

Studies in the Book of Ruth

by

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Preface

A passage of particular importance for us as children of God is that given by Jesus in John 8:31,32, “If ye continue in my word, ye are my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” It means that few things are more important for us as Christians than to *continue* in the word of God – that is, to study the word of God, to know it, and to live according to it.

For this the studies of Rev. Haak are most valuable. We have had several of them already and they have served well in guiding along this way. These studies carefully and thoroughly carry us through the primary thought of Scripture in a way that good Bible study should always be done. And now we have this new study in the book of Ruth, promising to be of equal worth.

There is something appealing about this book of Ruth, if for no other reason than its simplicity. A small book, it appears quite unpretentiously after the book of Judges and before the books of Samuel. Judges, of course, is important in its history, carrying us through the first four hundred years following Israel’s entrance into Canaan, while Samuel records the establishment of Israel’s kings. And there, nestled between them, is the account of this simple peasant girl, Ruth, an immigrant from Moab, hardly a noble distinction in a land of people who boasted in their genealogies and birth.

But that is its beauty, of course, its attractiveness to us; for we are all Ruths at heart, foreigners and strangers brought into the covenant kingdom by the overwhelming grace of God. How readily can we not identify with her?

And so the story goes on. We find in Ruth an example of true *continuing* in God’s word; that is, we find this simple peasant girl listening to the word of God as she had learned it from her husband in the short time they had together before his death. She learned from her mother-in-law as well, doing whatever the Scriptures required she should, until at last she found her rest with godly Boaz, the great-grandfather of David. Her story could only anticipate that glorious song one of her descendants of many generations would sing in what we now know as the *Magnificat*, Luke 1:47-50, “My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior, for he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.”

All of this was anticipated and provided for in that beautiful confession in Ruth 1:16 which expressed Ruth’s deepest commitment so well, “For whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.”

May all who engage in these studies find this same truth echoed in their souls, so that her God is our God as well.

Bernard J. Woudenberg

RUTH
Lesson I
Overview of Ruth

The story of Ruth took place at the time “when the judges ruled,” and thus is part of the period of the judges (the time between Joshua and the conquest of Canaan, 1450 BC, and Israel’s cry for a king, the first of which was Saul, 1050 BC). Exactly when did the history of Ruth take place during judges? There are two major views. Some say that Ruth lived during the days of the Midianite invasions and was thus a contemporary of Gideon (Judges 6). The Midianites would invade Israel during the harvest season, and this would explain the famine that caused Elimelech to leave the country. Others place Ruth near the end of the period of the judges because of the genealogy given in chapter 4:18-22. If there are no missing links, Boaz would be David’s great-grandfather, and thus Ruth would have to live at the end of the time of the judges. This is probably correct.

The human instrument or author (unknown) evidently lived and wrote this history sometime during the reign of David. It appears that David was well known, and the book could conceivably have been written to fill in the history of David’s genealogy. That the book was actually written sometime after the life of Ruth herself is also indicated in that the author feels he must explain the custom of ratifying a legal transaction by giving up one’s shoe (ch. 4:7). This custom must have been unknown to the readers of the author’s time.

Significance of the Book:

1. It traces the line of Christ, specifically the line of David, showing David’s descent from Ruth, the Moabitess. Repeatedly the Old Testament Scriptures show the marvel of God’s preserving the line of Christ (seed of the woman, Gen. 3:15) in humanly impossible ways. The Savior comes from God’s grace.
2. It shows the universality of Christ’s church. Ruth is a type of the gathering of the Gentiles in due time to Christ, even as we are grafted into him (Rom. 11).
3. It gives us lessons in true faith, love of God, trust, and sincere regard for our Christian duties. That is, it gives us lessons in godliness, as those lessons are written by grace in Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz.
4. It teaches us the working of God’s providence as he works all things together for good to them that love him. Careful study will give us an eye to see God’s fatherly providence in our private concerns and to acknowledge God in all our ways (1 Sam. 2:7, 8; Ps. 113:7-9).
5. It teaches us the beautiful idea of redemption. Boaz is the redeemer, the “one who acts as a kinsman.” The whole idea of redemption seen in Boaz, who redeems Elimelech’s inheritance for Ruth, is a picture of our redemption by Jesus Christ.

Outline:

Chapter 1: Ruth comes to Bethlehem

- A. Verses 1-7 – Introduction to and setting of the book
- B. Verses 8-18 – Ruth’s determination to stay with Naomi
- C. Verses 19-22 – The return to Bethlehem

Chapter 2: Ruth meets Boaz

- A. Verses 1-7 – Ruth gleans in the fields
- B. Verses 8-16 – The kindness of Boaz
- C. Verses 17-23 – Ruth returns to Naomi

Chapter 3: Ruth's appeal to Boaz

- A. Verses 1-5 – Naomi's advice
- B. Verses 6-15 – Ruth speaks to Boaz
- C. Verses 16-18 – Ruth returns to Naomi

Chapter 4: The marriage of Boaz and Ruth

- A. Verses 1-8 – The kinsman
- B. Verses 9-12 – Boaz takes Ruth
- C. Verses 13-17 – Ruth bears a son
- D. Verses 18-22 – The Ancestry of David

Questions for Study:

1. Read the entire book of Ruth in one sitting.

Do you see it in the five points under “significance”?

Do you find other major themes in the book?

Why did the Holy Spirit include the book of Ruth in the Bible?

2. Compare the account of Ruth (the spiritual climate of Boaz, Naomi, Ruth) with the account of Samson (Judges 13-16), or with the story of Micah's image (Judges 17, 18). Both give us a glimpse of life during the time of the judges. How do they differ?

3. History and Geography

- a. What do you know about the period of the judges? That is, what are its distinguishing characteristics?

- b. Where is Moab?

Bethlehem?

What is an Ephrathite?

- c. When did the barley harvest take place?

- d. What were the Old Testament laws on gleaning? (See Deut. 24:19-21 and Lev. 19:10.)

- e. Research the idea of a “kinsman” or “redeemer” (Deut. 25:5ff. and Lev. 25:25ff.). Also look up the idea of one's “inheritance” in Canaan.

References:

A Bible Dictionary (Smith, Douglas)
Concordance of the Bible (Young's, Cruden's)
Old Testament Bible History by Alfred Edersheim
Matthew Henry's *Commentary on the Bible*
Standard Bearer Articles by Rev. J. Heys

RUTH
Lesson 2
Trust and Obey
Ruth 1:1-18

Under Joshua's guidance, the land of Canaan had been divided among the twelve tribes (Josh. 13-19). Every family had its own inheritance, within which the family was to continue to live in its generations (1 Kings 21:3; Num. 36:7). This represented the Lord's gracious care for them, and their inclusion in the covenant rest of God (Ps. 16:5, 6). Yet, sometimes the faith of the Israelites grew weak, especially when outward circumstances of famine and apostasy were heavy; of themselves they severed that link with their inheritance. This was unbelief, a lack of steadfastness, an unwillingness to bow under the judgment upon the land and wait for the time of deliverance.

The book of Ruth opens with the history of Elimelech and his family. These were true, believing children of God, who had never shared in the idolatry and wickedness which had become so predominant in the nation as a whole. But this does not mean that the wickedness of the day did not have its effect upon them. In the midst of a famine, Elimelech moves his family to Moab. Did he believe it was only a temporary move? No doubt he did. Yet, under the distress of the famine upon his family (Mahlon – "sickness"; Chilion – "wasting") he severed his tie with his holy inheritance. This was sin.

The Lord is faithful to chasten and to work in all of this his own gracious purpose, namely, the bringing in of Ruth as a mother in the line of Christ. This does not excuse his sin but shows God's power and grace. Elimelech died in Moab. His sons, after marrying Moabitish women, also died. Thus, after ten or more years, Naomi is left a poor widow, living with her two daughters-in-law . (Isaiah 47:9).

Naomi decided to return to Judah, for she had heard that the Lord had granted deliverance and bread to his people. She urges her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab. But Ruth reveals the work of God's love in her heart, implanted by the faith-testimony of her mother-in-law. She is bound to Israel's God and desires to live with God's people. She returns with Naomi.

Memory Work:
Ruth 1:16, 17

"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: they people shall be my people, and thy God, my God:

Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."

Questions for Study:

1. Why did Elimelech take his family to Moab?

What does the presence of a famine indicate? (Deut 28:15-18)

2. Was Elimelech's action justifiable? Why or why not?

Are there similar examples of this same thing in the Old Testament? (See Gen. 12.)

In light of your answer:

- a. In what ways do we show we are more concerned about the needs of our earthly life than with what we need spiritually?
 - b. How do we sometimes attempt to escape the cross laid in our way by changing our place rather than taking up our cross as we ought?
3. Was the death of Naomi's husband and sons a punishment?
 4. Should Naomi have encouraged her daughters-in-law to return with her so they could be with believers?

Explain why she handled the situation the way she did.

5. Give a character sketch of Naomi. Did she have self-pity, bitterness, godliness, a loving heart?

6. Study in names

Name:	Meaning:	Significance:
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Elimelech (1:2)

Naomi (1:2)

Mahlon (1:2)

Chilion (1:2)

Ruth (1:4)

Mara (1:20)

7. Ruth's beautiful confession (Ruth 1:16, 17):

- a. Give the main points of her confession.

- b. Find other powerful confessions in Scripture (i.e. Peter's, Joshua's, etc.)

- c. Are these words appropriate for weddings?

d. What does Ruth's confession teach us about the bonds between us as Christian sisters/brothers?

e. On another sheet of paper, write out your own profession. (Thinking through and writing can strengthen faith. Using Scripture's pattern and words is helpful.)

RUTH
Lesson 3
Naomi-Mara: Jehovah – Plenteous in Mercy
Ruth 1:19-2:17

In a sense we can call Naomi a prodigal daughter (Luke 15:11ff). She left her spiritual Father's house and lived for ten years in a place where he did not reveal himself in his love in Christ. And she did return to Bethlehem-Judah, even as the prodigal son returned to his father's house. She returned because she realized that there was no other place on earth where she could find blessedness. By God's grace her return was in the way of acknowledging her sin and her Lord's faithful chastening of her (Ruth 1:20, 21). Naomi's bitterness was not resentment towards God. Nor when she says, "The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me," does she accuse God of cruelty. Rather her bitterness is the knowledge of sin and its effects. She sees her afflictions as the loving rod of God (Heb. 12:6). In all her actions and words she shows a spirit of humbleness before God and of submission to the afflictions she received (1 Peter 5:5, 6). This contains many lessons for us.

Jehovah is plenteous in mercy (Ps. 103:8, 86:5, 15). Already in Naomi's return, and then in the material provisions God supplies, we begin to see the hand of God's grace. This was not a bitter deed of God, but a most pleasant work of God, and both Ruth and Naomi begin to see that God is taking care of them in his grace. The Lord had not forsaken Elimelech's family because of their unbelief, but in his mercy he would restore. What if there was no mercy with God? We would all lose our portion in his covenant due to our faithlessness. But God maintains our lot and inheritance (Ps. 16).

Rev. J. Heys makes an important observation at this point. "What is striking is the fact that Naomi with her husband and sons left Bethlehem-Judah for earthly bread during a famine, and came back with a Moabitess who was seeking spiritual bread. This daughter-in-law, Ruth, sought the bread of life. Ruth came for spiritual reasons."

Ruth displays that indeed she was a true child of God in her care for her mother-in-law, her humility (to glean was to beg, Luke 16:1-12), her industry, and in her trust in God's providence to lead her. Boaz recognizes this in words of blessing to her in chapter 2:12, "Under whose wings thou art come to trust."

Boaz is a man who honors the covenant of God. His faith in God hallowed his life as a master towards his servants and as a man among God's people. Ruth's love for God's covenant touched Boaz, and he promises her freedom and protection in his fields.

Truly, those who wait upon the Lord shall not be ashamed. Bitterness over sin leads to the wondrous joy in the covenant mercy of God, who not only puts away our sin and restores us again, but also gives us to trust in his mercy to make straight our way.

Memory Work:

Ruth 2:12

"The LORD recompense they work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."

Questions for Study:

1. Why did Naomi's return cause such a stir in the city?

What do you think is meant by the question, “Is this Naomi?” (Lack of recognition, surprise, contempt, compassion on her poverty or _____?)

2. Though Naomi calls herself “Mara,” we do not see bitterness expressed. What spirit do we see expressed toward God and her present condition? Note in verses 20, 21 that she refers to God twice as almighty and twice as LORD (Jehovah). Is there any significance?

3. When Naomi speaks of being full and empty, is she speaking in earthly or spiritual terms?

In light of your answer:

a. Is it often the case when earthly needs are abundantly satisfied that we are spiritually lacking, and vice versa?

Why?

b. Can you give examples from Scripture or your own life?

4. Naomi is a picture of the child of God under affliction, and patience under it (Phil. 4:11; Rom. 5:3-5, etc.). Discuss this statement: “It is not affliction itself, but how affliction is borne, that does us good.”

5. Study in names;

Give the meaning and significance of the name Boaz.

6. Much can be learned in Ruth regarding practical godliness. Identify, explain, and apply these virtues in Ruth:

Humility:

Industry:

Devotion to parents:

Trust in God's providence:

7. How are we to depend upon and live our lives in the light of God's providence?

8. What salutations did Boaz and his servants exchange? (See Ps. 129:7, 8.)

What is the significance?

Should we use such salutations?

9. Why did Boaz show kindness to Ruth?

In what ways did he do so?

What does this tell us?

10. How are you doing on your memory work?

RUTH
Lesson 4
Seeking Rest
Ruth 2:18-3:5

When Ruth returned home that night after her first day of gleaning and recounted all that had transpired, Naomi began to see the merciful providence of God breaking through the dark clouds of her bitterness and poverty. As she listened to Ruth tell of the kindness of Boaz, and when she saw the material blessings Ruth brought back, Naomi blessed the Lord “who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead.” Especially when Ruth told her of Boaz, whom Naomi knew to be one of her closest relatives (kinsman), did she see that it was the Lord who had led Ruth to Boaz’s field. The fact that Boaz was a kinsman is especially the reason for Naomi to rejoice in the kindness of God’s providence.

Naomi rejoices because she sees in Boaz a potential redeemer, one to marry Ruth and redeem Elimelech’s inheritance. According to the decree of the covenant (Deut. 25:5-10), the redeemer’s duty was not only to buy back the field she had been forced to sell but also to take Ruth as his wife. Ruth’s firstborn son would then be counted as a son of Elimelech’s line. In that way in Elimelech’s name an inheritance would be preserved among his people. The family of Elimelech, including Naomi, would be brought back to its rightful place among Israel.

Would the Lord be willing to do that? This had been more than Naomi could have dared hope for. Although the law of the kinsman clearly stipulated the duty of the nearest of kin to marry the widow and raise up children to his brother, thus preserving the brother’s name and inheritance in Israel, Naomi could have little confidence this would happen. First, she knew it was a sinful day in which few took the law seriously anymore. Already in the days of Jacob, Judah had ignored it (Gen. 38). Second, Ruth was a Moabitess, which would provide more than ample excuse for anyone who wished to avoid his responsibilities under the law (Deut. 23:3-6).

But now there suddenly burst forth a small glimmering of promise and light. Naomi has no objection when Ruth proposed to continue gleaning in Boaz’ field. Looking to the Lord in this matter did not mean Naomi remained inactive. She gives the instruction of chapter 3: 1-5, with the prayer that it would be Boaz who would exercise the right of redemption.

There are two things we should note about this instruction of Naomi to Ruth. First, by seeking rest for Ruth, Naomi meant more than seeking a husband for her. What Naomi had in mind was that Ruth would have a place within the nation of Israel as a full-fledged member of the covenant. Second, it must not be thought that Naomi was encouraging Ruth to be improperly aggressive in her relationship with Boaz. The law specified that a widow of a deceased and childless man was free to press her claim for marriage to his kinsman publicly before the elders of the people (Deut. 25:7). This Naomi hesitated to have Ruth do. To press such a public demand would be tantamount to accusing him publicly of neglecting his obligations under the law of God. Although she would not understand why Boaz had as yet not done what they hoped from him, she felt sure that if he were reminded of his obligation, he would willingly do it. The course of

action which she outlined to Ruth was designed to remind him privately and meekly how they felt dependent on him to preserve for them a place in Israel.

Memory Work:

Ruth 2:20

“And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kind unto us, one of our next kinsmen.”

Questions for Study:

1. Explain Naomi’s confession: “Blessed be the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead.”
 - a. What specifically occasioned this confession?
 - b. What does it mean to “bless the Lord” (Ps. 103)? (God blesses us. What do we mean when we say, “Blessed be God”?)
 - c. How had God shown his kindness to the *dead*?
2. Naomi and Ruth decide that Ruth should continue to glean in Boaz’s fields.
 - a. Could the poor gather enough to last through winter? If not, what other ways could income be supplemented?
 - b. Who are the “maidens” of verse 22? (Boaz’ servants, or other poor?)
3. Note that Naomi speaks a prayer of blessing upon Boaz before she even knew who their benefactor was, and later when he is named. What should be our attitude toward those who help us?

Do we need to know their identity? Should we? (Job 29:13; 31:16-20)

4. What “test” did Naomi seek for Ruth?

(Is there a lesson here that encourages parents or fellow believers to aid others in finding godly spouses? Any Scriptures that speak about this?)

5. Was Naomi aware that Boaz was not the nearest kinsman?
6. Was Naomi right in having Ruth take the initiative in approaching Boaz? Isn’t this more properly the man’s place?

- a. Is there a lack of patience shown on Naomi's part? Or are Naomi and Ruth showing faith by willingly placing themselves at Boaz' mercy?
- b. Was Boaz lax in not coming forth as a kinsman?

7. Is there significance to the washing, anointing, and dressing, of verse 3?

8. How is your memory work coming?

RUTH
Lesson 5
Chaste Conversation Coupled with Fear
Ruth 3:6-18

Ruth, under Naomi's tutelage and believing Boaz to be the first in line for this duty, has decided to bring to Boaz her request that he do the part of a kinsman. It was of vital importance to them that the inheritance of their husbands not be blotted out in Israel. In spite of Boaz's great kindness, he had not taken the initiative, and so they decide to press the matter themselves. They do so, however, in the most reserved and unpretentious way possible. Ruth is walking the way of godly discretion. She does not wish that Boaz be put in a bad light as if he had neglected his obligation as a kinsman; nor does she wish to reprove him. But her actions are intended to remind him tactfully of the law of the redeemer, as well as to express her own desire to be his wife.

Two truths shine forth in this part of the narrative. First, we see the chaste conversation of Ruth. Her approach to Boaz (and thus her approach to the whole matter of marriage and children) is one of deep consideration for Boaz, of modesty, of chastity, and yet of forthrightness. Ruth is the living example of the character of the godly woman described in 1 Peter 3:2-5. Her actions and request, namely that Boaz would look upon her in her need and provide that which only a kinsman could, are expressed in as gentle and discreet a way as possible.. Second, Ruth's chaste conversation is coupled with fear. There is no need to "sit still," that is, wait upon the Lord in those matters most dear to her heart. For Naomi and Ruth are mistaken; there is a nearer kinsman. Thus their request cannot be answered at that moment, and they must wait to see what the Lord will do.

In understanding this passage, we should note the importance of the threshing of grain in Israel. It marked the climax of the harvest and was one of the most joyful seasons in the year. As another year's supply of food was secured, the believing Israelites realized that all they had they had received from the hand of the Lord. It was a gift of his grace and the assurance of his covenant. Psalms and hymns were sung as they labored together in the last stage of harvest, the winnowing or the separation of the chaff from the grain. Numerous feasts of thanksgiving were held with prayers of gratitude to God.

Also, do not fail to note that Ruth for the first time laid aside her widow's garments and dressed herself in the customary clothing of a young woman in Israel. This in itself was a public declaration of her intentions to seek another husband.

Boaz's reaction and words reflect the fact that he had given much thought to the whole situation. Boaz loved Ruth, and he had wanted for a long time to do the duty of a kinsman to her. But there were other considerations under the law which he could not ignore. There was yet living in Bethlehem a closer relative to Ruth than he. Boaz knew exactly what had to be done, and Ruth's initiative in which she reflected her feelings are his signal to proceed. He promises to contact the nearer kinsman and redeem Ruth if the kinsman would not. Their parting is done before the rising of the sun, for Boaz is jealous that none suppose he would take Ruth to wife without the consideration of the closer kinsman.

Patiently, Ruth explains to Naomi all that has happened and presents the gift of barley which Boaz had given her. Now they must sit still that day, committing their heart's desire to a faithful Jehovah.

Memory Work:

1 Peter 3:2-5

“While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands.”

Questions for Study:

. 1. Describe the scene that evening at Boaz’s threshingfloor. What was being done?

a. Why at night?

b. Who were present?

c. What was the significance of the eating and drinking, and of “his heart was merry”?

2. Was it proper for Ruth to go to Boaz secretly and lie down there?

a. Why did she uncover his feet?

b. Did this action have special meaning? If so, what?

c. In verse 9, is Ruth asking Boaz to marry her?

3. Boaz’s reaction (verses 9-13)

a. Why did Boaz bless Ruth? (What thoughts were going through his mind?)

b. In verse 10, when he commends Ruth for showing “more kindness in the latter end, than at the beginning,” what does he mean?

c. When he says that Ruth “followedst not young men,” does he mean that his being older than she did not bother her (by the way, what was the age

difference between them?), or does he mean that as a widow Ruth had not been out looking for young men to marry, but rather took care of Naomi?

d. In his vow to “do the part of a kinsman to thee,” was Boaz promising to marry Ruth if the nearer kinsman would not?

4. Why did Ruth tarry the night?

Why did she leave secretly?

5. “Who art thou, my daughter?” Naomi asks. (Matthew Henry adds, “Art thou a bride or no?”) What does this question mean?

6. What does Naomi mean when she tells Ruth to “sit still”?

(Apply this to our own lives of patient waiting for God to make known his will. How do we “sit still”? What temptations are present when we are at such a point?

7. What more do we learn about the characters of Ruth and Boaz in this chapter? List qualities and cite examples.

8. How are you doing on your memory work?

RUTH
Lesson 6
My Redeemer
Ruth 4:1-10

Boaz had promised Ruth that he would see to her rights as a widow in Israel and . Naomi had assured her that Boaz would not rest until he had done it. And so it was; the very same day found Boaz at the gate of Bethlehem, representing the cause of Ruth before the elders of the city.

The gate of the city in that day was the near equivalent of our present country court house. Here all business was transacted. There contracts were publicly verified, trials were held, judgment made, and verdicts were given and carried out. Boaz evidently was one of the elders of the city and went to take up his seat at the gate of the city. By this action he gave notice that he had a legal matter on his mind, which he wanted transacted. (On the “gate of the city” see Deut. 16:18; 17:8ff.; 22:15ff.; Job 29:7ff.; Prov. 31:23; 2 Sam. 15:2, etc.)

It was not long before the nearer kinsman answered. That his name is never mentioned is not without significance; for the man shows that, though outwardly a member in Israel, he has no true inheritance. nor is his name found written (Phil. 4:1-4). In the presence of ten elders, Boaz asked the man if he was prepared to buy back Naomi’s property for her. The man declared he was willing to do so. He had it all figured out. Although he was buying the field for Naomi, it would surely revert to him and his family when Naomi died. Boaz responded that the man would also have to take Ruth as his wife. This the man refused to do, for the field would then wind up in the hands of Elimelech’s family, which would be represented in the first son Ruth bore. If he married Ruth and she bore him a son, the parcel of land would be lost. In fact, he would “mar his own inheritance,” that is, jeopardize it by mortgaging it for the money to redeem Naomi’s plot, and all for naught as far as he would be concerned. For the nameless kinsman, it was simply a financial consideration. Love for the covenant and continuation of Elimelech’s family played no role in his consideration (Matt. 6:19-21).

Following the custom prevailing in Israel, Boaz then asked the man to take off his shoe, the shoe with which he would otherwise step onto the field to be redeemed. The removal of the shoe was a sign that he waived his right to the parcel of land and his right to serve as redeemer (Ps. 60:8). In the presence of the elders and the people standing at the gate, Boaz solemnly accepted the obligation to serve as the redeemer of Elimelech’s family by marrying Ruth and returning the land to its original owners. The people and elders call upon the Lord to bless Boaz and Ruth.

Do not fail to see the underlying truth here of *redemption*. The passage is a beautiful shadow of things to come, our redemption by Jesus Christ. Rev. Heys touches on this when he writes, “wonderfully, this was a shadow of the reality that Christ would come and take his church to Himself as his bride, so that she can live with him in his house of many mansions. He takes her away from Satan and the firm grip that he has upon us. This he did in a very legal way of buying us by his precious blood from the awful punishment we deserve, and from the spiritual death into which we fell with Adam.”

Memory Work:
19

1 Peter 1:18,

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of lamb without blemish and without spot.”

Questions for Study:

1. From your understanding of the principles of “redemption” by the “near kinsman” as given in the book of Ruth, formulate the doctrine of *our redemption* by our “elder brother,” Jesus Christ. (Look up New Testament passages on *redemption, redeem, ransom* and try to state in 4-5 steps what it means to be redeemed by Jesus Christ.)

2. What went on at the “gate”?

a. What was the nature of this meeting place?

b. How did Boaz know the kinsman would be there?

c. Was this gathering the same as a court?

3. Is there significance in the fact that the kinsman is never named? (What does it mean to have one’s name mentioned in God’s book?)

4. Why did the kinsman first say that he would redeem Naomi’s land and then change his mind?

a. Was the kinsman wrong in turning down the opportunity to redeem Naomi?

b. How would he have “marred his own inheritance”?

c. Give an evaluation of the motives and principles governing the near kinsman, and apply them to ourselves regarding the temptations we face and warnings we must heed.

5 What did the taking off and giving the shoe signify?

6. What is the significance of Boaz's calling the people to be witnesses of the transaction that has taken place?

a. How are we faithful witnesses to each other?

b. What obligation does this place on the people and us?

7. Review your memory work. Now write it from memory!

RUTH
Lesson 7
His Name Shall Endure Forever
Ruth 4:11-22

The book of Ruth begins with a sad picture of famine and sin, of death and a door closed on begetting covenant seed. But what a bright and beautiful picture it is with which the book closes! Boaz takes Ruth to be his wife, and she bears a son. And beyond this, God unfolds His purpose to continue the line of Christ. The beauty of the book of Ruth, along with all the Bible, is the salvation which God gives us in Christ, who was born in that line of Boaz, Obed, and David (Lam. 3:22,23.)

In Boaz's marrying Ruth, several great truths are brought to the fore. In the first place, it shows that the Old Testament did not maintain mere legalistic bars against the heathen. Although Ruth was a Moabitess, her faith in Jehovah constituted more than ample credentials for her to be received into the nation of Israel. Although there may well have been natural prejudices which she also met, they were not there in men of faith, such as Boaz. By him she was received as a child of God, and that was sufficient for him. Ruth's confession in chapter one is now sealed in her marriage to Boaz.

Secondly, in the closing verses of the book of Ruth we see the working of God towards the fulfillment of his covenant promises, especially those given in Genesis 3:15 and Genesis 49:10. In the midst of a day when there was much wickedness, and through people who themselves were not faithful (Naomi, Elimelech), God not only preserved a remnant of believers but preserved the seed of the woman, who is Christ. (Compare Genesis 3:15 with Galatians 3:16.) God, who knows the end from the beginning, brings Obed and thus continues the promised line of Christ. This is wondrous in our eyes (Ps. 118: 22, 23).

In addition it should be noted:

1. How it is emphasized that God gave Ruth conception (verse 13).
2. That Naomi had to experience the truth of Romans 8:28.
3. That Ruth is specifically mentioned in the genealogies of Christ in Matthew 1 (verse 5).

Rev. Heys brings his comments on the book of Ruth to a fitting conclusion with these words: "Having promised through Jacob that the scepter would not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come, God brought Ruth to the promised land and moved Boaz to take her as his wife, so that Christ could and would be born in Bethlehem, and salvation with all its blessings might be given us. Think highly of Boaz and Ruth. But think far more highly of God, who gave them the strength to do what he brought them into being to perform, and used them so that our salvation was earned. This will be a blessed reality for us when he sends his Son to bring us into that of which Canaan was only a type and shadow."

May God bless the study of the book of Ruth to our hearts and lives!

Memory Work:
Psalm 72:17-19

"His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things.
And blessed be his glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.”

Questions for Study:

1. The people at the gate readily and publicly acknowledged themselves as witnesses to the marriage of Boaz and Ruth, and went on to bless them (verses 11, 12). Does this teach that marriages should be publicly witnessed?

a. How do we give our blessing to couples as they marry?

b. Are we giving our blessing by our presence?

c. Outline the blessing given to Ruth and Boaz.\

What is meant by the reference to Rachel, Leah, and the house of Pharez, in verses 11 and 12?

2. Was Ruth’s conception a miracle? (Had she been barren? Was Boaz old?) Discuss this in light of other passages (Ps. 127, e.g.) and in light of our present evil day of abortion, etc.

3. How was Ruth better to Naomi than seven sons (verse 15)?

4. What is the meaning and significance of the name “Obed”? Why did the neighbors name Obed (verse 17)?

5. How was Naomi a nurse to Obed (verse 16)?

6. From Matthew 1, write out the line of Christ from Abraham to Christ, and, from Genesis 5 through 11, from Adam to Abraham.

7. Returning to introductory lesson and the five points under significance, do you see these and/or others now?

8. Write out the personal benefits you have received from this study.

9. Review your memory work and write it from memory!

Acknowledgments

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