

Ruth as a Type of Christ

[This is the text of a talk (sermon) given to Main Street Community Church, Frodsham, UK, on Sunday 22 October 2023.]

Introduction

We continue our series of 'types' of Christ found in the Old Testament. **Romans 5:14** [ESV] says of Adam, "Adam, who was a type of the one to come." NIV says "pattern". Greek "typos".

This idea was broadened to include **many people** in the Hebrew Scriptures, and we have already looked at several, including **Melchizedek** last week; thank you, Paul. It became a whole theory called "Typology".

Typology began with the early church thinkers like Irenaeus, who were trying to work out what value the Hebrew Scriptures had. One answer: the Hebrew Scriptures had 'types' or 'patterns' of Christ, people or events that had some essential similarity with Christ and especially salvation. Christ fulfils the 'type' and goes further. Look at the Wikipedia page on Typology to know more.

The **extreme form of Typology** sees the value of the Hebrew Scriptures as ONLY this. I do not. I see much other value in the Hebrew Scriptures too.

This is because I look at patterns of Christ through the lens of **three dimensions of salvation**, not just one. Dimension 1: justification by faith through Christ - the main one that the early church thinkers focused on. Dimension 2: experience of God here and now through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Dimension 3: these so that the whole Creation will be redeemed by Christ-like people. All in Romans 8.

[\[See "http://abxn.org/nv/3ds.html", "http://abxn.org/nv/romans8.html".\]](http://abxn.org/nv/3ds.html)

I have been asked to expound **Ruth** as a type of Christ. When I read through, I felt Boaz was more. Paul W told me he wanted to find female 'types' but I should use the whole book. In fact, I find patterns prefiguring Christ in Ruth as well as Boaz. And also the entire cultural situation. And all five challenge us.

Ruth as Prefiguring Christ

1. **Ruth** willingly and **humbly served and worked hard**. 2:2,17, "And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, 'Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favour.' ... so Ruth gleaned in the field until evening, then she threshed the barley she had gathered and it amounted to about an ephah [22 litres]."

Jesus willingly and humbly served and worked hard, healing and teaching, and also for salvation. e.g. Luke 22:27, "I am among you as one who serves." Matthew 8:23-26, Jesus so worn out that he slept through a storm. Jesus went further, sacrificing his whole self for the salvation of the world. **Do we serve and work hard**; we will if we are motivated by what Jesus wants to do through us, in His work of salvation for the world?

2. **Ruth** had **courage to leave her family and her culture** - what she was used to. So did **Jesus**; he left his family for his preaching and healing life with "nowhere to lay his head", and he 'left' his culture insofar as he showed Father God in a new way. **Are we willing to leave** what we are used to - whether life-situation or limited beliefs? I recall someone who went out as a missionary at age 70!

(I find those likenesses a little weak, however, especially the first, as though it is just my own seeing similarities rather than something essential. The next may be stronger.)

Boaz as Prefiguring Christ

3. **Boaz** is a **redeemer who gave of himself** to redeem Ruth. He gave up his right to the children she would have, for the sake of her husband and father Elimilech.

Jesus gave of himself to redeem. He went further, giving up his whole life. **Do we give of ourselves** so that Jesus can redeem others through us?

4. **Boaz** showed **love and mercy to a despised foreigner**.

Jesus showed love and mercy to the Canaanite woman, the Samaritan woman and perhaps "some Greeks" [John 8]. And Matthew celebrates the fact that Jesus had the gentile Ruth in his ancestry.

Do we love and show mercy to those whom we would naturally see as below us?

The Cultural Situation as Prefiguring Christ

5. Now I want to talk about a slightly different thing. The others have been about individuals, and the person of Jesus, but there is another important theme in the Book of Ruth: **culture and society**.

Ruth not only loved Naomi, but said "**Your people will be my people, Your God will be my God.**" This suggests that she was attracted by the **culture** of Israel - its **attitude** to life and its **mindset** - which presumably she witnessed and felt in her husband and in Naomi.

Culture, mindset and attitude come from the god a people worship. **Yhwh God**, the Creator of Heaven and Earth Whom Israel had the privilege of worshipping, had given laws to live by which are those of justice-righteousness and peace, among other things.

Last week, Paul spoke about Melchizedek, who was King of both *tsedeq* and *shalom* (Salem).

- ◆ *Tsedeq* is translated both justice and righteousness and combine both the public and private (unlike English that separates them). It also has an element of mercy too. Paul Marshall has defined the what *tsedeq* means as "Right relationships among all things in the Created Order." All things: humans, animals, plants, land, etc. For example animals, plants and land are to have sabbaths like people have. And the laws were for all the people, not just the elites or rulers.
- ◆ *Shalom* refers to peace, not just the absence of war but full wellbeing. It is a result of a culture where all things (human, non-human) are in right relationships.

Though separated as concepts, **they go together** in the Reality God has made possible. See Psalm 85, especially verse 10.

This is in contrast to the **culture of the Canaanite nations**, whose mindset was selfishness, elitism, cruelty, competitiveness and war (as depicted in Genesis 14).

It seems to me that Ruth was attracted by the mindset and attitude she saw, of justice-righteousness and peace. This fulfilled the mandate of the people of Israel to be a light to the nations, and the Torah has provision for people to want to join Israel.

Jesus is King of, and governs with, *Tsedeq* and *Shalom*. The well-known words of Isaiah 9:6-7:

"For to us a child is born
to us a son is given
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called

Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace
there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne,
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and for ever.

The zeal of the LORD almighty will accomplish this."

Jesus does indeed fulfil Melchizedek and what attracted Ruth to the God and people of Israel. Jesus is the One Who can bring *tsedeq* "right relationships among all things in the Created Order" and therefore *shalom* to the entire Creation. In our personal lives, in our relationships and in our tending and caring for the rest of Creation. That is the foundation of the three dimensions of salvation.

But **Jesus goes further**, adding a third thing: **agape Love**. Jesus infuses us, our relationships and our caring for Creation with agape love. It is not just a duty and outcome, but a very attitude of self-giving love.

Understanding the Times Now

Now may I make a political statement about the situation that has recently blown up in the Middle East, between **Israel and Hamas**. It is of course dangerous to do so, because I alienate myself from both sides, but this has helped me understand without getting totally blinded and lost in taking sides. It might be helpful to some of you.

God set up (the people of) **Israel to be a light to the nations**, to represent God and God's ways to all peoples. Ruth saw this. This partly fulfils God's promise to Abraham, who deferred to Melchizedek, that through him all peoples would be blessed. Israel as a nation was supposed to show the ways of God and Melchizedek, those of *tsedeq* and *shalom*, among the surrounding nations where the Canaanite mindset of competition and enmity seem to reign. I believe God still intends that, even today. And to some extent, very imperfectly, the current nation of Israel does show something of this.

Hamas has taken the **Canaanite** line of enmity. And the politicians of Israel have **responded in kind** with Canaanite enmity. Enmity breeds enmity, breeds enmity, breeds enmity, in an escalating spiral - except where the attitude of Jesus (and Father God) is found: "Love your enemies." The trio of *agape*, *tsedeq* and *shalom* is the intention of God for all humankind. And Israel is not fully representing God in that.

There is much more to this, of course, but that is my 'big picture' that guides me in understanding situation we are in now.

What About Us?

In exercising that trio of *agape*, *tsedeq* and *shalom*, **we can be like Jesus** as we let the Holy Spirit grow fruit of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness gentleness/humility and self-control", etc. [Galatians 5:22-23]. And we can be like salt and light among people and within the entire Creation. That is why "The Creation waits with eager longing" [Romans 8:19] to experience those in whom the Holy Spirit grows this fruit, led by *agape* love.

So the challenge is **What is our attitude?** Are we letting the Holy Spirit full sway in our lives?

That, I suggest, is what makes even the hard work of Ruth and Jesus worthwhile!

It is the Holy Spirit of God who changes our attitude to be like Jesus - to the extent that we allow it. Let me finish with part of an email that Claire sent me about one way in which the Holy Spirit does this: Galatians 5 (she calls God "Daddy" as in Romans 8):

"I have been taught that Holy Spirit grows all of the 'types of fruit' in us all of the time but that there are seasons where He concentrates on a particular fruit and then concentrates on another one in the next season. From my own personal experience, I agree with this. One suggestion is that we ask Holy Spirit which fruit He is concentrating on in our current season because then we can view each new situation through the knowledge of what we are supposed to be learning.

For example, if Holy Spirit is concentrating on teaching me peace, then I know that the situations I'm going through are designed by Daddy to increase my levels of peace. I am made aware that the enemy will try to steal my peace in the situations but that Holy Spirit will be cheering me on, showing me how to not only keep hold of my current level of peace but also how to increase my level of peace so that I will have more peace with which to enter the next situation, remembering all of the time that Daddy always provides a solution to every problem that He allows us to go through even before the problem arises."

Also available on "<http://abxn.org/ruth.as.type.html>"

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