

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2025: Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy

Lesson 11 “Ruth and Esther”

Read for this week’s study

Ruth 1:1–5; Ruth 2:5–20; Job 1:6–11; Matthew 4:8, 9; Esther 3:1–14; Revelation 12:14–17.

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 top of the scepter” (Esther 5:2, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Famine in “The House of Bread”
- III. Ruth and Boaz
- IV. Boaz, as Redeemer
- V. Haman and Satan
- VI. For Such a Time as This
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week we continue to explore stories that prefigure last-day events. [...] Our attention turns to two important women whose stories have touched the hearts of countless generations: Ruth and Esther. [...] Let’s look at the biblical accounts of these two women, whose life circumstances have been immortalized in the Word of God, and seek to draw whatever lessons we can from their experiences.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. What can we learn about the state of this world from Ruth 1:1-5? (Sunday’s lesson) Psychologists say, “Life is a series of hope adjustments.” When your life doesn’t adjust itself to fit your hopes, how do you adjust your hope to fit your life? In a patriarchal world, this woman, Ruth, commits herself not to find a husband who could bring her hope, but to an old lady who has no hope at all.
3. In an ethnocentric world, Moabites were so despised by the Israelites that they were not allowed to join the assembly. They worshiped their god Chemosh by offering human sacrifices. Yet, a despised Moabite woman will immigrate to Israel. There is no divine guidance in this book. There is no burning bush. There is no still small

voice. There are no angelic visions. Nobody gets miraculously directed or healed or raised from the dead. Ruth has to make decisions on her own and muddle through life as best as she can.

4. Why is Ruth 2:5–20 such a pivotal moment in the story? Why was Naomi’s discovery of their benefactor’s identity such good news? (Monday’s lesson) After Boaz’ initial act of kindness, Naomi wisely sums up God’s posture toward them saying, “Blessed be he by the Lord whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead.” (2:20) The word here translated as “kindness” is an important word in Hebrew, *chesed*. It means a loyal enduring, relentlessly committed love, a kindness that pursues and never gives up, a love that you cannot escape even if you tried.
5. As Ruth moves away from the comfort and predictability of her homeland, toward Naomi with this risky and vulnerable love, God is all the while moving toward Ruth, holding Ruth in the truest and purest expression of that love.
6. As the book ends, there is a little two-verse genealogy that says in essence, “Boaz of Obed, Obed of Jesse, and Jesse of David.” (4:21-22) (Tuesday’s lesson) This means when Ruth returns to Bethlehem in Israel with Naomi and when Ruth marries Boaz and has a child named Obed, this is the first time in 1,000 years of biblical history that Lot’s tribe (Moabites) and Abraham’s tribe (Israelites) are reunited. Through Ruth’s act of clinging to Naomi and her risky act of love that led her into this unknown territory, what appears to be a small story about the courage of two widowed refugees, is actually the story of how two widowed refugees united the entire Israelite nation and was actually the story of transformation on a worldwide scale. King David was one-eighth Moabite.
7. Ruth did not know her risky and faithful love of Naomi was actually the beginning of reconciling a 1,000-year-old feud from the past and the beginning of a new lineage and a new story that would change the world. Ordinary people making ordinary decisions are the ones who transform history.
8. Wednesday’s lesson looks at Haman and compares him to Satan from the book of Revelation. The book of Esther illustrates what happens when a real mission is hijacked by a shadow mission. What is the shadow mission of Ahasuerus, Haman, and Zeresh, his wife (5:13-14)? Why would Esther agree to replace Vashti after what happened to her? Esther’s apparent mission was to be eye candy for the most powerful man in the world.
9. In Thursday’s lesson Mordecai challenges Esther to ask God for clarity and courage about the mission God called her to do: “You have been called to your position for such a time as this.” (4:14) Who is “Mordecai” in your life? Who loves you enough to challenge you when you’re ready to settle for your shadow mission?
10. Just like in the book of Esther, God is still at work. God is at work for you. And because God is at work for you, you too don’t need to get seduced by your shadow mission! Because just like Ruth or Esther, you have come to your position and influence for such a time as this!

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Now the Bible often speaks of such meetings of the heavenly family. Look, for example, in the first two chapters of Job. And if you wonder how many attend, look in the book of Daniel where it says a hundred million beings watch as the court meets. Now note how God resolves questions, particularly of the charges of Satan that are leveled against Him and against His friends before the heavenly court. In the book of Job, Satan accused God, and he accused Job of being unworthy of God's trust. Did God say, "That's a lie, Satan, this man is perfect"? God said, "You've raised a serious question. The only way to answer it is to show you."

And look at the rest of the book of Job. Did Job show himself to be a trustworthy friend of God? Did he trust God because he was being richly rewarded or did he seem to be utterly abandoned and yet he still trusted God? And the book ends with God saying, "Thank you, Job, you've said of Me what is right." Job was God's friend all the way through, and God could then turn to the heavenly court and say, "Do you need any more evidence about the falsity of Satan's charges and the trustworthiness of My friend Job?"

This is God's way. God Himself has been accused. He does not merely deny the accusation. He says, "Let Me show you. My children, let Me show you the falsity of these accusations and the truth about Myself, and you decide." Imagine the humility of the Infinite One submitting His character and government to the scrutiny and investigation of His mere creatures. But that's God's way, and it is the only way to really establish love and trust in the fullest sense of freedom. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #8, "The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence" recorded March 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>

Lou: In our Bible reference sheet we have the passage regarding Abraham, and James' reference to that. Abraham is referred to as a "man of faith." Couldn't you call it "blind faith" when Abraham set out to obey God—when God said, "Take your son. I want you to bring him and to offer him as a sacrifice"?

Graham: Abraham's relationship with God—why, they were two of the best friends in all history! Abraham knew God well. He had had long experience with God. When God asked him to do things before, it had always worked out well and it made sense. So there was no *blind* faith on Abraham's part. God asked him to do something that puzzled him a great deal. At the moment he couldn't understand. But he said, "God, if it is you saying it (and I know You so well) I know this will make sense and there will be some solution, so I'm on my way."

This kind of faith is saying, “God, I’m on my way, but may I ask You why?” And so on the way, he asked why. And as he thought it through, he thought, the One who gave me this son miraculously is well able to resurrect my son. Or maybe He will provide a substitute. And Hebrews says he was right. So instead of that being blind faith, I would say he knew God well enough to go, and to know that there would be a solution that would make sense. And so it did.

Lou: But there was in that experience an element of uncertainty. That is to say, how will it work out? There was pain, certainly.

Graham: He wondered.

Lou: Yes. So faith can include that kind of thing.

Graham: Because God is so trustworthy, we are willing to obey Him when He asks us to do something beyond our present understanding. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3 with Lou Venden, “All God Asks Is Trust” recorded January 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/3MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

The same power that upholds nature, is working also in man. The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom control human life. The laws that govern the heart’s action, regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, are the laws of the mighty Intelligence that has the jurisdiction of the soul. From Him all life proceeds. Only in harmony with Him can be found its true sphere of action. For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same—a life sustained by receiving the life of God, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator’s will. To transgress His law, physical, mental, or moral, is to place one’s self out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin. {Ed 99.2}

Christ undertook to redeem man and to rescue the world from the grasp of Satan. The great controversy begun in heaven was to be decided in the very world, on the very same field, that Satan claimed as his. {PP 69.2}

Those who accept Christ as their personal Saviour are not left as orphans, to bear the trials of life alone. He receives them as members of the heavenly family; He bids them call His Father their Father. They are His “little ones,” dear to the heart of God, bound to Him by the most tender and abiding ties. He has toward them an exceeding tenderness, as far surpassing what our father or mother has felt toward us in our helplessness as the divine is above the human. {DA 327.2}

How precious are these assurances that we shall never be left to take one step in our own finite strength, for He has said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Hebrews 13:5. We are fighting in the presence of invisible hosts. Unseen intelligences survey the whole array of evil, and help is at hand. We shall not only be provided with that which is necessary but shall be placed upon vantage ground. . . . {OHC 311.4}

Satan cannot overcome the humble learner of Christ, he who walks prayerfully before the Lord. “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard” for him against the enemy (Isaiah 59:19). Christ interposes Himself as a shelter, a retreat, and the wicked one cannot overcome Him.—Manuscript 109, Sept. 8, 1898, “Peter’s Fall and Restoration.” {TDG 260.6}

The Lord will not compel men to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God; He sets before the human agent good and evil, and makes plain what will be the sure result of following one course or the other. Christ invites us, saying, “Follow Me.” But we are never forced to walk in His footsteps. If we do walk in His footsteps, it is the result of deliberate choice.—R. & H., March 31, 1896. {CS 138.1}

God never forces the will or the conscience; but Satan’s constant resort—to gain control of those whom he cannot otherwise seduce—is compulsion by cruelty. Through fear or force he endeavors to rule the conscience and to secure homage to himself. To accomplish this, he works through both religious and secular authorities, moving them to the enforcement of human laws in defiance of the law of God. {GC 591.2}

In the very fact that men are free moral agents, God teaches us not to be forced or compelled into any course of action, also that as responsible beings in copartnership with God we are to represent God in character. We are to have an interest in our brother, in our neighbor, in all around (Letter 65, 1895). {5BC 1098.1}

I saw a covering that God was drawing over His people to protect them in the time of trouble; and every soul that was decided on the truth and was pure in heart was to be covered with the covering of the Almighty. {EW 43.2}

Satan assailed Christ with his fiercest and most subtle temptations, but he was repulsed in every conflict. Those battles were fought in our behalf; those victories make it possible for us to conquer. Christ will give strength to all who seek it. No man without his own consent can be overcome by Satan. The tempter has no power to control the will or to force the soul to sin. He may distress, but he cannot contaminate. He can cause agony, but not defilement. The fact that Christ has conquered should inspire His followers with courage to fight manfully the battle against sin and Satan. {GC 510.3}

Then will be the time for us to trust wholly in God, and He will sustain us. I saw that our bread and water will be sure at that time, and that we shall not lack or suffer hunger; for God is able

to spread a table for us in the wilderness. If necessary He would send ravens to feed us, as He did to feed Elijah, or rain manna from heaven, as He did for the Israelites. {EW 56.2}

Soon I saw the saints suffering great mental anguish. They seemed to be surrounded by the wicked inhabitants of the earth. Every appearance was against them. Some began to fear that God had at last left them to perish by the hand of the wicked. But if their eyes could have been opened, they would have seen themselves surrounded by angels of God. Next came the multitude of the angry wicked, and next a mass of evil angels, hurrying on the wicked to slay the saints. But before they could approach God's people, the wicked must first pass this company of mighty, holy angels. This was impossible. The angels of God were causing them to recede and also causing the evil angels who were pressing around them to fall back. {EW 283.1}

The eye of God, looking down the ages, was fixed upon the crisis which His people are to meet, when earthly powers shall be arrayed against them. Like the captive exile, they will be in fear of death by starvation or by violence. But the Holy One who divided the Red Sea before Israel, will manifest His mighty power and turn their captivity. {GC 634.1}

Fearful tests and trials await the people of God. The spirit of war is stirring the nations from one end of the earth to the other. But in the midst of the time of trouble that is coming—a time of trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—God's chosen people will stand unmoved. Satan and his angels cannot destroy them, for angels that excel in strength will protect them.—Letter 119, 1904. {2SM 55.2}