

**LECTURE 18a: OT WRITINGS—
The Old Covenant *Enjoyed***
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I. Introduction

- A. Purpose:** To show God’s covenant people how to live faithfully in all of life’s circumstances as they hope in God’s faithfulness to fulfill all his kingdom promises.
- B. Two Central Questions:**
1. *In the Commentary:* How did following Yahweh affect the lives of the remnant throughout the history of the covenant?
 2. *In the Narrative History:* How should Israel’s history be understood by those who truly put their hope in God?
- C. The Time of Writing and Shaping:** from Moses (mid-2nd millennium) to the post-exilic, 2nd temple period (mid-1st millennium)

II. Questions of Sequence:

A. Various Arrangements of the Writings

1. *Baba Bathra* 14b (a baraita perhaps dated as early as 2nd century B.C.; found in *Babylonian Talmud*): Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles.¹
2. *Tiberian masoretic codices* like the Aleppo Codex (A.D. 930) and Leningrad Codex (A.D. 1008) + several Spanish compilations: Chronicles, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah
3. *Ashkenazi codices* (from medieval Germany):
 - a. The poetic books: Psalms, Job, Proverbs
 - i. Sometimes Job and Proverbs are reversed
 - ii. Called the “books of truth,” based on an acronym drawn from the titles in Hebrew: תהלים (Psalms), משלי (Proverbs), איוב (Job) yields אמת, “truth.”
 - b. The five scrolls: Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther
 - i. Five short books grouped together in Jewish tradition.
 - ii. Sometimes grouped in the order they are used in the liturgical year:
 - (1) Song of Songs (the Sabbath of the Passover)

¹ *Baba Bathra* 14b is a baraita, which is an ancient tradition found in the Babylonian Talmud (ca. A.D. 500) that dates from around the time of the Mishnah but was not included in it. Roger Beckwith provides a complete evaluation of the textual data and posits that the arrangement of biblical books in *Baba Bathra* 14b most likely originated from a list drawn up by Judas Maccabaeus around 164 B.C. (see 2 Macc. 2:14–15) (*The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985], 121–27, 152–53, 198). For a popular-level, succinct summary of Beckwith’s conclusions, see his “The Canon of Scripture,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 27–34.

- (2) Ruth (before the Torah reading the morning of the Feast of Weeks)
 - (3) Lamentations (the 9th of Ab, commemorating the destruction of the 1st and 2nd temples)
 - (4) Ecclesiastes (the Sabbath of the Feast of Tabernacles)
 - (5) Esther (Purim)
- c. The history: Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles
- i. All narrative written from the perspective of the exile and beyond.
 - ii. Daniel and Ezra-Nehemiah have the only substantial Aramaic sections in the Old Testament.
 - iii. The last verses of 2 Chronicles (36:22–23) and the first verses of Ezra (1:1–3) are almost identical.
- B. Paul House** follows the canonical order of the *BHS*, which, while employing the text of the Leningrad Codex, places Chronicles last as in *Baba Bathra* and the Ashkenazi codices. House suggests that each book in the Writings shows a different aspect of *how to live* by portraying how faith in Yahweh affected the daily lives of Old Testament saints (*Old Testament Survey*, 267). He offers the following synopses for each book (268–355):
1. Psalms—How to worship
 2. Job—How to struggle with doubt
 3. Proverbs—How to develop wisdom
 4. Ruth—How to survive personal difficulties
 5. Song of Songs—How to enjoy love
 6. Ecclesiastes—How to search for meaning in life
 7. Lamentations—How to mourn national tragedies
 8. Esther—How to survive in exile
 9. Daniel—How to maintain distinctive faith in exile
 10. Ezra-Nehemiah—How to rebuild a nation
 11. Chronicles—How to view the past
- C. Jason DeRouchie.** Building off the arguments supplied by Frank Beckwith and Stephen Dempster, DeRouchie follows the order found in the *Baba Bathra* 14b–15a because it is the oldest list, because all the other lists can be explained as secondary, and because its arrangement is the most theologically Messianic in orientation, thus heightening anticipation for the NT and supporting the highly Christo-centric interpretation of the OT by NT authors.
1. Introductory comments:
 - a. Like the Prophets, the Writings distinguish “commentary” and “narrative history,” but here the history ends the section, probably to allow the Old Testament to begin with creation and to end with the anticipation of return.
 - b. In contrast to the Prophets, the commentary and history are both primarily anticipatory rather than reflective, focusing on kingdom hope through the Messiah rather than addressing sin.
 - c. The “Former Writings” or commentary portion has all books arranged in order of length from longest to shortest. There are two exceptions to this basic rule, both driven by theological purposes:
 - i. Ruth stands as the prelude to Psalms, providing a narrative bridge via analogy from an age of exile into hope.
 - ii. Lamentations is actually a little longer than the Song of Songs (2011 words vs. 1662 words). Its placement after the Song was likely driven by some of the following desires:
 - (1) To keep together the three books traditionally assigned to Solomon (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs),

- (2) To allow the Old Testament's commentary section (the Latter Prophets and Former Writings) to begin and end with books assigned to the prophet Jeremiah, and
 - (3) To provide a transition at the end of the commentary section back into the exilic context departed from at the end of 2 Kings.
2. Proposed organizational framework and message:
 - a. *Former Writings (Anticipatory Commentary on an Age of Life)*
 - i. *Ruth*: Prelude Affirming the Kingdom Hope of Yahweh's Redeeming Grace through the Line of David
 - ii. *Psalms*: Hope for Those Delighting in and Submitting to God's Kingship by Walking, Waiting, and Worshipping in Light of the Messiah
 - iii. *Job*: Hope for Those Fearing God for Who He Is, Not for What He Gives or Takes Away
 - iv. *Proverbs*: Hope for Those Acting Wisely—Who Fear God, Turn from Evil, and Live in Light of the Future
 - v. *Ecclesiastes*: Hope for Those Fearing and Following God in Pleasure and Pain Despite Life's Enigmas
 - vi. *Song of Songs*: Hope for Those Celebrating Human Sexuality in the Context of Marriage
 - vii. *Lamentations*: Hope for Those Remaining Confident in God's Reign and Faithfulness to His Own
 - b. *Latter Writings (Anticipatory Narrative on an Age of Life)*
 - i. *Daniel*: The Promise of God's Universal Kingdom Reiterated
 - ii. *Esther*: The Preservation of God's Kingdom People Realized
 - iii. *Ezra-Nehemiah*: The Restoration of God's Kingdom People and Land Foreshadowed
 - iv. *1–2 Chronicles*: Yahweh's Universal Kingship and Kingdom Promises Affirmed

LECTURE 18b: RUTH
“The God who extends mercy to the faithful”
 Jason S. DeRouchie, PhD

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I. Orienting Data

- A. **Historical Coverage:** a few years around 1150 B.C.
- B. **Content:** A story of loyalty to Yahweh during the period of the judges, in which Naomi’s fortunes mirror Israel’s during this period (while also providing the lineage of King David). Naomi loses her husband and sons, which places her in a seemingly impossible financial situation. She is rescued by her own cunning, the beauty and industriousness of her Moabite daughter-in-law Ruth, and Boaz’s kindness.
- C. **Emphases:** Yahweh’s gift of a redeemer and his faithfulness to bless the faithful and to fulfill his promises.

II. Placement in Scripture:

- A. **In Many English Bibles:** Ruth after Judges
 1. Following the arrangement of the Old Greek version, Ruth is placed after Judges in English Bibles, due to the chronological signal in Ruth 1:1, “In the days when the judges ruled.” The placement appears to have been recognized as early as Josephus (*Ag. Ap.* 1.7–8), who tallies the total number of books in the Hebrew Bible at 22, suggesting that Ruth was attached to Judges and Lamentations to Jeremiah.
 2. The connection of Ruth to Judges allows the story of Ruth and Boaz to provide a strong contrast to those who turned away from Yahweh and “did what was right in their own eyes” (Judg. 21:25). Moreover, it anticipates nicely the rise of David in 1–2 Samuel.
 3. However, in light of the apparent purpose of the Prophets to provide narrative and commentary on Israel’s age of death, Ruth’s focus on life does not fit well in the sequence of books. Furthermore, 1–2 Samuel in many ways is written as a direct

counterpart to Judges, beginning exactly where Judges leaves off and not assuming the hope-filled story presented in Ruth.

- B. In Hebrew Bibles.** In Hebrew Bibles, Ruth is part of the Writings, likely due to its positive message of life and hope.
1. Some Jewish traditions place it with the four other shorter books (Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther), and together they are called “the five scrolls.” When this is so, Ruth sometimes follows Proverbs, providing a beautiful narrative portrayal of the “excellent/worthy woman/wife,” a phrase found only in Prov. 12:4; 31:10; and Ruth 3:11.
 - Prov. 12:4. An *excellent wife* is the crown of her husband, but she who bring shame is like rottenness in his bones.
 - Prov. 31:10. An *excellent wife* who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.
 - Ruth. 3:11. And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a *worthy woman*.
 2. The baraita *baba bathra* 14b (ca. 2nd century AD) places Ruth as the prelude to the Psalter/Writings, and this placement seems to capture best the overall thrust of the book.
 - a. The chronological note placing the story of Ruth in the period of the judges (Ruth 1:1) highlights the book’s purpose to emphasize a rising light in the midst of darkness.
 - b. The story of Ruth ends with a focus on the kingdom hope and the line of David, which suggests the focus of the book lies here and not on Ruth. What Boaz was for Ruth and Naomi (David’s ancestors), the future David would be David’s descendants, now in exile (for more on this, see below).

III. Literary Overview

Introduction	Body		Conclusion	
<i>Crisis</i>	<i>Hope</i>	<i>Challenge</i>	<i>Rescue</i>	<i>Epilogue</i>
Ruth 1:1–22	2:1–23	3:1–18	4:1–17	4:18–22
Naomi emptied	A redeemer identified (provider & protector)	A roadblock for redemption?	Boaz & Ruth marry; Naomi filled	Genealogy of David
Israel is emptied in exile.	The redeemer rises from Bethlehem.		Israel is filled through her redeemer.	Hope exists for a new Davidic kingdom.

A. Introduction: The Crisis (1:1–22)

1. The time of judges (Ruth 1:1: “In the days when the judges ruled”)
 - a. An age of chaos:
 - Judg 2:11. The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.
 - Judg 21:25. In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.
 - b. An age of curse—famine
 - Judg 2:15. The hand of the LORD was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress.
 - Lev 26:26. When I break your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven and shall dole out your bread again by weight, and you shall not be satisfied.
2. Departure from the Ephrathites of Bethlehem (“the house of bread”) and from the place of redemptive hope (Ruth 1:2: “They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there.”)
 - Mic 5:2, 4–5. But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel....⁴ And he shall stand and

shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. ⁵ And he shall be their peace.

3. Naomi's emptiness:

a. Loss of husband and sons (1:5)

b. No practical hope of a future:

i. The reality—no redeemer (1:11–13):

- Ruth 1:11–13. But Naomi said, “Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? ¹² Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, ¹³ would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me.”

Widows were to be provided for by their sons, so it was important for a woman to bear sons. If a widow was left without a son, the law of levirate marriage (*levir* = Latin for “brother-in-law”) came into practice. In this law, a kinsman assumed the wife of a deceased relative in order to protect this relative's property and family and to continue his line at great cost to himself (Ruth 4:1–14).

- Deut 25:5–6. If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. ⁶ And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

ii. Ruth's response: It was rare for someone to adopt the religion of another nation. Ruth's following of Naomi showed a high-level of loyalty and care (2:12) and likely meant she would remain a single woman without the benefit of male protection or provision. In light of the horrors of Israelite society during the period of the judges, such an act was a fearful thing (2:9, 22) and a testament of supreme faith in Yahweh, in whom Ruth sought refuge (2:12).

- Ruth 1:16. Where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. (Cf. 2:12)

c. Naomi's perspective

- Ruth 1:20–21. Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. ²¹ I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty.

B. Body A: The Hope (2:1–23)

1. A providential contact

a. Boaz's identity: “a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech” (2:1)—an antithesis to the typical man of Judges.

b. Boaz's character:

i. A blessing, rather than abuser (2:4).

- Ruth 2:4. And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, “The LORD be with you!” And they answered, “The LORD bless you.”

ii. A provider and protector (2:8–9, 14–16, 22).

- Ruth 2:8–9. Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. ⁹ Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn.”
- Ruth 2:14–16. And at mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine.” So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain. And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. ¹⁵ When she rose

to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her.¹⁶ And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her.”

- Ruth 2:22. And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted.”
- iii. A filler, rather than emptier (2:14, 17–18; cf. 3:17; 4:13).
- Ruth 2:14, 17–18. And at mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine.” So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain. And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over....¹⁷ So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.¹⁸ And she took it up and went into the city. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied.

c. Boaz’s motivation:

- Ruth 2:12. The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!

2. A “redeemer” identified

- Ruth 2:19–20. And her mother-in-law said to her, “Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you.” So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, “The man’s name with whom I worked today is Boaz.”²⁰ And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May he be blessed by the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!” Naomi also said to her, “The man is a close relative of ours, one of our *redeemers*.”

C. Body B: The Challenge (3:1–18)

1. Naomi and Ruth’s request

a. The context:

- Ruth 3:1–2. My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that It may be well with you?² Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were?

b. The request:

- Ruth 3:9. I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.

2. Boaz’s response and dilemma

a. His response:

- Ruth 2:12. The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!

b. His dilemma:

- Ruth 3:10–13. May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich.¹¹ And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman.¹² And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I.¹³ Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, as the LORD lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning.

3. Ruth’s questionable activity: Some scholars propose that Ruth’s “uncovering of Boaz’s feet” in 3:4, 7 is actually a euphemism for sexual activity. Should we read the text this way?

a. Context always guides the meaning we attribute to words, so while Scripture uses the various Hebrew words to express sexuality in certain contexts, the following facts all point to a much more positive, non-scandalous reading of Ruth 3:

- i. Naomi, who gives the instructions in 3:1–4, is explicitly Godward in her disposition at this point (2:20).
- ii. Ruth’s verbal request to Boaz that he spread his wings over her (3:9) echoes his earlier blessing of her in relation to God (2:12), suggesting that Ruth is identifying him as God means of provision.

- iii. Boaz grants her a new Godward blessing and declares her to be a “worthy woman” (3:11)—the consistent portrayal of her throughout the book. These literary features inform my reading.
- b. Furthermore, I would add that the term מרגלות (“lower parts around his feet”) is found elsewhere only in Dan 10:6, where it clearly is not used sexually but points only to the region around the shins, calves, and feet. Naomi's instructions stated only that Ruth was to uncover the place around Boaz's feet and lie down near them (3:4), and this is what she does (3:7–8, 14). Ruth does not actually go under his garment, for this is part of her marriage request (3:9)—“spread your wings/edge of your garment over your servant, for you are a redeemer” (3:9). The act of covering another with your garment naturally implies sexual intimacy associated with marriage (cf. Ezek 16:8), but Boaz does *not* do this at this point. Instead, he calls her to remain for the night and to wait for the next day to see whether the nearer redeemer would act. He also promises that if this other will not, he will indeed spread his wings over her, vowing before God (3:12–13).
- c. Finally, I wonder if the uncovering of his feet is not only to arouse him and identify the request for marriage but also to contrast with the enigmatic sandal episode at the end of the book. Both in Deut 25:9 and Ruth 4:7, the one giving up his authority is called to remove his sandal and by this to identify the removal of his authority over another—he is no longer the redeemer (cf. Matt 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16; John 1:27). In Ruth's approaching the area of Boaz's feet, she is requesting that he place his authority over her. He, in turn, declares that he will *if* the closer redeemer refuses to do so. In all, we then see that the uncovering of the feet in Ruth 3 is not a passing, unimportant comment but is in fact integral to the flow of the story.

D. Conclusion A: The Rescue (4:1–17)

- 1. Boaz as kinsman redeemer
 - a. The role of the kinsman redeemer in the OT (Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 674):
 - i. Maintained the freedom of individuals within the clan by buying back those who have sold themselves into slavery because of poverty (Lev. 27:47–55).
 - ii. Tracked down and executed murderers of relatives (Num. 35:12, 19–27).
 - iii. Received restitution money on behalf of a deceased victim of a crime (Num. 5:8).
 - iv. Ensured that justice is served in a lawsuit involving a relative (Job 19:25; Ps 119:154; Jer. 50:34).
 - v. Ensured that the hereditary property of the clan never passes out of the clan (Lev. 25:25–30).
 - vi. Helped prevent the “name” of a deceased relative from dying out and helped support the widow of the deceased by performing “the duties of the *levir*” (Deut. 25:5–10).

Question: Which of these are part of the story of Ruth? See especially Ruth 1:9–13; 2:20; 3:1–2, 9–11; 4:3–10.
 - b. The initial encounter (4:1–6): note features v–vi above.
 - Ruth 4:3–6. Then he said to the redeemer, “Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. ⁴ So I thought I would tell you of it and say, ‘Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.’ If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you.” And he said, “I will redeem it.” ⁵ Then Boaz said, “The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the

dead in his inheritance.”⁶ Then the redeemer said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.”

c. The sandal ceremony (4:7–10; cf. Deut 25:7–9)

- Ruth 4:7–10. Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel.⁸ So when the redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself,” he drew off his sandal.⁹ Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon.¹⁰ Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day.”
- Deut 25:5–10. If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her.⁶ And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.⁷ And if the man does not wish to take his brother’s wife, then his brother’s wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, “My husband’s brother refuses to perpetuate his brother’s name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband’s brother to me.”⁸ Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he persists, saying, “I do not wish to take her,”⁹ then his brother’s wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, “So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother’s house.” And the name of his house shall be called in Israel, “The house of him who had his sandal pulled off.”

2. The community’s blessing

a. The blessing itself:

- Ruth 4:11–12. May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem,¹² and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman.

b. Its significance:

- i. Rachel and Leah: hope of a new Israel.
- ii. Tamar and Judah: the line bearing the kingdom hope. The Judah and Tamar saga in Genesis 38 is another instance of levirate marriage and the role of the kinsman redeemer, and it relates directly to the preservation of the line through which the male deliver anticipated in Gen 3:15 and 22:17b–18 would rise.
 - Gen 49:8–10. Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons shall bow down before you.⁹ Judah is a lion’s cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?¹⁰ The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

3. The birth of Obed and the Davidic kingdom hope

- Ruth 4:13, 17. So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son....¹⁷ They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.
- Ruth 4:14–15. Blessed the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer.... He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you ... has given birth to him.

E. Conclusion B: The Epilogue (4:18–22)

1. The ten-member genealogy that ends the book recalls the linear genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 that focus on the line of promise hoping in the offspring of promise.
2. It also puts a stamp on the book’s message, clarifying that the whole is less a love story between Ruth and Boaz and more a study in God’s faithfulness to the line of David.

3. Just as God was faithful to preserve David's ancestors through a redeemer from Bethlehem, so he would preserve David's descendants through a new redeemer from Bethlehem. What Boaz was for Ruth, (the new) David would be for the nation and ultimately the world.

IV. The Message of the Book

A. The Davidic Focus

1. The book of Ruth ends with three notes that highlight that the overall message is focused on David:
 - a. In 4:11–12, the Bethlehemites declare over Boaz that anticipates that the offspring would give rise to both a new Israel and the fulfillment of the Genesis promises for a royal male offspring in the line of Judah: “May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman.”
 - b. After their marriage, Boaz and Ruth bear a son, and in 4:17 we read: “[Boaz and Ruth] named [their son] Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.” This added note is only necessary if the book is ultimately designed to highlight God's preservation of the kingdom hope in the past in order to instill retained hope in the kingdom promise for the future.
 - c. The book is then concluded with a ten-member genealogy that moves from Perez, son of Judah and Tamar, to David, the Old Testament's royal figure of hope. The ten-person linear genealogy echoes the linear genealogies in Genesis focused on the line of promise (Adam to Noah then Shem in Gen 5; Shem to Terah then Abra[ha]m in Gen 11). It also draws attention to the patriarchal promises of a royal deliverer through Judah (Gen 22:17b–18; 49:8, 10) and the Davidic promises of a lasting kingdom (2 Sam 7:12–13).
2. The focus on David stresses that the book is not directly about Ruth but about God's faithfulness to preserve the Davidic ancestors through “exile” in Moab and by the provision of a kinsman redeemer. This focus is not accented as much when Ruth is placed elsewhere in the Writings.

B. The Son of David as the Redeemer

1. Ruth went to Bethlehem, seeking refuge under Yahweh's “wings” (Ruth 2:12), and Yahweh provided her with a tangible expression of his care under the “wings” of Boaz, a kinsman “redeemer” (3:9). God's protection of Ruth through Boaz was designed to give great hope of God's faithfulness to provide a more ultimate redeemer.
2. The emphasis on David at the end of the book moves the reader to build connections between Boaz and David. God promised to do through David on a *national* level what Boaz had done on a *personal* one. The same godliness that drove Boaz drove David to bless his nation and redeem their lives from the moral chaos of the judges. God continued to be faithful, and the characters of Boaz and David supplied hope in the Son of David whose godly character and sacrificial leadership would ultimately redeem all believers from the chaos of sin and death.
3. Directly after his oracle about the Suffering Servant, who “has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (Isa. 53:4), the prophet Isaiah declared (54:4–5): “Fear not, for you will not be ashamed; be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name;

and the Holy One of Israel is your *Redeemer*, the God of the whole earth he is called.”
Redemptive history hinges on God serving the world through Christ in the way Boaz served Ruth and Naomi.

- V. Key Theme:** The providence of God in preserving the ancestral line of David and ultimately the Messiah.
- VI. Summary:** Just as the Lord redeemed David’s ancestors and preserved the messianic line by filling Naomi’s emptiness through the Bethlehemite redeemer Boaz’s marrying Ruth, so God will redeem David’s descendants by filling their emptiness and expanding them to include the nations through a new redeemer from Bethlehem, David’s greater son.

VII. Guided Reading for Ruth:

A. Points of Focus:

1. Key Chapters: Ruth 1–4
2. Key People/Places: Bethlehem, Boaz, David, Jesse, Moab, Naomi, Orpah, Ruth, the unnamed kinsman

B. Questions:

1. Within what time period is the story of Ruth set? In what ways does this make the message of Ruth all the more amazing?
2. What significant theological point can be made from the fact that Ruth originally descended from Moab?
3. What Hebrew word occurs 22x in the Book of Ruth and provides a key concept through the account? What is the “central story” of the Book of Ruth? What message does the “selfless love of Ruth and Boaz” communicate to the Israelite audience?
4. What would you define as the “crucial turning point” in the story of Ruth?
5. What is the significance of the “kinsman redeemer” motif in Ruth?
6. How does the function of Ruth change depending on where it occurs in the Old Testament canon?