

Title: **Providence not Coincidence**

Passage: **Ruth 2:18-23**

Theme: **God's providential care is revealed through what appears coincidental**

Number: **1212Ru2.18-23(8)**

Date: **December 9, 2012**

{Read Passage}

This am we get to wrap up chapter 2 which puts us midway through the book of Ruth.

We've noted all along that t/BOR is historical narrative. Some have used t/word "novella" (from novel as in reading a novel). HN may better sum up t/Ruth as a genre of literature in that it's historical (non-fiction) and it's a narrative (story).

Remember - it's set during t/time of t/Judges in Israel - a time when "every man did what was right in his own eyes" (last verse of Judges which is t/book that comes right before Ruth in t/OT).

Ruth, as part of t/inspired canon of Scripture, is a true story about 2 women (Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth) and one man (Boaz).

That's in t/foreground. In t/background is a much larger story -- the story of God's work in history (history = his story) in preserving t/Royal line of David and thus preparing t/way for t/entrance of JC into t/world.

Gal. 4:4 {cite} - But that fulness of time didn't occur in a vacuum.

BTIM - Jesus didn't drop from t/sky. He wasn't left here by aliens from outer space (regardless of what some websites claim).

He was t/final fulfillment of a genealogical line that stretches from Adam to Abraham ==> Judah ==> Rahab ==> David ==> Hezekiah ==> Zerubbabel ==> Joseph and Mary.

In t/middle of that line stand a man by t/name of Baoz and a woman by t/name of Ruth.

We've said many times thru this study (this is our 8 message) that t/structure of this book is a "4 act drama:"

Each chapter / Act centers on t/over-arching theme of t/Royal Line (Kingly genealogy of David (foreground) ==> JC)

I. Act One: The Royal Line with Hope in Ruin (1:1-22)

II. Act Two: The Royal Line with Hope Renewed (2:1-23)

III. Act Three: The Royal Line with Hope at Risk (3:1-18)

IV. Act Four: The Royal Line with Hope Restored (4:1-17)

Like a golden thread t/o t/book is weaved t/wonderful fact of God's providence.

A few weeks back ==>

The continuing and often unseen activity of God in sustaining his universe, providing for the needs of every creature, and preparing for the completion of his eternal purposes. [Manser, M. H. (1999). Dictionary of Bible

Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies. London: Martin Manser] —

As someone rightly observed ==>

There are many shadows that fall across the earth—the shadows of floating clouds, of trees swaying in the wind, of smoke ascending from chimneys, of birds on the wing, and the shadows of great rocks

on mountainsides. But the deepest and longest and kindest shadow which falls over the earth is the shadow of divine providence.

That was true in Ruth's day. You know what - it continues to be true today and will contin. to be true tomorrow.

We can always look at whatever is happening around us & ask t/? How is God wonderfully at work? In t/big things (world); in t/little things (my own life).

As we've seen t/big and small are alike to Him. He uses t/small things, (and small seemingly insig. people) to accomplish His sov. eternal will to His glorious good pleasure (our pleasure as well).

II. Act Two: The Royal Line with Hope Renewed (2:1-23)

4 scenes in this second Act

A. Scene One: Ruth Reaping (vv. 1-7)

{review vv. 1-7}

B. Scene Two: Ruth Rewarded - Part 1 (vv. 8-13)

Boaz provides for Ruth's needs by granting her undeserved privileges that reflect her position under God's protective wing.

{review vv. 8-13}

C. Scene Three: Ruth Rewarded - Part 2 (vv. 14-17)

1. Ruth's Rest (14)

And at mealtime . . .

Lit. "at the time of the noon meal"

... **Boaz said to her, "Come here, that you may eat of the bread**
Specially provided for the workers. Likely a grain cake cooked in oil.
... **and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar."**

(wine-vinegar) = יַיִן אֶחָד a fermented liquid w/a sour taste used as a
condiment (mustard).

So she sat beside the reapers; ...
... and he served her roasted grain, ...

The man ==> W; Israelite ==> For. ; Prominent landowner ==>
obscure widow.

... and she ate and was satisfied and had some left.

b. Ruth's Rights (15-16)

When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying,
"Let her glean even among the sheaves,
Boaz commands his workers emphatically to permit Ruth to glean
among the sheaves.

And also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the
bundles and leave it that she may glean,

Verbal idea "pull out" reflects an Arabic word that referred to
withdrawing a sword from its sheath. Much as one would pull a
sword from a sheath, t/workers were to pull out grain from t/bundles
that had already been harvested leaving it behind for her.

c. Ruth's Reward (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.

An ephah of barley would have weighed 30-50 lbs. About a months worth of grain required to feed a family.

D. Scene Four: Ruth Reports (vv. 18-23)

Ruth, no doubt tired from a hard day's work, reports to Naomi about how God had blessed her. It's t/other side of 2:2.

6 vv. here. There's a brief introduction or transition.

And she took it up and went into the city . . .

(village of Bethlehem / back home).

What follows is a conversation between N. and R. Goes back and forth - question / answer.

t/Hebrew text is structured in such a way that t/highlight of t/conversation is in t/2nd half of v. 20. Everything builds toward Naomi's discovery God had providentially led Ruth to t/field belonging to Boaz - a kinsman, a redeemer, a close relative (2:1).

1. Reward: Naomi Sees and Savors (18)

2. Request: Naomi Wonders Where and Who (19a)

3. Response: Ruth Answers the Who (but not the what) (19b)

4. Revelation: Naomi Glories in God's Providence (20)

5. Reflection: Ruth Relates Boaz' Kindness (21)

6. Recommendation: Naomi is Concerned (22)

7. Resumption: Ruth Patiently Works and Waits (23)

After that we'll take a look at some practical concluding thoughts.

Seems like a lot but we're going to move fast. (fasten s.bs).

1. Reward: Naomi Sees and Savors (18)

I like this: N. sees and savors - what?

a. What did Naomi see?

... her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. ...

c. *Ruth's Reward (17)*

... it was about an ephah of barley.

30-50 lbs of grain. A solid months worth of food. She saw and no doubt she was astounded at what she saw!

b. She savored

... She also took it out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied.

... *She [Ruth] also took it out and gave Naomi what she had left after she [Ruth] was satisfied.*

That goes back to t/2nd half of v. 14.

c. The picture

Ruth had worked hard all day in t/fields gleaning and harvesting barley so that she and her mother-in-law, Naomi, could eat.

She not only gleaned but she beat out what she had gleaned and it was about 40 lbs worth of grain. I don't know how many pounds of raw material you have to start w/to get 40 lbs. of grain - probl. signif.

She carried t/load by herself back to town, hot and tired, yet no doubt full of excitement. Down t/dusty paths to t/menial dwelling she and Naomi called "home."

Naomi may have been busy herself. Perhaps she was carrying water; gathering straw for bedding. She was likely anxious about how t/day went for her daughter-in-law as she heard t/other workers walking down t/road chatting about their day.

Ruth arrives, she looks exhausted. But look at what she has: out on t/floor or on a make-shift table she opens her shawl and shows Naomi w/pride what she had gleaned - she left empty, she returns w/this great bounty overflowing w/grain.

Maybe Naomi hadn't eaten. You get that impression. Boaz provided so much for Ruth at t/noon meal that she was able to eat her fill & save some for Naomi.

May be a hint here that Naomi gave thanks and ate before she asked any questions.

If I'm going hungry and my wife goes out w/little prospect of finding any food. And she returns w/a side of beef I'll probably dig in before I say anything. If it's t/other way around I know she's asking some questions. I joke about t/difference between us as far as sharing information is concerned. She can talk to her mother for 5 minutes and give me 15 minutes worth of details. I can talk to mine for an hour and if she asks me, "What did you talk about" I offer up a sentence of two.

Here's a woman w/a hunger for food that seems to outdistance her hunger for details.

But after the reward

1. Reward: Naomi Sees and Savors (18)

Comes the ==>

2. Request: Naomi Wonders Where and Who (19a)

Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work?"

a. Seems redundant [^]

Not only is this an example of Hebrew parallelism, but also speaks to Naomi's amazement.

a. Behind the question of "where" stands t/wonder of "who"

Seems evident from what she says next ==>

"May he who took notice of you be blessed."

IOW - "I know that someone w/a position of authority, probably a prominent land owner, was especially gracious to you today. May God bless Him for his blessing of you (and me).

(1) "Blessed" comes from a Hebrew word בָּרַךְ used over 330x in the OT

First used of Adam and Eve in Gen. 1:22,28.

"God blessed them ==> be fruitful and multiply"

(2) I fear that our use of t/word has become an empty cliché'

It's something we say, "God bless you".

It's something we pray, "Lord, we ask that you bless this situation."

What does that mean?

What are we asking when we say that? Do we think about what we're asking or is it just Christianese?

Next time you pray that or say that let all t/implications unfold like a blossoming flower in your mind.

Blessing? Opposite of cursing (used that way in t/OT).

We're affirming God's sov. control when we ask him to bless others.

In t/OT blessing is related to t/Fear of the Lord (Jer 32:40; Ecc 12:13)
Also related to obedience (Dt 11:26-28)

There is a close link between blessing and prayer.

1 Chronicles 4:10 Now Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from harm that it may not pain me!" And God granted him what he requested.

Also see that in the NT ==> εὐλογεῶ.

Connection prayer & forgiveness (Luke 6:28; cf. Rom. 12:14).

1 Peter 3:9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

"May he who took notice of you be blessed."

3. Response: Ruth Answers the Who (but not the where) (19b)

She tells N. who it was that took notice of her.

So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz."

The readers know about Boaz (introduced in 2:1).
Remember, at this point in t/story Naomi doesn't!

What a coincidence! (back to 2:3).

Remarkable how God works out these sorts of details in our lives.

I think of TAP who's in Rome. In that busy, bustling city he comes across a runaway slave named Onesimus. 1 of millions of slaves in t/R.E.

God directs his path to this odd looking little Jew named Paul. It's a divine appt. - Paul gives him t/Gospel. Ones. t/slave is free in t/greatest sense of t/word. "BTW - who were you working for, O.?" "A man named Philemon." "I just happen to know him."

Philemon hosted a house church in Colossae. Philemon was converted under the apostle Paul, likely in Ephesus (Acts 19:10).

Think about your own life - how God has woven into t/fabric of your life people and events that bear his hand mark as a master weaver.

I think t/fog is lifting in that regard for Naomi ==>

4. Revelation: Naomi Glories in God's Providence (20)

a. 2 Very Important words in this verse (key words)

And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead."

(1) Word "kindness" is the Hebrew noun **חֶסֶד**

Central to the BOR - this concept of *chesed* - covenant faithfulness.

Used 3x in Ruth ==>

Ruth 1:8 **And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go, return each of you to her mother’s house. May the LORD deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me.**

Word that wraps itself in a cluster of related concepts . . . love, mercy, grace, kindness, goodness, loyalty.

Covenant faithfulness / what we might call in the NT agape love.

(a) Difficult question in this verse that relates to the antecedent of the word "who"

And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May he be blessed of the LORD WHO has not withdrawn his kindness (*chesed*) to the living and to the dead.”

i. Who's the who?

Is it Boaz or the LORD?

Is it

“May he be blessed of the LORD - Boaz who has not withdrawn his kindness (*chesed*) to the living and to the dead.”

or

“May he be blessed of the LORD - The LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead.”

I don't think anyone can say w/absolute certainty one way or another. Both readings can make sense.

I'm going to argue for the latter interpretation.

The word LORD is the nearest object. [^]

Gen 24:27. After Abraham's servant has discovered Rebekah as a potential wife for Isaac, he declares, "Blessed be the LORD ... who has not abandoned his *hesed* and his truth toward my master."

But what does Naomi mean when she says that Yahweh has not abandoned his *hesed* toward the living and the dead?

"the living," in this context refers to Naomi and Ruth

"the dead," to the deceased Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion.

"living and dead" is a figure of speech (merism) - it refers to the family as a whole. (cf. Gen. 1:1).

Yahweh's covenant grace to this entire family.

(2) Second key word is another Hebrew noun **כֹּהֵן**

Again Naomi said to her, "The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives."

(a) **כֹּהֵן**: Could be translated "one of our redeemers" or "one of our kinsman-redeemers"

If you know the BOR you know that the "kinsman-redeemer" is very imp. to understanding t/entire book.

כֹּהֵן (used in over 80 vv. / 10 vv. in Ruth of which this is t/first).

Primary meaning is to do the part of a kinsman - to redeem a relative from danger or difficulty (TWOT).

(b) It's a word that functions in a legal sense related to Israelite family law

Within a family (clan) a *gō'ēl's* is the nearest relative who is responsible for the well-being of his closest kin.

Relevant when the relative is in distress and can't get himself/herself out of a crisis.

(c) In t/OT there are 5 aspects of t/redemptive function of a *gō'ēl*

1. To ensure that the hereditary property of the family stays in the family (Lev 25:25–30)

2. To ensure the freedom of individuals within the family by buying them back (redeem) when they were forced to sell themselves into slavery because of poverty (Lev 25:47–55)

3. To avenge a murder (Num 35:12, 19–27).

Judicial. If your close kin was murdered you had t/right of execution.

4. To receive restitution on behalf of a deceased victim of a crime (Num 5:8). Financial settlement.

You didn't have to dial 88888888888888. In Israel it was 7777777777.

5. To ensure that justice is served in a court case involving a relative. That is especially relevant this side of the cross.

Job 19:25 “As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth.

Psalms 119:154 Plead my cause and redeem me; Revive me according to Your word.

Jeremiah 50:34 “Their Redeemer is strong, the LORD of hosts is His name; He will vigorously plead their case . . .

What have we talked about as it relates to t/Gospel - key words and concepts like "justification" and "imputation".

Romans 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? “ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Romans 4:5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Romans 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

1 John 2:1–2 1 . . . if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins . . .

The Israelite provision for the *gō`ēl* is based upon an assumption of corporate solidarity and the sanctity of the family/clan: to offend a relative is to offend oneself. The custom of redemption was designed to maintain the wholeness and health of family relationships, even after the person has died. [Block, 674–675]

I suppose in that temporal sense we ought to serve as redeemers for one another within the Church, the family of God.

We ought to defend one another. (weeping, rejoicing, serving, forgiving, loving, keeping no record of wrongs).

We ought to defend one another but what do we all too often do? We don't defend we devour.

We devour one another. Doesn't take long to figure out that your fellow brothers and sisters in X won't hesitate to bite you, they will eat you too.

Galatians 5 13b but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

solution?

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

If you're biting and eating another brother or sister in X you're walking in t/flesh.

D. Scene Four: Ruth Reports (vv. 18-23)

1. Reward: Naomi Sees and Savors (18)

2. Request: Naomi Wonders Where and Who (19a)

3. Response: Ruth Answers the Who (but not the what) (19b)

4. Revelation: Naomi Glories in God's Providence (20)

The LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead."

What a change from their defeated return to Beth. (1:19-21). Hope.

5. Reflection: Ruth Relates Boaz' Kindness (21)

Then Ruth the Moabitess said, "Furthermore, he said to me, 'You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.'" Cf. 2:8-9.

6. Recommendation: Naomi is Concerned (22)

And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, lest others fall upon you in another field.”

Seems to be that Naomi, ever the mother, is concerned about Ruth's safety. Even in Israel it was possible that Ruth could be driven off by overzealous harvesters or greedy gleaners."

7. Resumption: Ruth Patiently Works and Waits (23)

She took her mother-in-law's advice.

So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

This is a postscript to Act 2 (particularly to this last scene).

[she gleaned] until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest.

The last words of chapter 2. How did chapter 1 end? {cite}

According to Deut. 16:9-12 the time between the beginning of barley harvest to the end of the wheat harvest was normally 7 weeks. This concluded at Pentecost. The period would be from late April to the beginning of June.

The point is that Ruth has gleaned for a long time - the time of harvest for both crops. Yet nothing has developed between her and Boaz.

The man who holds so much promise for their destitute state has at this point provided food for a season.

**** Concluding Thoughts ****

1. God's providential care for us doesn't mean we don't put forth our own effort.

Ruth worked hard. Can't steer a parked car.

2. God's providential care for us ought to move us toward greater worship.

See again Naomi's response in v. 20.

3. God's providential care for us includes our care for others

This is so imp. God didn't drop manna from the sky. Ruth worked; but Boaz no doubt moved by t/Spirit of God, extended mercy.

Psalm 41:1 **How blessed is he who considers the helpless; The LORD will deliver him in a day of trouble.**

James 2:15–17 **15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.**

1 John 3:16–18 **16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?**

18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

We need to extend that family love to t/entire world.

It's so easy to turn a blind eye to the sufferings and needs of others // turn a deaf ear to their cries for help.

"Omnipotence has servants everywhere." [C.H. Spurgeon]

Are you his servant? God's servants serve Him and others, not themselves. Who are you serving?

Boaz prayed for Ruth (2:12). Little did he know that he would be t/answer to that prayer.

4. God's providential care for us assumes our patience

There's at least 7 weeks of time that falls between t/end of chapter 2 and the beg. of chapter 3. Nearly 2 months.

1 Peter 5:10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

5. God's providential care for us encompasses our weakness

Who was weaker in Israel than 2 seemingly forsaken widows?

Part of what it means to be humble isn't it?

Paul? 2 Corinthians 12:9–10

9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast

about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.
10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with
distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for
when I am weak, then I am strong.

Over 150 years ago, Robert Murray McCheyne ministered in Scotland. His closest friend was a man by the name of Andrew Bonar who was also a minister in the church of Scotland, and who also wrote McCheyne's Memoirs. Andrew Bonar preached in the Glasgow for many years and enjoyed a tremendous ministry there. In fact, the church in which he ministered is still there and they have Andrew Bonar's personal Bible on display in a glass case (3 volumes with interleaved blank pages). If you leaf through it you will find every square inch covered with Hebrew words in the Old Testament and Greek words in the New, along with Bonar's personal comments.

If you open the Bible to Romans 8:28 you will find that he inscribed this thought on that wonderful verse: "A Pillow on which the troubled believer may lay his head." [Rev. Eric Alexander, in a message on Romans 8:26-31 during the memorial service for Dr. James M. Boice, 6/25/00. Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals cassette message]