

THE CONTROVERSY NAME OF BOAZ IN THE BIBLE
GENEALOGY FROM MATTHEAN PERSPECTIVE:
INTERTEXTUALITY APPROACH

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ABSTRACT: The appearance of Boaz's name in the Bible genealogy – Ruth, 1 Chronicles, Matthew, and Luke – creates difficulty. Ruth 4:21, 1 Chronicles 2:12, Matthew 1:5, Luke 3:32 informs that Boaz was the father of Obed. The issue is the Bible, both Old Testament and New Testament, mentions that the father of Obed should be Mahlon, and not Boaz. According to the book of Deuteronomy, the purpose of Boaz and Ruth's levirate marriage is to raise up an offspring (Obed) that would continue the name of Mahlon, and not Boaz. In Ruth 4:4, Boaz even confirms this purpose is to perpetuate the name of the deceased (Mahlon). In the Gospel of Matthew, Sadducees also explicitly narrate that the brothers of the dead man would raise up seed for him to perpetuate the name of the dead man (Mat. 22:24-25; cf. Gen. 38:8-10). Therefore, the Law opposes the idea of Obed carrying the name of Boaz, and not Mahlon. This research employs the study of intertextuality to offer another perspective – Matthean perspective – on the problematic name of Boaz in the Bible genealogy: Ruth, 1 Chronicles, Matthew, and Luke.

KEYWORDS: Genealogy, Boaz, Ruth, 1 Chronicles, Matthew, Luke, Torah

Introduction

The name of Boaz occurs in Ruth's, 1 Chronicles', Matthew's, and Luke's genealogy. Ruth 4:21 records that and Boaz begot Obed. NET Bible translates that Boaz was the father of Obed. 1 Chronicles 2:12 mentions that and Boaz begot Obed. NASB translates it as Boaz became the father of Obed. Matthew 1:5 says that and Boaz begat Obed out of Ruth. NET Bible translates that Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth. Luke 3:32 reveals that Obed of Boaz. NASB translates it as Obed, the son of Boaz. All verses demonstrate that Boaz was the father of Obed. This information, however, creates contradiction to the other parts of the Bible. In the book of Ruth itself, Ruth 4:4

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discloses that the redeemer should raise up the name of the deceased: Mahlon. Ruth 4:21, on the other hand, does not list Mahlon as the father of Obed, but Boaz. In the New Testament, Matthew 22:24-25 also communicates that if someone dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife as next of kin, and he shall raise up seed (offspring) to his brother. Matthew 1:5, on the other hand, claims that Boaz the kinsman does not raise offspring for Mahlon, but Boaz himself was the father of Obed.

Apart from the book of Ruth and Matthew, the book of Deuteronomy clearly regulates that the brother of the dead man should continue the name of the dead man, not his own name. Deuteronomy 25:6a reports that and it shall be the first-born (the oldest male child), that she bears, establishes the name of his brother, the dead one. Deuteronomy 25:6b presents the purpose of continuing the name of the dead brother is to prevent his name (the dead brother) from being blotted out of Israel. Therefore, the book of Deuteronomy endorses Obed to perpetuate the name of Mahlon, and not Boaz. Another piece of evidence comes from the book of Genesis through the story of Onan and Tamar. Genesis 38:8-10 reports, "Onan should raise up seed (offspring) to his dead brother: then Judah said to Onan, go to the wife of your (dead) brother, and do the duty to her, and raise up seed (offspring) for your (dead) brother. And Onan knew that the seed (offspring) would not be to him, and it happened when he came to the wife of his (dead) brother, he spilled to the ground, lest that he should give seed to his (dead) brother. But it was evil before the eyes of the Lord that he did. Thus, he killed him also." This story informs the readers that the seed (offspring), that Onan gave, would not be his, but his dead brother. As a result, Onan refused to give seed to his dead brother, and he spilled his sperm on the ground. Onan's act displeased the Lord and God killed him due to Onan's action. Back to Boaz's story, the narrative of Onan and Tamar discloses that Obed should perpetuate the name of Mahlon, and not Boaz.

The problematic name of Boaz also baffles biblical scholars. Both Weisberg and Angami acknowledge this difficulty. They agree that since Mahlon did not have any surviving brother who could offer the levirate marriage solution to Ruth, then the duty is expanded to *goel* to act as kinsman redeemer. In Ruth 4:10, Weisberg and Angami see that Boaz, as a kinsman redeemer, took Ruth as his wife to perpetuate the name of Mahlon. Nevertheless, when Obed is born out of their marriage, he is not considered as the son of Mahlon. Instead, the Bible acknowledges Boaz as the father of Obed (Weisberg 2009: 31; Angami 2017: 107). In summary, the appearance of Boaz's name in the Bible genealogy – Ruth, 1 Chronicles, Matthew, and Luke – brings out difficulty to the rest of the Holy Scriptures and biblical scholars. Angami proposes two possible answers. First, the purpose of the levirate marriage was thwarted by popular memory. Or, second, the marriage was not really a levirate marriage

(Angami 2017: 107). The primary problem with Angami’s proposals is Angami does not explain further or provide arguments for these two proposals. Therefore, this research offers another perspective from the gospel of Matthew on the problematic name of Boaz in the Bible genealogy. This proposal believes that the problematic name of Boaz is to emphasize the superiority of Jesus Christ over the Law.

Methodology

What is intertextuality? Moyise summarizes the difficulty of this term, “scholars have been using the word intertextuality variously, in very different, and in some cases, in compatible ways” (Moyise 2002: 418-431; cf. Smith 2022: 228-255). Hylen, for instance, believes that intertextuality is not limited by a single meaning of its author, but rather its reader. In other words, the reader determines the meaning (Hylen 2005: 51). This article, rather, follows Jurin, Krišković, and Kučiš’ understanding of intertextuality. They say that intertextuality is a relationship to other texts. This relationship acknowledges text dependence on previously written texts, and it refers to the interdependence of production and reception of a text with the knowledge of communication participants about other texts (Jurin and Arijana Krišković 2017: 24). Trojanowska argues that interrelationship of texts could lead to important conclusions about the common features of the genealogies described (Trojanowska 2021: 213-217). Therefore, this research employs the study of intertextuality to draw some valuable theological conclusion out of the common characteristics of Ruth’s, 1 Chronicles’, Matthew’s, and Luke’s genealogy.

Genealogy of Boaz in the Bible

This research uses the study of intertextuality to draw some valuable theological conclusion out of the common characteristics of Ruth’s, 1 Chronicles, Matthew’s, and Luke’s genealogy. Thus, this article presents Boaz genealogy in those four books in the table below.

	Ruth	1 Chronicles 2:5-16	Matthew 1:3-6	Luke 3:31-33
1	Perez was the father of Hezron	Perez was the father of Hezron	Perez was the father of Hezron	Perez was the father of Hezron
2	Hezron was the father of Ram	Hezron was the father of Ram	Hezron was the father of Ram	Hezron was the father of Ram
3	Ram was the father of Ammi-nadab	Ram was the father of Ammi-nadab	Ram was the father of Ammi-nadab	Ram was the father of Admin

4	Amminadab was the father of Nahshon	Amminadab was the father of Nahshon	Amminadab was the father of Nahshon	Admin was the father of Amminadab
5	Nashon was the father of Salmon	Nashon was the father of Salma	Nashon was the father of Salmon	Amminadab was the father of Nahshon
6	Salmon was the father of Boaz	Salma was the father of Boaz	Salmon was the father of Boaz	Nashon was the father of Salmon
7	Boaz was the father of Obed	Boaz was the father of Obed	Boaz was the father of Obed	Salmon was the father of Boaz
8	Obed was the father of Jesse	Obed was the father of Jesse	Obed was the father of Jesse	Boaz was the father of Obed
9	Jesse was the father of David	Jesse was the father of David	Jesse was the father of David	Obed was the father of Jesse
10				Jesse was the father of David

The table above summarizes Boaz genealogy in the four books: Ruth, 1 Chronicles, Matthew, and Luke. The table above reveals that Luke’s genealogy is longer than the other books because Admin, the son of Ram and the father of Amminadab, is recorded in the Gospel of Luke. This research, nevertheless, does not discuss Admin because the primary focus of this article is Boaz. All books record Boaz as the father of Obed.

Deuteronomy 25:5-10, however, opposes Boaz to be the father of Obed. Verse five states that the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man (NASB). According to the Law, a brother or a near kinsmen of a man who died childless must marry the widow and raise up a child for the dead man (Weren 1997: 288-305). Therefore, Naomi encourages Ruth to go to Boaz because he is their relatives and a near kinsman. Since Boaz is the kinsman redeemer, then he should take Ruth to himself as his wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her (Deut. 25:5b). Their firstborn, to whom Ruth gives birth, shall perpetuate the name of his dead brother so that his name will not be wiped out from Israel (Deut. 25:6). Since all genealogies demonstrate that Obed carries Boaz’s name, then is Obed Boaz’s second child from Ruth? If Obed were Boaz’s second child, then it would solve the problematic name of Boaz in the Bible genealogy because Deuteronomy 25:6 writes that the firstborn that will perpetuate the name of Mahlon, and not Boaz. Thus, the firstborn would continue the name of Mahlon, while Obed as the second child would carry the name of Boaz. However, is Obed Boaz’s second child from Ruth? The intertextuality study provides an answer to that question. 1 Chronicles 2 informs that Obed is indeed Boaz’s firstborn and the only child from Ruth. 1 Chronicles 2 is different than Ruth 4, Matthew 1, and Luke 3 because it lists all children. 1 Chronicles 2 states all names of

the sons of Israel in verse one and verse two. 1 Chronicles 2:3-4 mentions all the names of Judah's children. 1 Chronicles 2:5 records two children of Perez. 1 Chronicles 2:6 writes the names of five children of Zerah. 1 Chronicles 2:9 states three sons of Hezron. 1 Chronicles 2:13-15 enlists all the sons of Jesse. Consequently, the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 2 is more comprehensive – regarding the children – than the genealogy in Ruth, Matthew, and Luke. The study of intertextuality from 1 Chronicles leads to the conclusion that Obed is the firstborn and the only child of Boaz and Ruth.

The next question is how to solve the problematic name of Boaz in the Bible genealogy? This article proposes that the problematic name of Boaz was purposely written to point out the superiority Jesus Christ over the Law. According to the Law, Obed should perpetuate the name of Mahlon, and not Boaz. However, four books in the Bible concur that Obed perpetuates the name of Boaz, and not Mahlon. The problematic name of Boaz anticipates and ushers Jesus Christ as the ultimate and fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham on salvation. The Law, on the other hand, has become obsolete because of Jesus Christ (cf. Stanley 2018: 110; Heil 1991: 538-545). Through Jesus Christ (not the Law), all people on the earth receive invitation to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus Christ offered his first invitation to the sons of Israel, then he expanded to the Gentiles (Chia 2021: 24-32; Chia 2023: 1-10). Through Matthean perspective, Matthew's genealogy reveals that the female gentiles (Tamar, the Canaanite, Rahab of Jericho, and Ruth, the Moabite) obtain God's salvation due to Jesus Christ, and not the Law (cf. Heb. 11). Matthew writes this distinct and unique genealogy to welcome Gentiles to the kingdom of God (Keener 1999: 125-127; France 2007: 103). Through Matthean perspective, Matthew's genealogy anticipates the coming of non-Israelites to follow and worship Jesus Christ such as the story of Magi (Matt. 2), the Gentile centurion (Matt. 8), the Canaanite woman (Matt. 15). The faithful Gentiles will be included in the eschatological banquet and unfaithful Jews excluded, "Many from the east and the west will come and recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom will be driven out" (Matthew 8:11-12; Heil 1991: 538-545). These verses demonstrate that people who believe in Jesus Christ will join in the eschatological banquet. Those, who are under the Law, and do not follow Jesus Christ, will be driven out. The Jews are no longer the object of God's salvation due to their living under the Law and rejected Jesus Christ even killed him (Matthew 21:39; cf. Clark 1947: 165-172; Freed 1987: 3-19). The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, not the Law, induce the faith of Gentiles to their salvation (Matthew 21:28-32; 22:1-14; 25:1-13; 25:14-30; 25:31-46; Heil 1991: 538-545). Therefore, all nations are invited to the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ, not the Law (Eloff 2004: 75-87). Jesus Christ has made the Law obsolete. Therefore, all nations have become sharers in the Messianic hope and kingdom

(Heffern 1912: 69-81). As Johnson states that the genealogy in Matthew plays an important role of the gospel. Matthew wrote this very genealogy to demonstrate that in every aspect the Old Testament hope of the salvation had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth (Johnson 2002: 178). Thus, the appearance the name of Boaz in the Bible genealogy argues for the superiority of Jesus Christ over the Law in man's salvation. The salvation is not brought out by the Law, but through Jesus Christ.

Does Matthew point out the superiority of Jesus Christ over the Law in other chapters? Matthew does point up the superiority of Jesus Christ over the Law repeatedly throughout his book. Matthew 5 describes the sayings of Jesus, "you have heard (from the Law), but I say to you . ." These formula of saying indicate the superiority of Jesus above the Law. Matthew 5:21-26 conveys Jesus' superiority above the Law in terms of murder: You have heard that the ancients were told, "You shall not commit murder and whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court." "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, You fool, shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. "If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, in order that your opponent may not deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Truly I say to you, you shall not come out of there, until you have paid up the last cent" (NASB translation). Matthew 5:27-28 demonstrates Jesus' superiority over the Law related to adultery: You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery, but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart (NASB translation). Matthew 12 also narrates that Jesus surpasses the Law. He is the Lord over the Sabbath: At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath through the grain-fields, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Behold, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath." But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry, he and his companions; how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent? But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice, you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (NASB translation). Matthew

12:21 also points up the superiority of Jesus's name because all the nations will hope in that name: And in His name the Gentiles will hope. Matthew 18:20 highlights the significance of Jesus's name in the assembly, saying that where two or three are gathered in my name (Jesus Christ), there I am (Jesus Christ) in their midst. Matthew closes his book with the exhortation to fulfill the Great Commission with the name of the Father, the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit because he has been given all authority in the heaven and on the earth: And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (NASB translation). In summary, the gospel of Matthew stresses the superiority of Jesus Christ over the Law because the Law has become obsolete due to the incarnation of Jesus Christ (cf. Waetjen 1976: 205-230).

Therefore, this research argues that Matthew purposely presents the problematic name of Boaz in the Bible genealogy to proclaim the superiority of Jesus Christ over the Law. According to the Law, Mahlon should be recorded as the father of Obed. However, since Jesus Christ is far superior to the Law and he made the Law obsolete, then Boaz was mentioned as the father of Obed. The first coming of Jesus Christ ushers a new era and the New Testament. As Jones says that the Jewish history and Law have been revised by Jesus Christ who provides salvation to the whole world (Jones 1994: 256-272). Therefore, the appearance of Boaz's name in the Bible signifies the superiority of Jesus Christ above the Law. The Old Testament promises and hopes are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, not the Law. The invitation to enter the kingdom of God is offered through Jesus Christ, not the Law or ethnicity. The salvation is guaranteed in Jesus Christ, not the Law.

Conclusion

Boaz genealogy in the Bible is against the Law. First, the inclusion of Boaz's wife (Ruth) in patriarch line by Matthew is problematic because it is contrary to patriarchal custom (Hill 1981: 74). Second, the marriage of Boaz and Ruth is against the Law specially in Deuteronomy 7 and 23. Third, the appearance of the name Boaz, instead of Mahlon, is against the Law (Deut. 25). This article, however, argues that Matthew deliberately poses these three problems of Boaz to argue for the superiority Jesus Christ over the Law. The incarnation of Jesus Christ has made the Law obsolete. Therefore, the problematic name of Boaz in the Bible genealogy was purposely recorded to highlight the superiority of Jesus Christ.

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