the evils done to His people. The Lord’s *righteousness* and praise for His name will be seen throughout the world.

Concerning the book of Ruth, this reminds us of the “kinsman-redeemer’s” role in avenging his family members, Boaz ensuring justice is done for Naomi, and how the Lord uses the Gentile Ruth to assist her return to the land.

Regarding the Jewish people:

The Lord’s healing of their bitterness and pain, replacing it with joy, and the ending of their shame. Their blessing with wealth and abundance, including permanent possession of their restored land as an everlasting inheritance. The fulfilment of their calling to be ministers of God to the nations.

Concerning the book of Ruth, we note how Naomi’s life as Mara (“bitter”) comes to an end when Boaz restores her land and property, blessing her even more through a relationship with him and the gift of a grandson. Regarding the priestly role, we shall see later how Naomi contributes to God’s eternal plan to reach the nations through the part she plays in bringing forth David and His descendant, Messiah Yeshua.

Regarding the Lord (and Ruth):

Is this Yeshua speaking through the prophet Isaiah of being clothed with salvation, righteousness and as a bridegroom? Certainly, the Lord is the One whose righteousness and salvation cause everything to happen according to His plans and purposes. He too is the bridegroom. Boaz, as we have seen, perfectly foreshadows Yeshua in his righteousness, in his bringing salvation to Naomi and Ruth, and in his marrying Ruth.

Bridal wear is also mentioned in the context of praise rising from all the nations to the Lord. Is this a prophetic hint from Isaiah concerning the future, largely Gentile bride of Messiah, which is represented in type by Ruth? This would make sense because, according to Paul, it was still a “mystery” when the Tanach was written, only being revealed later in New Testament times.⁵⁴

Isaiah 61 in Summary

The table below summarises the message of Isaiah 61 in brief:

The Year of the Lord’s Favour (quoted in Luke 4)

Believers (Jew and Gentile):

- Good news
 - Freedom for prisoners
 - Sight for the blind
 - Set oppressed free
-

The Day of Vengeance of our God

Israel (who will come to faith):

- Vengeance on and deliverance from enemies
- Beauty for ashes
- Righteousness
- Return from exile

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

- Restoration of dwelling places and the land (with Gentile help)
 - Foremost among nations
 - Priests of God
-

Summary - redemption and kinsman-redeemer

As we have seen, the role of “Kinsman-Redeemer” is of central significance in the book of Ruth and the Bible as a whole. Yeshua becomes our kinsman when we are reborn. Regarding Gentile believers, redemption means salvation from sin, a new life in Messiah and future resurrection from the dead. For Jewish believers (and one day “all Israel will be saved”⁵⁵) it also includes the fulfilment of all Tanach prophecy – the Lord making good on His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Knowing Yeshua’s character and nature we should expect nothing less, for as Israel’s closest relative He has obliged Himself to redeem them and, in so doing, fulfil all His covenant commitments.

THE OTHER CLAIMANT

In order for Boaz to marry Ruth and redeem Naomi's property, he must first deal with a significant problem. Another man is a closer relative and has a greater claim on Naomi's land. However, Boaz makes marriage to Ruth part and parcel of the agreement and the other man, perhaps not wanting to take the risk of his inheritance passing on to her, turns down the opportunity. Boaz is free to marry Ruth and reclaim Naomi's land on her behalf.

The exceptionally strong use of types and shadows for the main characters in the book of Ruth encourages us to ask whom this other claimant might represent. There is a risk of being overly analytical and possibly reading things into the text which are not present. However, a couple of observations are worth offering tentatively.

There is always a powerful spiritual battle not just for the salvation of believers, but for our on-going faithful walk with the Lord, so that we will one day be the "Bride of Messiah". Ultimately the Lord has us in His hands, for we are sealed by His Spirit, and Yeshua does not lose those His Father has entrusted to Him.⁵⁶ Furthermore, we were called out from our previous life under the dominion of sin and this world. Ruth was married previously, but her husband's death left her free to enter into a new marriage with Boaz, who represents Yeshua. By dying on the cross, Yeshua set us "free from the law of sin and death".⁵⁷ Boaz's offer involves taking a great, though calculated risk, due to his love for Ruth and Naomi. Messiah laid down His life because of His great love for us, trusting in the Lord to raise Him from the dead, and facing the danger that the temptation to rescue Himself from the horror of crucifixion might at any time overwhelm Him.

The other claimant on Naomi's land has at no point demonstrated any care or compassion for Naomi or Ruth, and turns down Boaz's offer

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

apparently out of self-interest. He only wants the land. *Ever since the Lord promised the land of Israel to Abraham and his Jewish descendants, there has been a tremendous battle to illegally occupy and control it in defiance of God.* This battle will continue and intensify right up to the end, when the Lord saves both His followers and His Jewish brethren, taking back the land on their behalf in a final, decisive battle. Ruth's and Naomi's powerlessness perfectly illustrates how the Lord's people will be entirely dependent on His intervention in the last days.⁵⁸

The story's dramatic climax, when Boaz wins his legal battle with the other claimant, therefore appears to reflect the spiritual opposition against Messiah's purposes for His people being fulfilled. Indeed, a public legal showdown or court case to settle the matter is entirely appropriate, as the reliability of all of the Lord's promises (including the land promises) are upheld on the basis of the covenants He has made in His name. Regarding Messiah, we read:

"This is what the Lord says - the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel - to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: 'Kings will see you and stand up, princes will see and bow down, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.'

This is what the Lord says: 'In the time of my favour I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances.'"⁵⁹

Paul confirms this in Romans:

*"For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed."*⁶⁰

Furthermore, the Lord will settle accounts with the nations for their mistreatment of the Jewish people through a court case over which He will preside:

THE OTHER CLAIMANT

*"In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will put them on trial for what they did to my inheritance, my people Israel, because they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land. They cast lots for my people and traded boys for prostitutes; they sold girls for wine to drink."*⁶¹

Replacement Theology and Dispensationalism have each, in their own way, caused Christians to think of themselves as somehow detached from the Jews and what happens to them. However, as previously mentioned, Boaz's decision to inextricably link the redemption of Naomi's land to his marriage to Ruth is a powerful prophetic statement of the Lord's commitment to uniting Jew and Gentile in Him.

RUTH - A PROPHETIC PARABLE

ORPAH

HER RELATIONSHIP TO NAOMI, RUTH AND BOAZ

Orpah's character is fascinating in light of the Biblical types and shadows we have used in this study. Although she appears early in our story, we have left her until last. There are two main reasons for this. First, we need to understand the more obvious and significant types of Boaz, Naomi and Ruth to have the right frame of reference for making sense of Orpah's typology. Second, if our interpretation of Orpah is correct, it has profound and important implications for believers – confirming strong warnings already contained in Scripture. I use the term “Prophetic Parable” to describe the book of Ruth, because I believe it is far more than just an interesting study and spiritual confirmation of prophecy in its own right: as in all good parables, there is a message for us.

Orpah, like Ruth, is a Gentile Moabite woman, who marries one of Elimelech and Naomi's sons. Ruth therefore becomes her sister-in-law. When Naomi returns to the land of Israel, Orpah returns to “her people and her gods”.⁶² It is not possible to return to something unless you have already left it, so although Orpah was still living in Moab whilst married, she had evidently embraced the Jewish faith and the God of Israel *to some extent*. This is all we know about Orpah.

Using Boaz, Elimelech's family and Ruth as types of Yeshua, the Jews and believers respectively, let us now translate Orpah's relationship with each of these in terms of the people whom she might foreshadow. Their respective relationships can be summarised as follows:

The Jewish People (Elimelech's family)

- They come into a close relationship with Jewish people when they come and live among them after leaving the land of Israel.

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

- They embrace some Jewish culture, customs, knowledge of Scripture and understanding of Yahweh.
- They are not fully committed to the Jews and their God. They do not help them return to Israel, and once the Jews leave, revert fully to their pagan roots.

Gentile believers (Ruth)

- They come into close relationship with Gentile believers, appearing outwardly similar to them, but they go their separate ways when the Jews return to Israel.

Yeshua Messiah (Boaz)

- They know something of Messiah's people, the Jews, but never come to know Him personally.

In summary, Orpah represents Gentiles who superficially resemble true believers, appear to have embraced the Bible and its God, but have no personal relationship with Messiah. Furthermore, the Jewish return to Israel is the catalyst for them reverting to paganism.

I believe that Orpah represents much of institutional Christianity (or “Christendom”) and those who claim to follow Yeshua without a saving faith in Him. Culturally we tend to think that people who go to church, have been “christened” or identify their religion as, for example, “CofE” are Christian. Yet to many of these Messiah will say “I never knew you” when they finally meet.⁶³ This, above all, is the most striking aspect concerning Orpah. She has no direct, personal relationship with Boaz.

Like Orpah, “Christendom” is historically an awkward marriage between paganism and genuine Jewish Biblical faith brought about by the influence of Jews in exile among the Gentiles. Its greatest historical mistakes included trying to merge New Testament teaching with the prevailing Greek philosophies of the day, and seeking to mix the Gospel of Grace with “Christianised” versions of Jewish Tanach religious practices. For the purpose of power and prestige, Christendom created

ORPAH

its own professional priesthood, altars, sacrifices and places of worship modelled on the Jewish temple. The Bible consistently teaches that God abhors a mixture, condemning the church of Laodicea for being “lukewarm.”⁶⁴ Just as Orpah is not fully committed to her relationship to the God of Israel, neither is institutional Christianity.

“Christendom” can perhaps be extended to include so-called “Christian” nations. Their way of life, values, cultural beliefs and legal system have been strongly influenced by the Bible, regardless of the extent to which they have correctly interpreted it.

What separates Ruth from Orpah is her love for and attitude towards the Jewish people. Are we therefore claiming that support, today, for the nation of Israel is a salvation issue? Absolutely not! However, Scripture makes it clear that the Lord uses the Jewish people and their entitlement to the land He promised them as a kind of litmus test for our innermost attitudes. Like the cross, they are a stumbling block. The organised *religion of Christianity*, most prominently represented by Catholicism, has all too frequently embraced “Replacement Theology”, denying God’s prophetic purposes and promises to the Jews. The wicked, anti-Semitic words and deeds of numerous professing Christians over many centuries belie their actual rejection of the God of Israel and Yeshua Messiah. Their consistent cursing of God’s people is entirely at odds with their claim to love the Lord.⁶⁵

To be fair to Orpah, although she seems to represent post-apostolic period institutional Christianity, there is no suggestion in the Bible that she is in any way anti-Semitic. Similarly, there are many born-again believers who are persuaded of the Scriptural case for “Replacement Theology” without being personally hostile to Jews.

Nevertheless, the creation of the Jewish state of Israel in 1948 presented Christendom with a profound challenge. Would it embrace or reject this as evidence of the truth of Scripture and the Lord’s control over history? Israel simply exposed the fault-line already present in much of Christian theology and accelerated a split that was already there. The Lord and the apostles constantly warned of a wave of

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

spiritual deception arising from within what we call “the church”. Once the plumb-line of Scripture is discarded, the flock are left defenceless. Believers are often shocked by the speed with which many Christian leaders, denominations and “Christian” nations have discarded Biblical truth and standards within living memory. Paganism is sweeping in as many churches merge back into unsaved culture by openly embracing New Age spirituality and every conceivable belief system hostile to the one true God.

Orpah dramatically illustrates this dilemma. Naomi’s departure for Israel is her defining moment. Like “Replacement Theology”, she sees no future in the Jews returning to their homeland, either for them or herself. To put it bluntly, this is the catalyst for “Christendom” tearing up what remains of its Jewish roots, just as Orpah did when she returned to her “people and her gods”.

Like Ruth and Orpah, who once lived together as a family, the time for a family split is upon us. The Lord calls on each one of us to “come out of” Babylon.⁶⁶ Not surprisingly, true Bible believers are leaving institutional Christianity in droves, seeking out fellowship and like-minded brothers and sisters in the Lord where they may be found. On the other hand, many will choose to stay and try to make the best of an imperfect situation, perhaps even thinking they can improve things. However, the danger of remaining in a community which is increasingly moving away from the Lord is to risk permanently damaging our own faith.

I have therefore included Appendix B to help identify some ways in which we can recognise the infiltration of the world into the church, as well as suggesting things we can do to help hold on to, and strengthen, our faith in these challenging times.

Harvest and Orpah

Orpah is not present for the harvest. Those who do not come to know the Lord are not part of the harvest.

THREE JOURNEYS

A SUMMARY

In studying the story of Naomi's family, Ruth and Orpah, we have seen how each of them travelled on a different journey. For Naomi and Ruth, the ultimate destination was the land of Israel and a close family relationship to Boaz. Orpah, on the other hand, returned to where she had come from.

The illustrations below may be helpful in more clearly demonstrating the prophetic types we have looked at together. A word of caution is needed, however. Types and shadows are intended as pictures to reinforce the plain teaching of Scripture, but, powerful as they are, we should not expect to see a perfect match in every detail.

As an example of this, consider Moses, who is generally considered by Christian theologians to be a "type of Christ". There are many similarities, such as his humility and face-to-face encounters with God, his rejection by his own people, spending forty years in preparation in the wilderness, then returning to save his people and deliver them through the shed blood of a sacrificial lamb. However, if we expect an exact parallel with Yeshua, then surely the Passover event recounted in Exodus would have happened at the time of Moses' rejection, rather than at his return, with his time in the wilderness preceding both?

Similarly, when considering the typology of Ruth, we might argue that many believers come to faith in Yeshua directly, rather than getting to know Jews first, then the God of Israel, and finally Messiah. Yet just as the case for Moses' typology remains valid despite some chronological differences, neither do I consider the above argument sufficient grounds to reject the case for Ruth representing believers, such is the strength of her as a prophetic shadow. In any case, it is through the Bible, recorded and brought to us by Jews, that we are able to understand the God of Israel and therefore make sense of Yeshua's

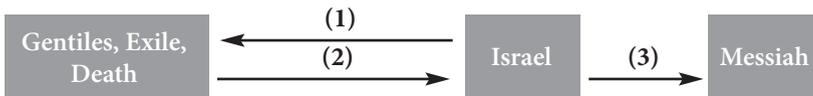
RUTH - A PROPHETIC PARABLE

person and ministry. Without this witness, how would any of us have come to faith in Messiah?

Here then are illustrations for each of the journeys in the book of Ruth with their suggested prophetic symbolism.

Naomi's Family / Jews

Naomi and her family, representing the Jewish people, portray with remarkable accuracy their painful journey into exile and ultimate return to the land, where they will come into a living relationship with Messiah:



Ruth / Believers

True believers, as prophetically foreshadowed by Ruth, walk by faith and live out the Lord's purposes for their lives. They trust in Scripture, believing in God's prophetic purposes for the Jewish people:



Orpah / Christendom

Orpah's journey reflects un-regenerated Christendom. To come into a living relationship with Messiah is more than just having a close acquaintance with Jewish people and some awareness of their God. It means trusting fully in both the written Word of God and Yeshua, the living Word of God, who will keep all His promises to the Jewish people. The Lord's fulfilment of prophecy in recent times has brought into sharp relief just how big a stumbling block "Replacement Theology" really is. For some, Israel is truly a barrier to faith in the true Jewish Messiah of the Bible:



FINAL REFLECTIONS ON HARVEST

We examined earlier how Ruth was able to thrive on the gleanings Boaz provided, although he encouraged her to gather among the sheaves – in type an encouragement for Gentile believers to go deeper into God’s word. Boaz’s Jewish workers could harvest everything, illustrating that the Jewish people have an advantage when it comes to understanding the Bible, based on a relationship with the Lord going back thousands of years. Gentile believers are frequently puzzled that religious Jews cannot see their own Messiah in Scripture, but we know their time will come. In the meantime, Yeshua taught that when Torah-teachers are born again they bring out new and old treasures.⁶⁷ This should encourage us first to recognise that the Tanach has a great deal to teach us, and second, that the Lord is raising up many Messianic Jewish teachers to help us on this journey.

The harvest in the book of Ruth is celebrated in the Levitical festivals of First Fruits and Pentecost. Yeshua was raised from the dead on the very morning when First Fruits was celebrated, just as He died on the day of Passover. The Holy Spirit was, of course, poured out at Pentecost, the very day when the harvest and the giving of the Torah were being commemorated. From this time onward believers enjoy the blessings of the Word and the Spirit. The very first believers from this “former rain” were Jewish, but the vast majority since have been Gentiles, represented in type by Ruth. We look forward to a “latter rain”, bringing in the “fulness of the Gentiles” and “all Israel”, of whom Naomi is a prophetic picture.⁶⁸

That Jews and Gentiles may enter into relationship with a holy God is thanks entirely to Yeshua, who died for us.

"Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee,

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

with a request. ‘Sir,’ they said, ‘we would like to see Jesus.’ Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

Jesus replied, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.’⁶⁹

It is not entirely clear whether the Greeks referred to were Gentile converts to Judaism, Jews living in the Diaspora, or even Gentiles wanting to at least share in the festivities and get as near to God as they could by entering the Court of the Gentiles. Either way, the Lord saw this as a prophetic sign of God’s preparation for the Gospel to go out to Jew and Gentile alike. Very soon, these pilgrims would be able to draw far closer to the Father than they could ever possibly have imagined!

As we know, the harvest did not come without a cost. Messiah had to die so that we might live, but He gave Himself willingly, fully, and without reservation for our sake.

REFLECTIONS ON THE BRIDE

The bridal theme is very important in Scripture and is particularly emphasised with regard to the “bride of Messiah”, although in the Tanach the Lord also describes Himself as “a husband” to the Jewish people.⁷⁰

Regarding believers, Yeshua said that He was going to “prepare a place” for us, using various images from a Jewish wedding to describe our coming into full relationship with Him at His return.⁷¹ Ruth’s devotion to her future husband speaks of the commitment true believers make to the Lord.

Yeshua used the wedding parable of the wise and foolish virgins as an illustration regarding believers being prepared or unprepared for His return. Some believers are looking forward to Messiah’s return and paying careful attention to the signs in the Bible, whilst others are completely uninterested, avoiding the study of Biblical prophecy. Dominion Theology - the idea that the “church” will take over the world for Messiah – together with Replacement Theology, are no doubt among the main reasons for this. This poses a question worth pondering: what kind of bride does not look forward to her wedding day and all this implies?

Dominion Theology reverses the biblical Jewish marriage pattern. In biblical practice it is the groom, or more particularly, the groom’s father, who prepares the “house” that will become the marriage home. Dominion Theology effectively makes it the bride’s responsibility to get things ready, after which she will summon the groom! This is a precise reversal of God’s revealed plan.

RUTH - A PROPHETIC PARABLE

THE LORD'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE BOOK OF RUTH

The story of Ruth and Naomi ends happily, foreshadowing the wonderful future Jewish and Gentile believers shall have together in the Lord. But this is not just a story about personal or even collective blessing. The ending to the book of Ruth shows us the Lord's perspective.

“We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. Through the offspring the Lord gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.”⁷²

Ruth had a calling from God, a part in His plan to build up “the family of Israel”. Boaz’s and Ruth’s son was not just theirs, he was considered Naomi’s too. Obed was the father of Jesse, the father of King David. From his descendants came Yeshua Messiah, who was known as the “Son of David”, and whom David foreshadowed in type.

The historical story of Ruth ends by looking forward to Israel’s great king from Bethlehem in Judea. In terms of prophetic typology this story eagerly anticipates the return of Israel’s great Messiah King. Yeshua once said that He would wait until His own Jewish brethren welcome Him back.⁷³ Gentile believers have a part to play in helping them turn to their own Messiah. Then, as He finally returns to set up His kingdom, Jews and Gentiles may be united in Him together as “one new man”.⁷⁴

RUTH - A PROPHETIC PARABLE

APPENDIX A

REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

Attitudes to Jews and Prophecy

The Tanach teaches that all Jewish people are bound by covenant with Yahweh. They are therefore His people. However, the Tanach also reveals many Jews to have been enemies of God, such as the priests of Baal. The concept of a Jewish remnant is clearly revealed in Elijah's conflict with them and the Lord's reassuring statement that He has retained a faithful remnant of 7,000 worshippers. Paul refers to this in Romans. The idea, therefore, that the Jews as an entire people have been replaced by the church is a fallacy. There have always been Jews who have rebelled against the God of Israel, and there have also been righteous Gentiles (such as Rahab and Ruth). Yet in this period of the "church age", far more Gentiles believe in Yahweh and His Messiah than Jews. This in no way invalidates God's covenants with the Jewish people (see Romans chapters 9-11).

By contrast, according to "Replacement Theology", the Lord has finished with the Jewish people - their return to the land of Israel was never His plan or something He prophesied. This belief is clearly contradicted by numerous passages of Scripture, including many statements in the New Testament and by Yeshua Himself. This is a big subject about which entire books have been written, so we will focus our comments here on highlighting some points which are particularly relevant to the story of Ruth.

Assuming that Ruth is a prophetic parable and that Naomi/Mara does indeed represent the Jewish people, if "Replacement Theology" were true, we should expect Mara's story to end in exile. She would be driven by God from the land and permanently rejected by Him, her only remaining hope being to find some solace in exile among the Gentiles.

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

If this characterisation of “Replacement Theology” sounds harsh, consider this contemporary statement by the popular theologian Bishop NT Wright and the hostile note it strikes:

“God has finally done for Israel what he was going to do for Israel, so now it’s time for the Gentiles to come in.... To suggest, therefore, that as Christians we should support the state of Israel because it is the fulfilment of prophecy is, in a quite radical way, to cut off the branch on which we are sitting... It is a way of saying that in the cross and resurrection God did not actually fulfil his whole saving purpose; that Jesus did not in fact achieve the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.... Say that if you like, but don’t claim to be Christian in doing so.”⁷⁵

NT Wright’s hostility to the Hebraic root is notable for its almost Roman Catholic approach to declaring who is – and who is not – a Christian! Has NT Wright, in the above, sought in effect to excommunicate those who quite simply accept God’s Word as it is written? It perhaps goes without saying that the quotation above represents a false premise and a false dichotomy. The fact that true Christians recognize God’s ongoing purposes for (national) Israel does not mean that those same Christians believe that the cross does not represent the fulfilment of God’s salvation purposes. Such an argument is a non sequitur.

Many theologians and other writers have set out solid grounds for accepting God’s ongoing purposes in and around Israel. Appendix F lists a sample of those who take this revelation of God seriously and at face value.

One cannot help but suspect that NT Wright (and this is not personal to him, the same message applies equally to those that hold to a *fulfilment theology* paradigm – which surely is *replacement theology* in another guise! – has merely codified what was hinted at in another Anglican’s polemic against Hebraic-focused Christians (“Zion’s Christian Soldiers” – by the Rev Stephen Sizer). Sizer also sought to demonize such Christians and for a short time was something of a

APPENDIX A

darling of the “replacement”/“fulfilment” theology wing of the Anglican church – until his unwholesome and unholy links with anti-Semitism were revealed, which put rather a different face on his polemic.

Peter Sammons in his useful book “Rebel Church” notes that attitudes to the Hebraic root are emerging as a key fault line amongst evangelicals, and that the institutional churches’ attacks on Israel will become increasingly shrill and intolerant in the years ahead. Sammons opined “... the rebel church (and very often this means the established/denominational churches) will become increasingly bold and vocal against Israel, and dismissive towards those Jews who know Yeshua (Jesus) as Lord and as Saviour, in the years ahead. Watch this space!”⁷⁶ Sadly we do now seem to be witnessing the outworking of this prediction. Returning to NT Wright and his “don’t claim to be a Christian” judgment we would have to observe that, regardless of his considerable reputation as an “evangelical theologian” on other matters, NT Wright is, on this subject of Israel and God’s ongoing purposes for her, NT Wrong.

The world has always been hostile to God, so Christians should be particularly cautious about uncritically embracing its narratives. “Replacement Theology” often goes hand-in-hand with support for Palestinians against Israel. For the sake of historical accuracy, it is important to note that for nearly 4,000 years there has been a continuous Jewish presence in the land of Israel. The story of Ruth reflects this. First, it never suggests that all Jewish families left the land along with Elimelech. Second, some clearly must have stayed, as indicated by the presence of Boaz, his harvesters and many others in the land when Naomi returned. The popular presentation of Israeli Jews as illegal occupiers and invaders of an existing Arab Palestinian state is widely circulated, but historically false.

Thankfully, the Lord is not deterred from fulfilling His covenant promises on account of misplaced interpretations of Scripture by “Christian theologians”, no matter how erudite they may be. His love,

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

promises and commitment to the Jewish people and their future is firmly established in both the Tanach and the New Testament. Replacement Theology attempts (but fails) to deal with this “problem” by choosing to interpret prophecies concerning the Lord’s judgements against the Jewish people as literal, but treating all God’s promises of their blessing as “spiritual” and applying those to the church. This is clearly inconsistent at best and anti-Semitic at worst.

Replacement Theology – the Bigger Problem

Replacement Theology is usually debated solely through the lens of how God views His covenant relationship to the Jews and believers in Messiah. However, important though this is, Replacement Theology is actually much more profound and far-reaching in its implications than simply a matter of Christendom attempting to steal the Jewish legal inheritance.

If Replacement Theology were true, we should expect to find prominent Messianic Jews (e.g. Jews who believe in Yeshua as Messiah) teaching and promoting it. Yet in my experience, Jewish followers of Yeshua, whilst stressing the equality of Jews and Gentiles before the Lord, all reject Replacement Theology. Messiah taught that those versed in the Torah who become His disciples will bring out of their “storeroom treasures old and new”,⁷⁷ meaning they would bless the body of Messiah by helping them grow through a deeper understanding of the Hebraic approach to Scripture. Yet instead of using this knowledge to affirm Replacement Theology, invariably they employ it to demonstrate its falsehood. In other words, Replacement Theology is a Gentile distortion of Scripture. It does not just replace the Jewish people, but also the Biblical perspective of a Jewish Messiah. It replaces the clear “Hebraic” understanding of Scripture with a “Gentilised” patchwork of Gentile equivalents and alternatives, so producing an unholy mixture that if left unchecked may eventually revert to full-blown paganism.

APPENDIX A

Orpah symbolises this dilemma for Christendom. She is the Gentile who for a time is united through marriage with a Jewish exile, but returns “to her people and her gods”. Furthermore, the catalyst for her return to paganism is the Jewish return to Israel, prophetically foreshadowed by Naomi.

The table below illustrates some ways in which Christendom’s Replacement Theology is much more extensive than just replacing the Jewish people. In many cases it draws its beliefs and practice from a distortion of the Tanach and the New Testament. Many of those who agree with Replacement Theology will disagree with some of the beliefs listed below for Christendom, depending for example on whether one is from a Protestant or Catholic background. However, these distortions do illustrate different manifestations of the same root problem.

Tanach (Old Testament)	New Testament	Christendom
People of God		
Faithful Jews (although all Jews are God’s covenant people), plus Gentiles grafted into Jewish covenant with Yahweh.	Believing Jews, plus Gentiles grafted into Yeshua by faith.	Religious membership through infant christening without personal faith.
Where God dwells		
Eden, Sinai, Ark of Covenant, Holy of Holies (tabernacle/temple).	Within believers.	Church buildings, Vatican.

RUTH - A PROPHETIC PARABLE

Tanach (Old Testament)	New Testament	Christendom
Priesthood		
Levites.	“The priesthood of all believers.”	Professional clergy.
Way to God		
Faith in Yahweh, faithfulness to the Torah, repentance and trust in God’s mercy.	Faith in Yeshua and trust in His atoning death for our sin.	Religious rituals, obedience to clerical “authority”, the Mass.
Prophecy		
Prophecy is literal and will be fulfilled 100%.	Prophecy is literal and will be fulfilled 100%.	Literal curses for the Jews, spiritual blessings for the church.
Nature of God		
Love and Judgement.	Love and Judgement.	Love only (Marcionism).
Future hope		
Resurrection.	Resurrection.	Heaven.
Covenants		
Made with Noah, Abraham (confirmed with Isaac and Jacob), Moses, David, Israel (new covenant).	Messiah confirms the covenants with the patriarchs and David, and upgrades the covenant with Moses to the new covenant.	The new covenant with the church replaces God’s covenants with the Jews.

APPENDIX A

Tanach (Old Testament)	New Testament	Christendom
Kingdom of God		
King Messiah will rule the world from Jerusalem.	Yeshua will rule the world from Jerusalem, but provides a foretaste of the kingdom through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.	The church will establish God's kingdom on earth.
The Gospel		
The Lord's future reign over a renewed creation. Suffering Messiah as atonement strongly hinted at.	Messiah's atoning death on the cross for all who put their faith in Him. His future reign as judge and king.	"Jesus loves you."
Spirituality		
Commitment and faithful obedience to Yahweh only.	Dead to self, alive to Messiah. Rejection of this world's values and alert to spiritual deception.	Focus on self-improvement, blessings and prosperity. Embrace of ecumenism and New Age spirituality.
Theology		
The Word of God alone, as revealed in Scripture.	The Word of God alone, as revealed in Scripture.	Interpreting Scripture through the lens of Greek philosophy or "spiritual experiences."

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

With Christianity coming under ever greater pressure to conform to the world, it does not take too much imagination to see how the influence of Replacement Theology will play an increasingly important role in severing much of the institutional church from its Biblical roots. However, just as Ruth and Orpah parted company, in our day there is also a movement in the opposite direction. The Lord is graciously giving greater understanding of Scripture to Gentile believers, often by using Messianic Jews to open our eyes to truths taught by Yeshua and His Jewish apostles but tragically abandoned or covered up by Christendom.

In the Bible, water is often used in type to represent the Holy Spirit. Yeshua said that the Spirit's ministry is to remind us of everything that He taught us. The Father seeks true worshippers in "Spirit and in truth",⁷⁸ but where truth is not present, false spirits invariably lead people into deception. Foreshadowing this truth, Abraham dug wells in Canaan, because they were essential to life. The Philistines (who lived in the modern-day Gaza Strip, although they have disappeared from history and are physically unrelated to today's Palestinians), opposed Abraham and his son Isaac by targeting the wells and filling them in. Isaac had to open up the wells again for the Lord to fulfil His purposes for him in the land.⁷⁹

Replacement Theology, with its opposition to an authentic Hebraic understanding of Scripture and its hostility to a Jewish presence in the land, shares a remarkable similarity with the Philistines. These modern critics have blocked up the wells. Our job is to co-operate with the Lord in helping to re-open them.

APPENDIX B

CHOOSING WHICH GOD TO FOLLOW

As believers we often tend to be very trusting of those with whom we fellowship, especially those who lead us. However, sincere conviction, passion and apparent good character are sadly not enough to protect us from false teachings and deception.

It is widely assumed that followers of Yeshua and Christendom are one and the same thing, but nothing could be further from the truth. This causes tremendous confusion, to say nothing of damaging Yeshua's reputation. True believers have suffered greatly from this, often wondering why they feel like outsiders within what they regard as God's church. Yet Christendom, strongly influenced by the world's values of power, money and prestige, has frequently sought to stifle Biblically authentic criticism, sometimes subtly and at other times with outright violence and persecution. This helps to explain why countless passages on spiritual deception in the New Testament are mostly ignored by institutionalised Christianity.

Here are some indications that your own church fellowship may be at risk:

- Presenting God as being only about love, but without judgement or discipline.
- Not teaching on the return of Yeshua.
- Avoiding the study of Biblical prophecy.
- Giving the impression Christians will set up the kingdom of God on earth.
- Teaching about health, prosperity and ways to live a more satisfying life, but avoiding the cross.

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

- Seeking ways to learn from and draw closer to other religions.
- Ignoring the Tanach (“Old Testament”).
- Promoting occult and New Age practices as though they were Christian. (Any spiritual activity found in church which resembles New Age spirituality and is not explicitly endorsed by the Bible is likely to be suspect.)
- Emphasising personal experience over the Word of God.
- Ridiculing anyone who warns of deception.
- Failing to properly test “words of knowledge” and “prophecy”.
- Trying to make church attractive to non-Christians by embracing the world’s values, latest fashions or trends and worldly morality (on marriage, divorce and abortion, for example).
- Seeking to impress people with slick presentations, stylish buildings and replacing God-focused worship with concert-style rock music.
- Leaders who regard questioning or disagreement concerning their teaching as “an attack on the Lord’s anointed”.
- Regarding modern-day “apostles” and “prophets” as those who “reveal new truths”.
- Promoting a “gospel” of changing society’s “culture”.
- Using techniques from the world of business and commerce as the primary means to encourage church growth.

The best ways to protect ourselves against deception are to draw near to the Lord and His Word and to be filled with His Spirit. Some practical suggestions include:

APPENDIX B

- Get to know the Word of God, giving it priority over other Christian teaching, no matter how good. Ask for the Lord to open up Scripture to you.
- Test all teaching and spiritual practices against the Bible. Ask the Lord for guidance, discernment and wisdom.
- Yeshua said that all of the Tanach (“Old Testament”, e.g. the Torah, Prophets and Wisdom Literature) is about Him. Search for Yeshua in the Festivals of Israel (“moedim”), Tabernacle and Temple worship, prophecy, types of Messiah, God’s covenants and in the persons of the “Word of God” and the “Angel of the Lord”.
- Find a strong, Bible-based and Spirit-filled fellowship, where discussion and debate are welcomed.
- Be filled continually with the Holy Spirit. Test what you believe the Spirit is saying to you. He will always confirm the Word of God, never contradicting it.

RUTH - A PROPHETIC PARABLE

APPENDIX C

MAPPING THE CHARACTER RELATIONSHIPS

	To Boaz	To Ruth	To Naomi	To Orpah	To Claimant
Boaz		Protection, provision, marriage	Protection, provision, redemption, land restored		Legal conflict
Ruth	Seeks help, devotion, marriage		Family, friend, introduces to Boaz, enlarged family and adoption	Temporary relationship through Naomi's family	At his mercy
Naomi	Relative, seeks his help, blessed	Introduces to God of Israel, family		Introduces to God of Israel, leaves her	At his mercy
Orpah		Temporary relationship through Naomi's family	Marries into family but returns to her "gods" and people		
Claimant	Challenged by him	Does not want to share inheritance	Only wants her land		

RUTH - A PROPHETIC PARABLE

APPENDIX D

A BIBLICAL BASIS FOR GENTILE BELIEVERS HELPING JEWS

Although we reject NT Wright’s support for Replacement Theology, he is correct in saying that many Christians support uncritically the State of Israel because they believe it is the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy. Yet “support” without further qualification is too vague a term, because there is a world of difference between agreeing with every action of a secular nation and supporting the existence of the State of Israel. Most believers I know personally who are “pro-Israel” support the right of Israeli Jews not to be exterminated by the surrounding nations and actively oppose anti-Semitism (hatred of Jews) wherever it is found.

When the Lord states through His prophets that He shall bring a set of events about, then this is clearly His firm will and desire – and He will do it! It should therefore be a cause of great concern if believers choose to oppose, deny or re-interpret the revealed purposes of God. I believe the Bible leaves no other option for true believers than to support the existence of a Jewish nation in their ancestral homeland. Even without Bible prophecy, international law unequivocally agrees with this position.⁹

⁹ The decisions that were made at San Remo in 1920 about the Jewish national homeland were based on the Faisal-Weizmann Agreement of January 1919 on the eve of the Paris Peace Conference from which a number of international treaties became a legally binding reality, including the Treaty of Versailles and the Covenant of the League of Nations. Faisal and Weizmann, who were leaders of the Arab and Jewish worlds respectively, presented their territorial claims (separately) to the Paris Peace Conference in February 1919, which were based on what they had just agreed. The San Remo Conference was an adjunct to the Paris Peace Conference, and decisions made there had the same legal force.

For a full exploration of the background to the international legal status of Israel as a Jewish homeland, we recommend Hugh Kitson’s “Whose Land? Part 1: Foundations” (DVD, Title Deed Media, 2017).

RUTH – A PROPHEMIC PARABLE

Are there other reasons why Gentile believers, following in the footsteps of Ruth, should actively seek to bless the Jewish people, whether in the land of Israel or the Diaspora? Here are just a few suggestions from the pages of Scripture.

- If we are living as the Lord intended, our lives will make Jewish people jealous for their own Biblical faith, causing them to seek Messiah.⁸⁰ This is one way we can share the Gospel.
- Gentiles will help Jews return to the land of Israel, playing a part in the Lord's purposes.⁸¹
- Astonishingly, the person other than Yeshua who is most explicitly referred to in Messianic terms is King Cyrus of the Medes and the Persians – a Gentile! His contribution to the Lord's work was helping the Jewish people return from exile to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.⁸²
- Gentiles have been spiritually blessed to a huge extent by the Jews. We owe it to them to share our material blessings with them.⁸³
- The Festival of Tabernacles celebrates the Lord dwelling among His people. On a personal level this starts when we are born again and the Holy Spirit indwells us. In future, the Lord will require all nations to pay homage to King Yeshua and show respect to His people by participating in the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles in Jerusalem.⁸⁴ We already have the opportunity to align our attitudes with the Lord on this matter.
- In the parable of the "sheep and the goats", Yeshua seems to suggest that His attitude to us will depend on our treatment of the Jewish people.⁸⁵
- As we considered elsewhere, the Gentiles whom the Lord most abundantly blessed in the Gospels and Acts were those who

APPENDIX D

showed care and compassion towards the Jews. They are therefore an example for us.

- Understanding the Bible from a Hebraic perspective will help us to be more sensitive and effective when we have an opportunity to share the Gospel with Jews, as well as greatly strengthening our own faith.
- Gentile believers are “grafted in” to an olive tree with a Jewish root⁸⁶ and should have a humble attitude to the Jews, despite their present unbelief. The Lord will one day reconnect them to their own olive tree, when they shall become our brothers and sisters in Messiah. We have already referred to “one new man” several times.
- The exhortation to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem”⁸⁷ will be fulfilled when the Prince of Peace comes to reign there. He will do so when His people are ready to welcome Him as Messiah.⁸⁸ If we truly long for the Kingdom of God (and surely we must do, for Yeshua taught us to pray “your kingdom come”),⁸⁹ then we should eagerly desire for the King to come and also pray for the Jewish people to share that desire.

In summary, Gentile believers have a distinct part to play in helping Jews come to faith in their own Messiah, which in turn will signal and presage Yeshua’s glorious return and our longed-for redemption by our “kinsman-redeemer”.

RUTH - A PROPHETIC PARABLE

APPENDIX E

AUTHOR'S USE OF TERMINOLOGY

Words mean different things to different people. In this study I have used various terms, employing them deliberately to reflect my understanding. Whilst others may disagree with me for perfectly valid reasons, in the interests of transparency, it is important to clarify the meanings I have attributed to various words and phrases.

Yeshua:

Jesus' actual name was Yeshua, meaning "God saves", and it accurately identifies Him as a Jewish man. Its use therefore seems entirely appropriate in the context of this work.

Messiah:

Messiah is a thoroughly Jewish concept. The Greek term "Christ" as a translation does not do it justice. The argument that we should use "Christ" because the New Testament is written in Greek is not entirely valid. English speakers use an English translation of the Greek "Christos", itself a translation for the Jewish term "Mashiach". We can be sure the apostles, all of whom were Jewish, fully explained the meaning of Messiah to the early believing community. Later these insights undoubtedly received less attention from a predominantly Gentile Christianity.

Type:

Theologians refer to people in the Tanach who resemble Yeshua as "types of Christ", meaning that in key aspects of their lives they resemble Him. They therefore pre-figure Him prophetically. I also use the term "type" in this way, as well as using it to describe the other main characters in the narrative.

Shadow or foreshadow:

The New Testament describes the religious practices of the Torah as a

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

“shadow” of the reality found in Messiah.⁹⁰ I use the terms “shadow” and “foreshadow” in a similar way, although more broadly in scope - to describe people or events in the book of Ruth which find their realisation in the life and ministry of Messiah, His people, and His relationship to them. The terms “type” and “shadow” are arguably to some extent interchangeable.

Church:

I have generally avoided the use of this term as it carries many cultural overtones which confuse the community of believers with buildings and religious denominations.

Christendom:

Under the Roman Emperor Constantine, Christianity became a state religion. In my understanding, “Christendom” conveys the sense of the state having dominion and rule over the lives of people, ostensibly in the name of “Christ”. At its worst, “Christendom’s” legacy includes the Spanish Inquisition, the Crusades and the persecution of the Jewish people. At its best, many countries have been influenced in their world view by the Bible and even incorporated Biblical principles into their legislation. For this reason, many British people, for example, call themselves “Christian” without having a personal faith in Yeshua.

Institutional Christianity:

The Bible describes the people of God in spiritual terms, for example, as the body or bride of Messiah, consisting of those who are “born again”. There is a reference in the New Testament to the community of believers as “the way” – something living and dynamic. However, human beings are prone to create religions with man-made hierarchies and rules. The Holy Spirit in turn has moved countless times to bring about revival, but invariably people have sought to codify and control His work by creating new denominations. I therefore use the term “institutional Christianity” to describe religion where outward form

APPENDIX E

and practice compete with inner renewal. Sadly, when this happens, people may be active and apparently successful participants in the worshipping community without having a living relationship with Messiah.

The Tanach:

The “Tanach” is the term Jews use to describe their Scriptures. It is an abbreviation of the first letters in Hebrew for the three types of literature found in the Hebrew Bible: the Torah (“the law” or Pentateuch), Nevi’im (“the prophets”) and Ketuvim (“the writings” or “wisdom literature”). The Christian term “Old Testament” is misleading because the Bible is founded on God’s covenants. All of these are either initiated or prophesied in the Tanach, and most are still in force today and therefore not obsolete, as implied by the term “old”.

The land of Israel, the land:

“The Promised Land” and its importance to the Jewish people is a central theme in the Tanach. Whilst the “New Testament” majors on the spiritual benefits of Yeshua’s life, death and resurrection for all humanity, it nevertheless confirms God’s covenant promises to the Jews. The ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah have become the modern-day state of Israel. The Bible repeatedly emphasises the importance of “the land”, and this is reflected in modern Hebrew, in which the term “Ha’aretz” (“the land”) and “Israel” are effectively interchangeable.

Hebraic:

One of the greatest challenges facing Gentile Christianity today is to regain a Biblically authentic understanding of our faith. We need to interpret Scripture from the perspective of its original Jewish authors as well as being inspired to live out that faith. I use the term “Hebraic” to refer to this genuine Biblical outlook. This is in preference to using the term “Jewish” because, although Hebraic is Jewish, not all Jewish religious beliefs or practices are Biblically valid. Whilst an Hebraic

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

approach to Scripture is important, we must never forget that the early Jewish Messianic community came to embrace the unchanging truth that Gentile believers do not need to convert to Judaism to be true followers of Messiah.⁹¹

APPENDIX F

FURTHER READING

A Fresh Understanding of Israel - *Adam Raffell and Jacob Vince*,
Malcolm Down Publishing, 2017,
ISBN 978 1 910786 628

Christians and Israel - *The Heart of the Matter* - *David Evans*,
Tahilla Press, 2010, ISBN 9781 907228 087

Defending Christian Zionism - *David Pawson*,
Terra Nova Publications International, 2008,
ISBN 9781901949629

For the Love of Zion - *Christian Witness and the Restoration of Israel* - *Kelvin Crombie*, Terra Nova Publications, 2008,
ISBN 9781901949636

Has God Finished with Israel? – *a personal journey through biblical prophecy* - *Rob Richards*, Terra Nova Publications, 2010,
ISBN 9781 901949674

How the Church Lost the Way - *and How it Can Find it Again* -
Steve Maltz, Saffron Planet Publishing, 2009,
ISBN 978-0-9562296-0-1

Israel in the New Testament: *Extended Edition* - *David Pawson*,
Anchor Recordings Ltd, 2014,
ISBN 978-1909886568

Israel, the Church & the Jews - *James Jacob Prasch*,
21st Century Press, 2008,
ISBN 978-0977953561

Older Younger Brother: *The tragic treatment of the Jews by the Christians* - *Canon Andrew White*, self-published, copyright©2014
Andrew White.

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

Our Hands are Stained with Blood: *The Tragic Story of the Church and the Jewish People* - Michael L Brown,

Destiny Image Publishers, 1992, ISBN 978-1560430681

Rebel Church - Peter Sammons, Glory to Glory Publications, 2013,
ISBN 978-0-9926674-0-5

The Case for Enlargement Theology, *second edition*,

Rev Alex Jacob, Glory to Glory Publications, 2011,

ISBN 97809567831-1-0

The Gospel of Christ Crucified: *A Theology of Suffering before Glory*

John P Harrigan, Paroikos Publishing, 2015,

ISBN 978-0996495516

The Land of Many Names - *Towards a Christian understanding of the Middle East conflict* – Steve Maltz, Authentic, 2003,

ISBN 1-860024-287-1

The Messiah Factor - Tony Pearce, New Wine, 2004.

ISBN 1-903725 321

When A Jew Rules the World: *What the Bible Really Says about Israel in the Plan of God* - Joel Richardson, WND Books, 2015,

ISBN 978-1938067716

Why Pray for Israel? - Ken Burnett, Sovereign World, 2009,

ISBN 978-1852405052

Why Still Care about Israel? - Sandra Teplinsky,

Baker Publishing Group, 2013,

ISBN 978-0-8007-0

TEXT REFERENCES

- 1 Luke 24:44
- 2 Matthew 2:5
- 3 <https://unitedwithisrael.org/today-in-zionist-history-the-san-remo-conference/>
- 4 Joel 3:2
- 5 Luke 24:44
- 6 John 16:13
- 7 John 14:26
- 8 John 6:35
- 9 Luke 22:19
- 10 John 4:10-14
- 11 John 6:68
- 12 1 John 1
- 13 John 6:33
- 14 Amos 8:11
- 15 1 Corinthians 12:27,
2 Corinthians 11:2
- 16 Genesis 2:24
- 17 1 John 4:19
- 18 Ephesians 2:19
- 19 Romans 11:17
- 20 James 2:26
- 21 John 10:27
- 22 Isaiah 53:2
- 23 1 Corinthians 1:18
- 24 John 4:35
- 25 Deuteronomy 8:3
- 26 Hebrews 5:12, 1 Corinthians 3:2
- 27 Deuteronomy 23:3
- 28 Romans 5:10
- 29 John 15:13
- 30 James 2:13
- 31 <http://www3.telus.net/public/kstam/en/temple/details/evidence.htm>
- 32 Isaiah 61:6
- 33 Romans 11:24
- 34 Ezekiel chapter 37
- 35 John 4:22
- 36 Ephesians 2:11-22
- 37 Romans 15:27
- 38 Matthew 24:29-31,
2 Thessalonians 2:1-4
- 39 Romans 11:11
- 40 Mark 7:24-30
- 41 Luke 7:4-5, Acts 10:2-4,22
- 42 Matthew 25:31-46
- 43 Leviticus 25:28
- 44 Leviticus 25:25
- 45 Exodus 6:6
- 46 Numbers 35:25
- 47 Jeremiah 31:31-37
- 48 Romans 15:8
- 49 Romans 11:29
- 50 Romans 11:26-27, Matthew 23:39
- 51 Luke 4:16-21
- 52 Acts 1:6-12
- 53 Isaiah 61:2-11
- 54 Romans 16:25-26, Ephesians 3:4-6
- 55 Romans 11:26
- 56 John 18:9

RUTH – A PROPHETIC PARABLE

- 57 Romans 8:2
- 58 Daniel 12:7, Mark 13:20
- 59 Isaiah 49:7-8
- 60 Romans 15:8
- 61 Joel 3:1-3
- 62 Ruth 1:15
- 63 Matthew 7:23
- 64 Revelation 3:16
- 65 James 3:9
- 66 Revelation 18:4
- 67 Matthew 13:52
- 68 Romans 11:25-26
- 69 John 12:20-24
- 70 Jeremiah 31:32
- 71 John 14:2-3
- 72 Ruth 4:12
- 73 Matthew 23:39
- 74 Ephesians 2:14-16
- 75 *NT Wright: The Way of the Lord: Christian Pilgrimage in the Holy Land and Beyond.* 1999, London: SPCK
- 76 *Peter Sammons: Rebel Church,* p157. 2013, Glory to Glory Publications
- 77 Matthew 13:52
- 78 John 4:23
- 79 Genesis 26 12:32
- 80 Romans 11:13-14
- 81 Isaiah 49:22
- 82 Isaiah 45 1:13
- 83 Romans 15:27
- 84 Zechariah 14:16
- 85 Matthew 25:31-46
- 86 Romans 11:17-20
- 87 Psalm 122:6
- 88 Luke 13:35
- 89 Matthew 6:10
- 90 Colossians 2:17, Hebrews 8:5, 10:1
- 91 Acts chapter 15

