

## Quarter Two: Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy

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### Lesson 11—Ruth and Esther

Sunday: Famine in “The House of Bread”

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- **Last Week:** “Upon Whom the Ends Have Come”
  - Stories from the OT that give us details about end-time events
    - Parallels between the time of the flood & time b4 Jesus’ 2<sup>nd</sup> coming
    - Parallels between Sodom & Gomorrah & the last days
    - Parallels between Abraham’s examination of God’s judgment on Sodom & the saint’s examination of God’s judgment of the wicked
    - The investigative judgment & Christ’s perfect righteousness that covers us during that time
- **This Week:** “Ruth and Esther”
  - Comparisons between 2 OT women and their stories & end-time events
    - Rom 15:4 – “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”
      - Scripture gives us answers
      - Scripture gives us hope
      - We discover lessons in these OT stories for us today
  - **Ruth**
    - Foreigner, used-to-be worshiper of other gods
    - Widow
    - Moves to another country; joins herself to Naomi & Naomi’s God
    - Marries her kinsman redeemer
      - Example of Christ and His church
  - **Esther**
    - Jewish girl, in a foreign land, with foreign gods
    - Stands up against the plotter against God’s people (Haman)
    - Risks her life to save her people

**Memory Text:** “So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, that she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the tip of his scepter” (Esther 5:2, NKJV)

The week in brief:

- 1. **Sunday:** Famine in the “House of Bread” (Jill)
  - Ruth 1 – tragedy / pain in world; entrance of sin & change to our dominion over the earth & suffering in general
- 2. **Monday:** Ruth & Boaz (John D)
  - Ruth 2 – Boaz as the kinsman redeemer
- 3. **Tuesday:** Boaz, as Redeemer (Daniel)

- Boaz wants to redeem Ruth – but there is a closer relative (comparison with Christ & Satan & battle for souls & judgment scene at the gate.)
- 4. **Wednesday:** Haman & Satan (James)
  - Haman desiring position & power & comparison to Satan; comparison to Haman's wrath against the Jews & Satan's wrath against God's end-time people; issue is over worship
- 5. **Thursday:** For Such a Time as This (Rise)
  - Comparison of Esther & God's church, as it emerged from the dark ages & proclaimed the 3 angels' messages at these end-times in earth's history

## Sunday: Famine in “The House of Bread”

Ruth 1:1 – 5; Gen 2:16; Gen 3:19

- Q: The evil in this world – suffering, sickness, tragedy, death – who caused it?
  - John 10:10 – “The thief (Satan) does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”
  - Matt 13:28 = “an enemy has done this”
  - Evil = the result of sin
- Yet, some question God's interaction with that evil. They look at evil & say:
  - God does not exist – if He did, He would see the evil
  - God is not all powerful – if He were, He would stop the evil
  - God is not just – if He were, He would correct the evil
  - God is not love – if He were, He would keep me from being hurt by the evil
- Truth:
  - God **does** exist, and even though evil is here temporarily, He is constantly present in our lives & working
  - God **is** all powerful – yet He allows us free will
  - God **is** just – even with the evil, He overrules events and works redemptively in this world
  - God **is** love – therefore, evil causes Him tremendous suffering
    - Ruth's story = one such example of God working in the midst of tragedy
- Book of Ruth
  - Read in the synagogue during the Feast of weeks, also known as Pentecost

## 6 Takeaways from Ruth (Ruth 1:1 – 5)

- Ruth 1:1a – “Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land...”
  - **Takeaway #1: Sin has consequences**
    - The famine was the direct result of the people's departure from God
      - Their disobedience & idol worship
    - Judges 17:5, 6 – “The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod and household idols; and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. (6) In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”
      - Time of the judges

- Idol worship
  - People acting as they believed was right
- Yet, consequences arose
  - Famine came
- #1: Sin has consequences
- **Takeaway #2: Sin can exist among God's people**
  - Famine was in the land
  - Idol worship had occurred in the land
  - 1 Cor 10:12 – “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”
    - \*think – I’m a church goer, I’m in ministry, I’m safe
  - Ps 139:23, 24 – “**Search** me, O God, and know my heart; **Try me** and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked ay in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”
    - Search = “intimately examine”
    - Try me = “investigate me”
- Ruth 1:1b – “...And a certain man of **Bethlehem**, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.”
  - Bethlehem = “house of bread”
    - Irony that a famine existed in the place that was supposed to have plenty
    - Bethlehem was about 6 miles south of Jerusalem
  - Moabites were descendants of Abram’s nephew, Lot
    - Dragged out of Sodom by angels
    - Wife turned to pillar of salt
    - Incestuous relationship with eldest daughter – nation of Moab was born
  - **Takeaway #3: Lack of faith has consequences**
    - Elimelech and his family didn’t trust God. They left
      - Home
      - Country
      - God’s people
    - Traveled to foreign country
      - Enemies of God’s people
      - Deut 23:3 – “An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the 10<sup>th</sup> generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever;”
    - Heb 11:6 – “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”
    - Rom 12:3 – God has given to every man a “measure of faith”

- Ruth 1:2 – “The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there.”
  - Elimelech = “my God is king”
  - Naomi = “pleasant” (later called Mara, meaning “full of bitterness”)
  - Mahlon = “sickness”
  - Chilion = from root meaning, “to be at an end, finished, spent” – can mean “wasting” or “pining”
- **Takeaway #4: Disobedience has consequences**
  - Elimelech left his country, people, God – to a foreign land
    - Stepped outside of God’s will
  - Yet, God doesn’t leave us in our sin & stuck with those consequences
    - He can work redemptively
  - Lev 26 (like Deut 28) – law of blessing & cursing
    - If we choose to follow God, blessings follow
    - If we choose to persistently push Him away, blessings withdrawn / judgment comes
  - Lev 26:14, 15 – “If you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, (15) and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, (16) I also will do this to you:
    - Appoint terror over you
    - Sow seed in vain for enemies shall eat it
    - Set My face against you & your enemies will defeat you
    - Those who hate you will reign over you
    - Send wild beasts among you
    - Bring a sword against you
    - Send pestilence among you
    - Cut off your supply of bread
    - Lay cities waste
    - Bring land to desolation
  - Is there any hope?
- Ruth 1:3, 4 – “Then Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. (4) Now they took wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was **Orpah**, and the name of the other **Ruth**. And they dwelt there about ten years.”
  - Ruth = “friend” or “companion”
  - Orpah = often understood to mean “back of the neck” or “stiff-necked”
    - Orpah turned back to her own gods
- **Takeaway #5: God still works redemptively**
  - Doesn’t seem like He’s working
    - They left God & went to a heathen country
    - Husband died
    - Sons intermarried with heathen tribe (against God’s counsel)
    - No children born in those 10 years

- Even when we disobey, God offers mercy & forgiveness - & can turn it out for good
    - Rom 5:20 – “...Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.”
    - Rom 5:8 – “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
    - Rom 2:4 – “it is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance”
  - God was going to work redemptively in Ruth’s life – and in Naomi’s life
    - They had choices: God gives us free will
      - Orpah chose to return to her idols
      - Ruth chose Naomi’s God
- Ruth 1:5 – “Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.”
  - **Takeaway #6: At our lowest point, God shows up**
    - Ironically, they left Judah to survive
      - Yet, they arrived in Moab and died
      - Yet, God did not leave them alone
      - Jer 29:11 – “‘I know the plans that I think toward you,’ says the Lord, ‘thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.’”
    - Lev 26:40 – 44 – “But if they confess their iniquity...with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me...if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt—then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land. . . when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away....for I am the Lord their God.”
      - God’s desire to forgive & restore
    - Eze 36:24 – 28 – “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. (25) Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. (26) I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (27) I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. (28) Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.”
    - From an apparently lifeless family (no husbands, no heirs)
      - God sent the Messiah who would bring eternal life to all
- **Truth:**
  - God **does** exist, and even with the evil, He is constantly present in our lives
  - God **is** all powerful – yet He allows us free will
  - God **is** just – even with the evil, He overrules events and works redemptively in this world
  - God **is** love – therefore, evil causes Him tremendous suffering
    - Ruth’s story = one such example of God working in the midst of tragedy

**Takeaways from Ruth:**

- #1: Sin has consequences
- #2: Sin can exist among God's people
- #3: Lack of faith has consequences
- #4: Disobedience has consequences
- #5: God still works redemptively
- #6: At our lowest point, God shows up

Lesson 12: "Precursors" (Plain of Dura, Dan 3 & comparison with Rev 13 & end-time worship)