

The Word Became Flesh: The Incarnation
John 1:14–18

1. The OT foundation of the Word became flesh — the seed for the need of the Word became flesh (Ruth)

Naomi is actually at the center of the book of Ruth. Cf. 1:19-21. This is our story too — we also had everything and we too are empty. We are fallen. We camouflage it, but a widow like Naomi can't. All the things that camouflage our true need are stripped away. We are more like an ancient near-eastern widow than we care to admit.

The woman believed the Lord had dealt bitterly with her and we are led to believe that she is bitter. She turns on God. *She* went out full; *the Lord* has brought her back empty. And the Lord has witnessed *against* her (not the preposition). This is a despairing place.

So this book that ends (begins??) on a downbeat, takes us even further down.

The key to the hope of the book is in 4:2 — *Naomi had a kinsman*. The whole book hangs on those four words. Note 4:14 — the women said, “Blessed is the Lord...” In chapter 1 she was not blessing the Lord! And notice that the child of Ruth is given to *Naomi* — the child is for Naomi. And the women name the child. So many ironies in the text.

A son was born — the father of Jesse, the father of David. Now we know the bigger picture in this narrative. This is a helpless infant — an entirely dependent being — and on this helpless infant, Naomi's salvation depends. On this infant, her emptiness is made full. Yes, Boaz is a type of Christ as the kinsman redeemer, but Obed is *the* type of Christ. He is the seed. (It's repeated at the end of the book — 4:21-22). This is the way out of the time of the judges.

How can we not hear in these closing verses of Ruth the words that were uttered from the angels to the shepherds. A full millennia later, these shepherds where David's great grandmother gleaned...in those very same fields the pronouncement of the arrival of the Son of Jesse...Obed is born who is Christ the Lord. The irony of Naomi is overshadowed by the irony of the obedience of the shepherds showing up and seeing a Savior.

The child is an infant, yet infinite. (Spurgeon) This is the word made flesh.

2. Matthew 9:18-22 — a story within a story and a miracle within a miracle

We read this text and we have nothing but sympathy for this woman. She doesn't presume to

take even a moment of his time. He didn't try to arrange a meeting or situate herself in front of Him to make a request. She just wanted to touch His garment. She's a fascinating figure. We have sympathy for her chronic illness and disease. There was no relief in anything she tried. And it meant that she was perpetually ceremonially unclean. She cannot participate in Temple life.

We are all similarly ceremonially unclean and need cleansing. We are unfit for worship. We are outside the camp. And He makes us clean. He brings us in. He sanctifies us, literally making us vessels fit for Tabernacle worship. This is what the Word made flesh does.

3. Galatians 3:13-14 —

We are not empty, outside, and unclean. We are *cursed*. And we are cursed by the Law.

Paul is quoting Dt. 21:22-23 — do you sense the *gravitas* of this? This is the scourge of the land. If night falls on the one on the tree, the curse will spread like a cancer on the land. The one who is cursed is brutally killed and must be put immediately into the cold, cold ground. The height of Jesus' obedience is the depth of death on the cross (Phil. 2). We are not only the ones who deserve to die, but we deserve to die a heinous death. And the body needs to be buried as soon as possible.

This is why the Word became flesh because only the incarnate God could pay the penalty of the curse of the Law. How did He do it? This is the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. And that is why the Word became flesh. He became the curse for us. He stood in our place and the full cup of the wrath of God cascaded over Him. He became flesh so He could become the curse for us. The Word became flesh and the Word became accursed. So that we might be redeemed.

It's easy to talk about our emptiness and sickness and brokenness. But how hard is it to say we are accursed? God is against us. God rests far too casually on the shoulders of the American church. We need the Seed. And the Seed has come. And what has Christ done for us? We see it in v. 14 — He came to the Gentiles! We are the children of God. God is no longer against us, but is for us and we are His children. And the full countenance of His grace and mercy shine upon us and we truly rest in Him.

And our salvation must be through faith because there is nothing an accursed person can do to merit God's blessing. Yes, we who are empty are made full and sick are made well. But the true treasure of the gospel is that those who were accursed are blessed. We are at peace with God. This is the Word made flesh and this is the Christ we preach.

The worst kind of selfishness is selfishness with the gospel. And there is no greater urgency than now to preach this Christ who became accursed for us.