



**Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for December 6, 2009
Released on Wednesday, December 2, 2009**

"The Lineage of David"

Lesson Text: Ruth 4:13-17; Matthew 1:1-6

Background Scripture: Ruth 4:13-17; Matthew 1:1-17

Devotional Reading: 2 Samuel 7:8-17

Ruth 4:13-17

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son.

14 And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.

15 And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him.

16 And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.

17 And the women her neighbors gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Matthew 1:1-6

1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren;

3 And Judah begat Pharez and Zerah of Tamar; and Pharez begat Hezron; and Hezron begat Ram;

4 And Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon; and Nahshon begat Salmon;

5 And Salmon begat Boaz of Rachab; and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

6 And Jesse begat David the king.

And David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Uriah.

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:

- 1.** Tell how Boaz and Ruth played key roles in the ancestry of Jesus.
- 2.** Explain how God's providence works through such "normal" events as the birth of a child.
- 3.** Share the genealogy of Jesus through the revealed and inspired Scriptures (2 Peter 1:21).

HOW TO SAY IT

ELIMELECH. Ee-*lim*-eh-leck.

SHAVUOT. *Sheh*-vu-oat.

INTRODUCTION

Genealogy Detectives

Have you done any investigation into your genealogy? Interest in discovering facts about one's family background seems to be rising steadily. Some people hope to find a forgotten jewel in the past centuries. Maybe they are actually descended from royalty!

Others are interested because of medical reasons. Genealogical research may help them understand certain genetic conditions they may have inherited. Interest is also greater because of the enormous amount of genealogical resources that are increasingly accessible. Some Internet sites allow such research for a nominal fee. This can be fascinating work. We may discover a branch of family nearby that we didn't even know about.

In the ancient world, genealogies were remembered with great care. It was important to know who your ancestors were. For example, the great families of Rome were judged on whether or not they could trace their ancestry to the city's beginnings. Julius Caesar was from the great patrician family *Julia*, which claimed to be descended from the founder of Rome. Wealth and accomplishment in Rome did not trump family background.

For believers in Christ, all this takes on added significance. Some genealogical inquiries are worthless, even counterproductive (see 1 Timothy 1:4; Titus 3:9). But just the opposite is true with regard to Jesus Christ. One of the important aspects of our belief in Jesus as the Messiah is the way the New Testament presents Him as a fulfillment of prophecy. Some of these prophecies are tied to certain ancestors of Jesus who played major roles in the history of Israel.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The book of Ruth is counted in Jewish tradition as one of the five "Festal Scrolls," shorter books from the Hebrew Bible that were traditionally read on festival days. Ruth was read on Shavuot, also known as the Feast of Weeks. Shavuot is better known to Christians as Pentecost. It had originally marked the period from the Passover exodus from Egypt until the giving of the law at Sinai, but it developed into a harvest festival celebrating the spring crops. This seems to be its connection with Ruth, a little book whose story is bound up in the farming customs of the ancient Near East.

The book of Ruth, a story taking place about 1100 BC, is set in the time of the judges of Israel. The book tells of an Israelite man named Elimelech (meaning "my God is king") who moved his family to the neighboring land of Moab because of famine. His family consisted of his wife (Naomi) and two sons. Over a period of a decade, they apparently made a permanent home in Moab. The sons even married Moabite women.

Tragically, Elimelech and the sons died. This left Naomi without husband or sons to support her. She also had two widowed daughters-in-law. On hearing of the availability of food in her ancestral homeland, Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem, which was located in the tribal province of Judah. This was a risky move, since she had been gone for a decade and did not know how she would be welcomed. One daughter-in-law, Ruth, decided to go with Naomi. In the process, Ruth pledged loyalty to Naomi and to her God (Ruth 1:16, 17).

When the two arrived in Bethlehem, they were received, but the male-dominated nature of their culture presented a challenge. Naomi understood that they needed to be connected with one of the men in order to ensure survival. The likely candidate was Boaz, a wealthy farmer and a kinsman of her dead husband. This resulted in

Ruth attracting the attention of Boaz. She eventually married him according to the intricate customs of the time.

Ruth was a beloved book among the Jews of Jesus' day because of its story of these two strong and resilient women. This is not why the book was written, however, or why it is included in the Old Testament. The book of Ruth is important because it tells a significant story about the ancestors of King David. The amazing detail is that one of the key ancestors of David, namely his great grandmother, was not an Israelite. This detail becomes even more important for Matthew. He includes several foreign women in his genealogy of Jesus to support the point that Jesus, the promised Messiah, was to serve all nations, not just Israel.

SIMPLE BIRTH (Ruth 4:13-17)

1. What do we learn from the brief statement of Ruth 4:13?

"So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son." This was surely the Lord at work. Ruth had been childless during her previous marriage, but now "the Lord gave her conception." *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: "This climax to the narrative is brief but full of meaning. Marriage, God-given conception, and the longed-for heir were all mentioned in a few words" (Walvoord and Zuck, eds., Victor).

2. Why were Naomi's friends so excited about Ruth's baby (v. 14)?

Surprisingly, the author points to *Naomi* as the one who is most *blessed* by the birth of Ruth's son. Her plan to return to Bethlehem has been a complete success. Not only have she and Ruth managed to survive, they have been blessed. In some ways, the return of Naomi to Israel is seen as a return to the God of Israel. God welcomes her back and rewards her faithfulness.

The women who are friends of Naomi understand the implications of these events. God has acted to preserve Naomi. He has given her a *kinsman*, a security for the future. Therefore, the women praise God. They ask that the child of Boaz may be *famous in Israel*. This repeats what the elders of the city wish for Boaz himself on hearing of his pending marriage (Ruth 4:11, 12). The word for *famous* is based on a root that involves spoken, verbal communication. Boaz's son is to be one who is talked about all over Israel.

3. What did Naomi's friends mean by "he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life..." (v. 15)?

For the women to wish Naomi's grandson to be a restorer of Naomi's life probably points to their understanding that the loss of her husband and sons had left Naomi empty. Life had turned into hardship, and from a human perspective she had little left to live for. The women wanted this new baby to become a means of changing that. In fact, until this birth, Naomi had no hope for the continuation of her family line. Now there was new hope—not only that the family line would continue but also for Naomi's care as she grew older.

The blessing of the women also contains a remarkable tribute to Ruth. They tell Naomi that Ruth "is better to thee than seven sons." In a society that values boys above girls, this is praise of the highest sort. The only person who has persevered with her is this foreign woman, her loyal daughter-in-law. No amount of sons, even the "perfect number" of seven, can replace the love and honor that Ruth has given her mother-in-law.

4. How did Naomi reveal her acceptance and joy over Obed's birth (vs. 16, 17a)?

The reference to Naomi's becoming a nurse to the child indicates her special oversight regarding his care. Although Ruth is the mother of *the child*, Naomi claims him too. She is determined to take an active role in his upbringing, as is her right according to the customs of that time. Today, family displacement for education and employment strains or even severs the ties of the extended family. Raising children is a challenge, and the help of grandparents can make it much easier for a weary mother. Surely, Ruth takes comfort from Naomi's help and delights in her mother-in-law's joy.

Realizing the significance of this birth, the local women phrase it as *a son born to Naomi*. She shares the blessing of this boy with Ruth in full measure. The name the women give the child is *Obed*, which means "servant" or "worshiper," and evidently this was acceptable to Naomi as well as to Boaz and Ruth. The name indicates an attitude of submission and gratitude to God for what He was doing for the family and especially for Naomi.

5. Why was the birth of Ruth's son emphasized so much at the end of the book (v. 17b)?

We instantly become aware of the magnitude of this birth when we read that Obed became the grandfather of King David. David was certainly a servant of God. But David may be best known for his worship of God, given David's authorship of a vast number of the songs of praise that fill the book of Psalms.

Yet, this is the first mention of David in the Bible; so up to this point in Israel's history, there was nothing to indicate how significant David would be. We have a fuller understanding than did those in Boaz and Ruth's day of how great this birth truly was.

So important was this event that the author repeated the information, with some expansion, in the concluding verses of the book. What an encouragement it should be to us to follow this narrative! Out of what seemed to be loss and hopelessness came some tremendously important steps leading to the coming of Jesus, our Saviour (as we will see in the second part of our lesson). While the information was recorded simply and matter-of-factly, those of us who know and love the Lord and understand His plan for mankind find joy and excitement in it.

SIGNIFICANT GENEALOGY (Matthew 1:1-6)

6. How did Matthew get the attention of his Jewish readers at the beginning of his Gospel, and why was this information important (Matthew 1:1)?

Matthew begins his Gospel in dramatic fashion. His Jewish readers immediately recognize the expression *the book of the generation*, taken from Genesis. It first occurs at Genesis 2:4 to introduce the "generations of the heavens and of the earth," that is, the creation of the world. Matthew intends his readers to understand that what he is relating presents Jesus as a new Adam (compare Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:22).

That is to say, nothing would have been initially more important to those Jewish people than evidence that Jesus fulfilled the legal requirements of the Messiah by having come through the line of Abraham and David.

In this verse, Matthew also gives the three keys to understanding his genealogy of Jesus. First, Jesus is *Christ*. That means He is the promised anointed one of the Jewish nation. (The Greek word *Christ* means the same as the Hebrew word *Messiah*.) Second, He is *the son of David*. David was the king who was promised repeatedly that his throne would be eternal, his dynasty unending (see Psalm 89:3, 4). The designation *son of David* thus is distinctly messianic. Third, Jesus is *the son of Abraham*. In this, He fulfills the promise given to the father of the Hebrews that his descendant would be a blessing to all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:3; see Galatians 3:16).

7. Is there a rigid form in which genealogies must follow (v. 2)?

There is no rigid form for genealogies in the ancient world. Matthew begins his genealogy at the most distant point he wants to include, which is *Abraham*. From there Matthew works forward to Jesus. In contrast, Luke begins his genealogy with Jesus and works backward all the way to Adam and to God himself (Luke 3:23–38).

This difference in procedures is because genealogies are more than simple lists of ancestors; they are lists with a purpose. Matthew's purpose is to use the lineage data to show that Jesus is the rightful heir to the promises given to David. Thus Jesus is the legitimate Messiah. Matthew also wants to teach his readers some other lessons by using this genealogy, as we shall see.

8. What is unusual about Judah being listed after his father, Jacob, in this genealogy?

The first 4 names of the list are familiar to anyone who has read the book of Genesis. *Judah and his brethren* are, of course, the 12 patriarchs of Israel, the fathers of the 12 tribes. Matthew mentions them because they represent the whole of Israel. Even so, his focus is on Judah, the royal tribe, the tribe of King David.

In Jacob's final words to his sons, he pointed Judah out as the one through whom the ultimate ruler of Israel would come (Gen. 49:10). Even though he had been involved in sinful activity (chap. 38), he had subsequently lived in a way that qualified him to lead. For example, he was the one who stepped forward and expressed willingness to take Benjamin's place as a slave to the then-unknown assistant to Pharaoh in Egypt (44:33). Besides, he was God's choice for this position.

9. Who were the women included in this genealogy, and what might this reveal about God's choices (vs. 3-5)?

It is most unusual for women to be named in biblical genealogies and even more unusual for one with a tainted background. Tamar is the first of four women mentioned in Matthew's genealogy. Judah had thought she was a prostitute and slept with her (Gen. 38:13-16). As a result, she gave birth to twins, Pharez and Zarah (vs. 27-30). God truly does work in ways beyond our comprehension, for we would probably have gone out of our way to avoid including such an individual in a line as important as this one.

No doubt we are seeing the mercy and grace of God in operation. The other three women were also questionable. Ruth was a Gentile, Rahab was a Gentile and a prostitute, and Bathsheba was involved in adultery. Although Judah never married Tamar as far as we can tell ("he knew her again no more" according to Genesis 38:26), it was through his son Pharez that the genealogical line led to the Messiah. We cannot help seeing that God in His goodness graciously reaches out to and desires to use all who are willing to do His will.

"Matthew's inclusion of four particular women in his genealogy reveals his concern to do more than relay historical data....These women (as well as most of the men) were less than sterling examples to have in one's ancestral line....These were normal people, sometimes caught up in their own sin, all of them in need of God's mercy and grace" (*Life Application Bible Commentary*, Osborne and Comfort, eds., Tyndale). "Perhaps also he included these women in order to put Jewish pride in its place" (Walvoord and Zuck).

The list continues, including mention of *Boaz*, *Obed*, and *Ruth* from the first part of our lesson. See also Numbers 1:7.

10. How did Matthew conclude the genealogy of Jesus (v. 6)?

Matthew comes to a climactic statement in his genealogy, for we have been led to *David the king*. No one else is given this title in this listing, not even the mighty *Solomon*. In fact, no one else is given any title until the very end, where Jesus is designated as *Christ* (Matthew 1:16).

David is the beginning of the true royal lineage in Israel. God's providential care of David's line allowed it to continue for 1,000 years, to find fulfillment in Jesus, the true son of David (see Matthew 1:1; 21:9).

PRACTICAL POINTS

- 1.** Marriage is the permanent, faithful union of a man and a woman to produce godly children (Ruth 4:13).
- 2.** Childbearing is a blessing and a joy, bringing honor and celebration to the community (v. 14).
- 3.** Motherhood offers comfort in old age and hope to future generations (vs. 15,16).
- 4.** Each child is another instrument for God to accomplish His purpose for creation (v. 17).
- 5.** Christ's genealogy is universal—no race or station is excluded from His grace (Matthew 1:1-6).
- 6.** God used a diverse mixture of human sinners to bring forth His perfect Saviour (Matthew 1:1-6).

CONCLUSION

Jesus the Fulfillment

Jesus had frequent controversies with the Pharisees, who were Jews strongly committed to keeping the Law of Moses as they interpreted it. These men often asked Jesus questions in order to catch Him in an inconsistency or offensive remark. In the case at Matthew 22:42, however, Jesus was the one who initiated the conversation by asking, "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?" The Pharisees respond by saying, "The son of David." Jesus then proceeded to show that even the legendary King David acknowledged that the Messiah was his Lord. Such a view stood the Jewish expectation for Messiah on its head.

Trying to come to grips with the prophetic connections of the Bible can be both fascinating and frustrating. When we don't quite understand, we still must trust that God is in control of history. His purposes cannot be thwarted by the worst of human behavior. God's plan to provide humanity with a redeeming king took many odd turns over the centuries. Tamar? A shameless trickster. Rahab? A prostitute. Ruth? Not even an Israelite. David? Committed murder and adultery. Despite these all-too-human characters, God's divine drama of salvation triumphs in the person of Jesus. He is the fulfillment of all our hopes and needs.

PRAYER

O Mighty Father, God of Abraham, God of David, we marvel at Your wisdom and patience in preparing the world for Your Son, Jesus the Christ. May we commit ourselves to His service anew, for we pray in His name. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Jesus' human ancestry reveals God's careful and deliberate plan.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

We will deal with split texts again as we look at Isaiah 7:13-17 and Luke 1:30-38. The first foretells the virgin birth of Jesus, and the second tells how Jesus will extend David's dynasty. Luke also reveals the virgin birth of Jesus with the overshadowing of

Mary by the Holy Spirit. Ask your students to determine why the virgin birth and the incarnation are related.

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