

RUTH/THREE FUNERALS AND A WEDDING

WEEK 8 – Why is it Significant that the Book of Ruth is Read in Synagogues at Shavuot/The Feast of Weeks? Why Did Pentecost Occur on Shavuot?

3/8/16

God has presented in the book of Ruth – in NEON - His plan of redemption for both Jew & Gentile!

The reason that the book of Ruth is read at Shavuot according to the traditional Jewish community – the Jewish community that doesn't believe in Jesus:

- Shavuot is the birthday and *yahrtzeit* (anniversary of passing) of King David, and the Book of Ruth records his ancestry. Ruth and her husband Boaz were King David's great-grandparents.
- The scenes of harvesting described in the book of Ruth are appropriate to the Festival of Harvest – which is Shavuot.
- Ruth was a sincere convert who embraced Judaism with all her heart. On Shavuot all Jews were converts—having accepted the Torah and all of its precepts at Mount Sinai. Shavuot is the celebration of the law being given to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai. (Chabad Web site)

The three bullet points noted above is NOT what I'm referring to as the SIGNIFICANCE of reading Ruth in synagogues at Shavuot. In understanding the SIGNIFICANCE of Ruth being read in synagogues on Shavuot/The Feast of Weeks, WE NEED TO KNOW that Pentecost occurred ON the Feast of Shavuot. And why do we, as the Church, celebrate Pentecost? It's the day when the Holy Spirit descended and permanently indwelt "about 3,000" believers in Jesus. Pentecost is the day when the Church was born. There's a connection between Shavuot and Pentecost. Shavuot/Pentecost – the only feast that God gave to the Jewish people that Israel and the Church share!

God gave the children of Israel seven feasts which we find in Lev. 23. JESUS is the fulfillment of all the feasts God gave to Israel. In Deut. 16:16 we read that God instructed Jewish men from all over the known world to appear before Him in Jerusalem at three times during the year, at three feasts: PASSOVER, SHAVUOT, and at TABERNACLES. (Shavuot literally means "sevens"; there are seven days in a week, thus it is also known as the Feast of Weeks)

Biblical sources tell us that 2+M Jewish people – from all over the known world – were in Jerusalem at Passover! Jesus was crucified on Passover. Jesus rose from the dead on the Jewish Feast of First Fruits – on the day following Sabbath of Passover week. Paul tells us in I Cor. 15:20, 23 that Jesus is our First Fruits. There was much activity in Jerusalem during what we call "passion" week when Jesus died and rose from the dead! There were 2+M Jewish people witnessing these events. Do you think that was orchestrated by God? Absolutely!

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He told the disciples to wait for power from on high. They were waiting for the Holy Spirit Whom Jesus had promised. We read of His promise of the Holy Spirit in John 14:15-18. In Acts 1:4, 8, Jesus told the disciples not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father, and that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit would come upon them. Jesus told them that they would then be witnesses of Him in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Pentecost occurred 50 days following Jesus' resurrection. What did God tell the children of Israel re: the celebration of Shavuot? Lev. 23:16 - *Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD*. You need to know that the counting for Shavuot began from the Feast of First Fruits. The Feast of First Fruits is the day after the Sabbath in Passover week – the day Jesus rose from the dead!

At Shavuot Jewish people traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the giving of the law at Mount Sinai in Moses' day. Jewish people today celebrate the giving of the law at Mount Sinai at Shavuot. Fifty days following Jesus' resurrection, Jewish people were in Jerusalem celebrating Shavuot, the giving of the law, on the same day that the Holy Spirit descended! How does the giving of the law relate to the giving of the Holy Spirit? There is such a contrast between Pentecost and the Feast of Weeks and yet such a harmony!

Acts 2:5 - *And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven*. This multitude from many nations were gathering in Jerusalem following Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection because of the Feast of Weeks. This multitude had also gathered in Jerusalem at the last feast, at Passover, when Jesus was crucified. Had they remembered what they had witnessed at Golgotha? What a loving God we have Who always makes Himself known.

Acts 2:1-2 - *When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord^[a] in one place.² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*

Acts 2:6 – *And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language*. The “multitude”: the Jewish people in Jerusalem for Shavuot. “Them” - the disciples.

The disciples of Jesus were gathered in one place waiting for His promise – the Holy Spirit. A sound from heaven, like a rushing mighty wind, filled all the house. Wind is frequently used in Scripture as a picture of the Spirit of God (the breath of God) – Eze. 37:9-10; John 3:8. There's a connection between the Jewish people and the Holy Spirit. King David, in Psalm 51, wrote through the inspiration of the HOLY SPIRIT, *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*¹¹ *Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me* (Psa. 51:10-11).

The sound from heaven is the sound of the Holy Spirit – the life giving Spirit of God - being poured out on the disciples.

Acts 2:3-4 - ³ *Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.* ⁴ *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.* The tongues as of fire rested on each of the disciples. In Acts 1:8 we read that Jesus had told them that the Holy Spirit would come upon them and they would be witnesses, they would SPEAK of Him. Jesus told them, . . . *and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

Fire in Scripture often speaks of God's presence.

- The Shekinah glory of God Who appeared to the children of Israel in the wilderness in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.
- God appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush – a bush that wasn't consumed.

Fire in the Tanakh, the Hebrew Scriptures, also speaks of purification, of purging. At Pentecost God sent fire from heaven to show His power – His presence. The fire that God sent descended upon living sacrifices (not on animals sacrifices – that would die). He, the Holy Spirit, descended upon and permanently indwelt human beings.

On this Feast of Shavuot, at Pentecost, the 50th day following Jesus' resurrection, God empowered the disciples, Jewish men, to follow their destiny - to bless all the nations of the world by sharing the message of redemption through the Messiah Jesus. Do you realize that this is why Israel was chosen by God? This was their destiny – to share the truth about the one true God to the nations!!!

Consider: the power of God at Pentecost reversed the curse of Babel. At the Tower of Babel, when mankind wanted to make a name for himself, when man turned against God because of pride, God took the gift of language – the ONE language (Gen. 11:6) which He had given man to communicate with him – and confused their language so they wouldn't understand one another. God then scattered mankind (Gen. 11:8). At Pentecost, God opened the way of communication, of understanding language. The Jews from every nation said, "We hear them speaking in our own tongues – the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11). God's desire is that His message of salvation be taken to the world. And, that message of salvation has always been for both the Jew and the Gentile through the Jewish Messiah, the Promised One of Israel (Gen. 12:3). At Pentecost we see the door opened wider. . . to the nations so that they could hear this powerful message of forgiveness of sin.

A Jewish person in Jerusalem on Shavuot would be remembering past events in Jewish history while anticipating God's future work. Throughout the OT, God told the Jewish

people to remember what He had done on their behalf, to worship Him, and to anticipate what He would do. We need to see that Pentecost points to past events in Israel's history. This will help us understand God's purpose in moving forward. Pentecost points back to Mt. Sinai and the giving of the Law and looks forward to the fulfillment in the New Covenant which God promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah – when God would write His law on their hearts (Jer. 31:33) – when He would put His Spirit within them (Eze. 36:27).

Exodus 19:16-18 tells us that when Moses went to receive the Law, the entire nation of Israel was in fear over the smoking mountain the sounds of thunder and trumpets that accompanied the sight. In Exodus 19:18 we're told that Mt. Sinai was completely in smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire and the entire mountain quaked greatly.

Why were the Jewish people to count 7 weeks from the Feast of First Fruits during Passover – on the 50th day following those 7 weeks? Lev. 23:15-17 – “*And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed.*”¹⁶ *Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD.*¹⁷ *You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD.”* GOD intended for them to always remember Passover – to always remember their redemption from bondage through the blood of the Passover Lamb! Passover is always the foundation! They were to remember their physical deliverance at the first Passover, thank God, and look forward to their spiritual deliverance through the blood of the perfect Passover Lamb, and to the promise of God's Spirit indwelling them. And, what about us? We are never to forget Jesus Who gave His life for us. Paul tells us in I Cor. 5:7 that Jesus is our Passover. Our foundation of faith as believers in Jesus is forever tied to Passover.

What happened at the giving of the law? We read in Ex. 32 that while Moses was communicating with the Lord and receiving God's law, the people were unrestrained (Ex. 32:25)! They were worshipping a golden calf. When Moses came down to the people and witnessed this perversion, he said in Ex. 32: 26, *Whoever is on the Lord's side, come to me.* The sons of Levi moved toward Moses. Ex. 32:27 – Moses told them, *Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.* Ex. 32:28 - *So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.* About 3,000 DIED that day – at the giving of the Law!!!

On the Feast of Shavuot/Pentecost, 50 days following the resurrection of Jesus, Acts 2:41 tells us that “about 3,000” people were given eternal life! What an amazing contrast is taught within this one Feast. The law is called the ministration of death in II Cor. 3:7 –

because the law reveals our sin. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). II Cor. 3:6 states that the Spirit gives life.

In Leviticus 23:16 God instructed the children of Israel to offer a new grain offering to the Lord on the Feast of Shavuot. Lev. 23:17 tells us, “*You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves. . . they shall be baked with leaven. . .*” These two loaves of bread baked with leaven (symbol of sin in the Scriptures) were to be waved before the Lord on the Feast day. Could the two wave loaves with leaven represent Jew and Gentile coming before the Lord, “one new man” (Eph. 2:15), placed in the body of Christ, the Church, that was born on this Feast of Shavuot. AND, two loaves with leaven: Jew and Gentile sinners but saved by God’s grace! Today in synagogues on the Feast of Shavuot, where the two loaves with leaven are to be waved before God, the Book of Ruth is read. What does the Book of Ruth teach? The Book of Ruth tells us of God’s plan of redemption for both Jew and Gentile. Do they know what they are reading? Celebrating? TELL THEM! (Rom. 11:11)

What is the contrast and the harmony that we see between/within Shavuot and Pentecost? Contrast: ministry of death vs. ministry of the Spirit; ministry of condemnation (because the law can only condemn) vs. the ministry of righteousness (II Cor. 3). Harmony: Gal. 3:21 - *Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.* Since God gave both the law and the promises, and since God doesn’t work against Himself, the law and the promise work in HARMONY! The law reveals man’s sinfulness and need for the salvation freely offered in the promise. If the law could have provided righteousness and eternal life, there would be no gracious promise.

Regarding the book of Ruth: God chose the Jewish people to be His witnesses to the nations, to the Gentiles who didn’t believe in the One True God. The Gentiles were polytheistic.

Ruth, the Moabitess, the Gentile, finds the blessing promised to all the nations through the Abrahamic Covenant. God promised Abraham that through him, Abraham, and his descendants, physical Israel, all the families of the earth would be blessed – through the Messiah Jesus (Gen. 12:3). And, Ruth becomes an ancestor of Jesus Who will reconcile to God such different nations as Moab and Israel.

As we, the Church, move toward the celebration of Pentecost on May 15th, let us remember that Pentecost speaks to God’s presence and power in our lives as believers in the Messiah Jesus.

Peter, on the day of Pentecost, preached and people were cut to the heart and said, “Brothers, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). The new believers in Jesus responded with immediate action, repentance, selling possessions, sharing the Gospel. How do we respond? How we live our days. . .how we live each day. . . represents how we live our lives! Are we living this day in faithful surrender to God? May we do so for His glory!

QUESTIONS

How did this lesson impact you?

Any V8 moments?

Why is it Significant that the Book of Ruth is Read in Synagogues at Shavuot/The Feast of Weeks?

Why Did Pentecost Occur on Shavuot?

Are the feasts of the Lord in Lev. 23 significant? If so, why?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK

How will you respond to Acts 2:37?

What will you do with these lessons from the book of Ruth?