



## *A Verse-By-Verse Study*

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## **RUTH 1:1-5**

### **(FAMINE AND HEARTACHE)**

**Introduction:** The book of Genesis is behind us and Exodus is the next logical place to continue our journey. But before we go there, we're going to take a short trip through the book of Ruth. If we were to follow the same timeframe as the book of Genesis for the next six books before Ruth, it could be many years before we actually get there.

Unlike the New Testament, the prophets, and the books of wisdom which we frequently have cited while going through Genesis, our travels through the pages of the Bible don't naturally reach out for quotes from books like Ruth.

Ruth is only four chapters long and yet it is almost completely overlooked by Christians, as if it were an unimportant story which has no relevance to anything we would care about in our daily walk. And yet, it is a book which drips with Christological significance and is filled with amazing beauty and wonder.

If one were to sit down and read it from beginning to end, it would take no more than 20 minutes, and yet how many of us have taken the time to do so even once? We'll be in Ruth for a bit more than 20 minutes, but I don't think you will find any of it tedious or boring.

Instead, you'll find it a delight to your senses and a marvelous story of love and grace - both from a human perspective and from the perspective of our heavenly Father. Ruth is an "insert" story, similar to that of Judah and Tamar found in Genesis 38.

There is a main narrative line which the Bible is following, but there are at times stories which occur during the main narrative which are selected and highlighted. As we will see in the last chapter of Ruth, there is a direct link between the insert story about Judah and Tamar and that of the book of Ruth.

Interestingly, Ruth was a story used by Benjamin Franklin to open up the wonders of the Bible to French aristocracy. When he was serving in the French Court as an ambassador to these United States, he was a frequenter of the Infidels Club.

While there one time, he heard some of the aristocrats demeaning the Bible as the pompous often do, even today - maybe even more so today. They noted that it was unworthy of their time or attention and that it lacked style or relevance.

Franklin knew this to be exactly the opposite of the truth and so he played a bit of a trick on them. They had a habit of bringing in and reading stories that were entertaining and then would evaluate them after the reader was finished in order to compliment them or critique them in one way or another.

Franklin went to the book of Ruth, wrote it out longhand, and changed all the proper names to French names. There in the Infidels club, he read his cunningly altered manuscript to his pompously elite associates - the great minds of France.

When he finished, they were utterly enchanted with what they had heard. They loved its elegance and straightforward, simple style. Their exclamation was *Charmant!* - "Charming." And their question, "But where did you find this gem of literature, Monsieur Franklin?"

His answer certainly wasn't what their intellectual and arrogant minds would have expected. He said, "It comes from that book you so despise, *la sainte Bible!*" Certainly there were those who were put in their place because of this one portion of the greatest book of literature in human history.

And yet, the arrogance and pathetically demeaning attitude is found still today; certainly in greater abundance than at the time of Benjamin's ambassadorship to France. The world of scholars, high-browed professors, and godless politicians continues to put down and belittle the book that they could never fully grasp or mentally assimilate.

**Text Verse:** *"When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth, even though one sees no sleep day or night, <sup>17</sup> then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man labors to discover it, yet he will not find it; moreover, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it." Ecclesiastes 8:16-17*

Paul says in the book of 1 Corinthians that the Lord will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. He certainly did it through Benjamin Franklin at the Infidel's club, but He does it to us in our daily lives as well.

We make plans for the contingencies that arise and we feel sure that the choices we make will turn out in a particular way. And yet, we often find that things don't turn out as we'd wished. The things we had hoped for or expected are forgotten and even regretted. This is how it will appear to a lady named Naomi in today's verses.

But someday, she will look back on the tragedies described in these few lines and realize that God was there with her all along. The same is true with each one of us. We lose a job, a family member dies, there is sadness or heartache heaped up in little pockets of time in our lives, and we lose heart.

And yet, when we get through them, we can turn around and look back and see how the good place we have come to needed each one of those difficulties in order for us to arrive at the location we are at. This is a constant theme of the Bible. We think things are out of control and God is there tending to them anyway.

Job is used as the Bible's exemplar of patience and fortitude in times of grief, sadness, and loss, but close on his heels is a lady named Naomi. Her reaction at the beginning of her trials is different from that of Job, but by the time the story is complete, she will, like Job, find herself in a wonderfully satisfied place.

When times get tough for us, we can go to stories like this, even stories which are only four chapters long, and we can be reassured that God really is in control and that He is working our lives out for a marvelous end.

They are stories of hope. They are stories of promise. They are stories which reveal the heart of God in the Person of Jesus Christ. And, they are stories found in His superior word. So let's go to that great and magnificent book now and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. A Famine in the Land (verses 1 & 2)**

**<sup>1</sup> Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled,**

In the Hebrew, the book opens with these words - *v'hi bime shephot ha'shophtim* - "And came to pass in the days when judged the judges." A book beginning with the word "and" may seem rather remarkable to us. It is as if we read the Bible and come to the book and find it is merely a continuation of the same story we have been reading.

And for all intents and purposes it is. God is revealing to us wonders, unfolding them in a logical sequence which may or may not be chronological, but they fit in a fashion as orderly as if they were chronological.

This same "and" begins the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Ezekiel, Esther, Ezra, and Jonah. Beginning this way

is certainly intended to show us an unraveling of a thought processes which had already begun elsewhere.

The time when the judges ruled begins with the time of Othniel who became judge after Joshua died. His time began in Judges 3:7. It goes all the way until the time of Samuel, the last judge of Israel. The time of kings replaced the time of judges when Samuel anointed Saul to be the first king in 1 Samuel 10:1 -

"Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured *it* on his head, and kissed him and said: '*Is it* not because the LORD has anointed you commander over His inheritance?'" 1 Samuel 10:1

Knowing that the author of Ruth said that these things came to pass *in* the days when the judges ruled tells us that it was written after that time. In the last chapter of Ruth, it is going to mention King David, and so we know that it was written during or after his life as well. It is unsure who wrote the book.

Jewish tradition says that it was Samuel who wrote it, but whether it was him or someone else, they were under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and thus the majestic and beautiful story is given to ultimately show us the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Of this, there can be no doubt.

There will be specific names of people and places which are selected to purposefully reveal hidden treasures of God's redemptive plans. As we continue through the book, every detail will be carefully sifted through in order to reveal Him.

Finally, before we go on, to understand the "and" at the beginning of Ruth, it is necessary to understand what the situation of Israel was at the time of the judges. The theme of the book of Judges can pretty much be summed up in the following words, which are the last words of the book -

"In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes." Judges 21:25

This phrase, or a portion of it, is repeated four times in the book. It shows that despite being under a theocracy, there was no true union among the people and there was often more of anarchy than obedience to God.

However, God promised under the law blessing and fruitfulness when the people were obedient and the opposite when they weren't. For a time in this story there is a lack of fruitfulness in the land. It is then a time of disobedience within Israel. The lack is noted in the continuation of verse 1...

<sup>1</sup> (con't) **that there was a famine in the land.**

This part of the verse in the Hebrew is very similar to the previous part - *v'hi raav baaretz*, "and came to pass a famine in the land." The entire thought so far shows God's hand is written all over it. It literally says "And came to pass in the days when judged the judges, and came to pass a famine in the land."

This isn't an unnecessary Hebrew lesson, but it is to show us that both the timing and the circumstance are noted for us to consider. Famines are directed by God. They are used by Him throughout biblical history to effect His will in the unfolding story of the world.

Famines come about in many ways, but none of them are unknown or undirected by Him. Sometimes they come about by unfavorable weather conditions and the lack of rain. Some come about by civil wars where a nation fights itself, and others by wars waged with foreigners.

From the time of Abraham all the way to Joseph, the patriarchs were all affected by famine in ways which showed the realization of God's purposes. Through these famines, patterns are seen which involve the repetition of specific dates and other occurrences.

And in those famines, specific people and places are named which seem otherwise unimportant and yet each reveals something to do with the work of Christ. No word is ever wasted in the Bible. Each has purpose.

In this verse, it says "in the land." By not specifying the country where the famine is, it supposes that the writer is in Israel and that we are joining him there in the narrative as it continues. And even though this happens during the time of the judges, nothing more precise is specified than that it is during a time of famine.

Many suggestions have been made, but none can be certain. Only by looking at the genealogy of David can we guess the approximate time, but even that is mere guesswork and supposition because the ages of his ancestors during this period aren't given.

**1 (con't) And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah,**

The Hebrew here says, *v'yelek ish* "and went man." The word "certain" is put in there by the translators as a way of further singling him out. Modern translations tend leave out the word "certain."

This man was from Bethlehem in the land of Judah. The reason for including "Judah" is because there is another Bethlehem mentioned in the land of Zebulun which is recorded in Joshua 19:15. This then is the same Bethlehem where Jesus would be born some 1100 or 1200 years later.

Judah is the main tribe of Israel and it is the tribe from which Jesus descended. The account is ensuring already that we look for Jesus and that no error is made in assuming a different Bethlehem. The name Bethlehem means "House of Bread" and Judah means "Praise."

**1 (con't) went to dwell in the country of Moab,**

"To dwell" means to sojourn rather than to live permanently. It was the intent to move to Moab in order to be free from the famine, not to make a permanent new home. It is to the "country of Moab" that they went, but the word in Hebrew is "the field" of Moab.

This is a term used with reference to a foreign country, not where the speaker or writer is. Again, it is showing in several ways that Canaan is the point from which the author is intending, and he is including us in the narrative as he writes.

The name Moab comes from two words – *mi* which means "who" and *ab* which means "dad." In modern language we'd call him "Who's your daddy?" The answer comes from the story of Lot and his two daughters. Through his oldest daughter, he had a son and he was named Moab because he came from her father."

**1 (con't) he and his wife and his two sons.**

Not only did the man go, but he headed out with his family. What is important is to keep remembering that this is a story of real people and things that really happened to them. The story could have simply been "not" included in the Bible, but it is. And so it is there for a reason.

We are to open our eyes and pay attention because a zillion people have been in



famines and some of them were Israelites. Lots of people have moved during famines, including many Israelites. And yet, the Bible selected this family and these details for a reason.

This book is so important that it is one of the five megillah scrolls which are read each year during feast days by observant Jews. Those five scrolls and the times they are read aloud include –

The Song of Songs at Passover  
Ruth at Shavuot, or Pentecost  
Lamentations on the 9th day of the month of Av  
Ecclesiastes during Tabernacles  
And Esther on Purim

The stories are read and yet eyes remain closed and hearts remain unopened, but Jesus is there if they will but look and believe.

*Where can I go from Your Spirit?  
Or where can I from Your presence flee?  
If I ascend into heaven you are there  
If I make my bed in hell, behold even there Your hand is upon me*

*If I take the wings of the morning to the coastland  
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea  
Even there You shall lead me with Your hand  
And Your right hand shall have hold of me*

*Wherever Your people go  
You are attentive to their every need  
Surely we can trust that this is so  
You are ever-faithful in Your care, amen and indeed*

**<sup>2</sup>The name of the man was Elimelech,**

The name Elimelech can have a couple different meanings. *El* means "God" and *melech* means "king." The "i" in the middle is either possessive and so it would mean "My God is King." This would then affirm that he lived in the time of the Judges which was when Israel was a theocracy. God, literally being King of Israel during that time.

The "i" could also belong to "king" instead of God and if so, then it is the third person statement that "God is King." In the end, the conclusion is the same - God is Israel's king. There is one more possibility for the "i." That would be to translate it as "God of the King." But at this time, there were no kings and so it doesn't fit.

<sup>2</sup> (con't) **the name of his wife *was* Naomi,**

Naomi is translated by most as beautiful, sweet, pleasant, lovely or something like that. Some take the "i" at the end of her name to be possessive and so it would mean "my sweetness." However, the "i" may also be a reference to the Lord, Jehovah. In this case her name would be Pleasantness of the Lord. This translation is the most likely based on something she herself will say later in verse 20.

<sup>2</sup> (con't) **and the names of his two sons *were* Mahlon and Chilion—**

And the names of the two sons are given. Mahlon is mentioned first and so is assumed to be the older of the two, but in chapter 4 he is named second. The names being reversed then has meaning in the story. Mahlon, the younger, will be the husband of Ruth. He is noted first here apart from birth order because Ruth is the principle in the story.

Their names reflect a sad state of affairs anticipated within the story itself. Mahlon literally means "Man of Weakness" or "Sickly." Chilion means "Wasting Away." Why a parent would choose names like these is unknown, but it could go to their appearance and health at birth. Or it could be the thoughts of a father who was aware of the fallen state of man and the useless nature of life under the sun.

Either way, their lives will match their names and they are in turn a picture of the pleasant things that the Lord gives us to enjoy during this life. They are weak, infirm, wasting away, and dying. Only the eternal things He offers are of any true value.

We may cherish a banana, or a beautiful sunrise. We may long for the cool days of autumn or the sunny days of spring, but as soon as they come, they pass away. It seems that this was on the mind of Elimelech when he married and had children with his wife, whose name is Pleasantness of the Lord. She would fade as would the children who would issue from her.

Solomon speaks of this in Ecclesiastes 2:10-11-

"Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them.  
I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure,  
For my heart rejoiced in all my labor;  
And this was my reward from all my labor.  
<sup>11</sup> Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done  
And on the labor in which I had toiled;  
And indeed all *was* vanity and grasping for the wind.  
*There was* no profit under the sun." Ecclesiastes 2:10, 11

## 2 (con't) **Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah.**

The Bible now further defines the residence of the family. They lived in Judah, they lived in Bethlehem, but they are Ephrathites as well. Ephrath is the same place mentioned in Genesis 35 as the place of burial for Rachel.

The name *Ephrath* as we have seen in the past, means both "ash heap" and "place of fruitfulness." It is not surprising that both of these meanings fit perfectly into the story. The land meaning "place of fruitfulness" is no longer fruitful which shows the greatness of the famine around them.

And so in order to stay alive, they decided to leave to find another dwelling to replace it. And in their leaving, it is a place of ashes, or mourning, because of the move they must make away from the Land of Promise.

Many find his actions as disobedience to the Lord, but the story doesn't indicate this. The fact that there is a famine shows that Israel as a whole is in a state of disobedience. Elimelech is actually separating himself and his family from those sad surroundings.

There are numerous examples of people leaving the land of promise during famines, and disobedience for this happening is not considered the case. A classic example of this is found in 2 Kings -

"Then Elisha spoke to the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, "Arise and go, you and your household, and stay wherever you can; for the LORD has called for a famine, and furthermore, it will come upon the land for seven years."  
<sup>2</sup> So the woman arose and did according to the saying of the man of God, and she went with her household and dwelt in the land of the Philistines seven years."

-2 Kings 8:1, 2

When she returned, her land and all the proceeds from her land were restored. When someone is exiled from the land forcefully, it is certainly because of God's curse. But when a voluntary move happens, no such deduction can be made on an individual level.

<sup>2</sup> (con't) **And they went to the country of Moab and remained there.**

And so, with the intent of merely being pilgrims, not permanent residents, in a foreign land, they went to Moab. As I said, many scholars fault in them for lacking faith in the providence and promises of God by moving to there.

Normally, such a move involves changing one's god when the move is made. However, nothing in the story implies this and no indictments are made. The famine is directed by God, the events are being used by God, and God's plans will be realized through what has happened.

Later in this same chapter, Naomi's words will actually reflect that they had remained obedient to the Lord even during their time in Moab. All that occurs takes place without the Bible negatively commenting on the actions of Elimelech and his family.

*What then shall we say to these things?  
What is it that our joy and gladness brings?*

*If God is for us, who can be against us?  
This God upon whom we call  
He who did not spare His own Son, Jesus  
But delivered Him up for us all*

*How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?  
This is that which certainly our joy and gladness brings!*

## **II. Life in a Foreign Land (verses 3-5)**

In this sad section, there will be a death, two marriages, and two more deaths.

<sup>3</sup> **Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died;**

No mention is made concerning how long they lived in Moab, but at some point, God, in order to continue the narrative in the manner which He alone is the Decider of, the life

of Elimelech ended in the foreign land in which he sojourned. Thus the story must now take on a new biographical direction.

<sup>3</sup> (con't) **and she was left, and her two sons.**

Naomi is the one to remain behind to lead the family through their sojourn - she with no husband and they with no father. There, with her sons, they will wait for their own departure from Moab. Elimelech had simply gone in advance of them.

The Hebrew word used to describe them being left, *vatishaer*, gives this thought. They remained, while he departed in advance.

<sup>4</sup> **Now they took wives of the women of Moab:**

Again, as before, scholars treat this as a real offense and something that was forbidden for them to do. However, this is not the case at all, nor does the story imply it or indict them in any way for this. In Deuteronomy 7, forbidden marriages are listed and they include to the daughters of the people who lived in Canaan the land.

They are named individually and there is nothing said about Moabites. Later in Deuteronomy 23, it is implied that marriage to a Moabite could occur, but with restrictions. There it says this -

"An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his *descendants* shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever, <sup>4</sup> because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you." Deuteronomy 23:3, 4

If an Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter the assembly even to the tenth generation, then it implies that a marriage may occur with them, but guidelines are given in that instance. Further, this applied to the female who would marry a male, but it didn't apply to a male who is married to a female.

How do we know this? Because the name travels through the father, not the mother. None of those in the line of Ruth will be excluded from the assembly, and even David, who comes from Ruth, entered the assembly. He was only the third generation from Ruth. In 1 Kings 7, Solomon is noted as being disobedient for such a marriage. There it says -

"But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, *and* Hittites— <sup>2</sup>from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, 'You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.'" 1 Kings 11:1, 2

In this, the list includes the explicitly forbidden marriages to the Hittites, but the list doesn't mean that all are included as we saw a moment ago. And it is from an Ammonite wife that the next king of Israel after Solomon, Rehoboam, would come. Both Ruth and Rehoboam's Ammonite mother are ancestors of Jesus.

<sup>4</sup> (con't) **the name of the one *was* Orpah,**

The name Orpah is a Moabite, not a Hebrew name. It means the "back of the neck" or the "mane." Her name will find its meaning in her actions before the chapter is finished.

<sup>4</sup> (con't) **and the name of the other Ruth.**

The name Ruth has one of two general meanings. It means either "Friend" or "Companion", or "Beauty" or "Looker" such as in one you would look at because of their beauty. It depends on the root word used to determine the end result. Because it is uncertain, it is probably a play on both words, Companion and Looker.

<sup>4</sup> (con't) **And they dwelt there about ten years.**

The term for dwelt, literally means "to sit." This idiom has passed down even to our modern times where we say that our house is our seat of residence. It was about- ten years that they dwelt in Moab.

No reason is given for the length of time, but it could be as simple as life just getting away from them. Without any regular communications with those in Israel, time crept by and before they knew it, ten years had passed.

Because it says "about ten years" it is asking us to look at what the significance of the number ten is in the Bible. The specific number is given in a general sense for a reason. According to EW Bullinger in his book, *Number in Scripture*, the number ten -

"...signifies *the perfection of Divine order*. ... It implies that nothing is wanting; that the number and order are perfect; that the whole cycle is complete."

God has a plan, the plan is being executed, and there is a completion to that plan. In the case of the story of Naomi and Ruth, the time for that completion to be realized and for them to enter into a new cycle of life would now come...

**<sup>5</sup>Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died;**

In approximately ten years of living, no more than a few verses are given to show us the life events of the family of Elimelech. In them are contained death, followed by marriage, followed by death. Only the details that are pertinent to the story are given, and only the details which point us to God's work in redemptive history are pertinent.

As with the father, and as with all of us, the lives of Mahlon and Chilion were in the hands and at the will of God. It is during this time of spiritual lethargy that the sons marry, and it is during this time that no children are born. God has directed the events of their lives for a greater purpose, a purpose which they can't see, but which is leading all the time to bring us to Jesus.

It has been speculated that the two sons died *because* they married Moabite women. In essence, it is judgment on disobedience for following after the gods of Moab. It is also speculated that no children were born to the women during their marriages as punishment to the husbands.

There are several reasons to know these are both incorrect assumptions. First, when God judges this way, it is stated. We see an example of it in the death of Judah's son Er -

"But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD killed him." Genesis 38:7

Such judgment is noted as a lesson to us and they are noted often, but no such hint is given in the deaths of Mahlon and Chilion. Secondly, Naomi's words to her daughters later in this chapter to "return to their gods" implies that they had married into a family who had been following the Lord.

Thirdly, Ruth will, in the coming chapters, marry a man named Boaz. If God were to have killed the sons for disobedience by marrying Moabite women, then the same disobedience would be seen in Boaz for him doing so. But this is completely contrary to the entire message of the book of Ruth. The assumption is wrong.

Fourth, the women not bearing children cannot be seen as any type of punishment. God withheld children from Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Tamar, among many others in order to meet His goals.

Finally, Ruth will have a baby to Boaz, who is an Israelite, in the pages ahead. And so punishment for having married her is an entirely wrong view. All such assumptions that God was somehow displeased with these actions are wrong.

<sup>5 (fin)</sup> **so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.**

From God's perspective, life was being directed with purpose and with care, even Naomi's life. But from her perspective, not seeing all that He sees and not understanding His plan, there was only loss and sorrow and certainly confusion.

Again as before, the Hebrew uses the term *vatishaer* to indicate that she is left while now her husband and both of her sons have gone before her. Their journey is taken while she remains. One scholar, Fuller, gives these heartfelt words concerning Naomi's plight –

"Of the two sexes, the woman is the weaker; of women, old women are most feeble; of old women, widows most woeful; of widows, those that are poor, their plight most pitiful; of poor widows, those who want children, their case most doleful; of widows that want children, those that once had them, and after lost them, their estate most desolate; of widows that have had children, those that are strangers in a foreign country, their condition most comfortless. Yet all these met together in Naomi, as in the center of sorrow, to make the measure of her misery pressed down, shaken together, running over. I conclude, therefore, many men have had affliction - none like Job; many women have had tribulation - none like Naomi." (Fuller)

The beginning of the book of Ruth resembles a Greek tragedy. It seems as if nothing could go right for Naomi. Surely the pleasantness of the Lord doesn't seem to describe her situation at all. She is in a rut that seems hopeless and beyond ability to bear.

But the Bible says that God is attentive to the widow. With three of them living together, there is three times the attentiveness to that home where they dwell. Certainly, good things are in store for those who have mourned their dead and good things are in store for those of us who belong to Him and who mourn as well.



But there is the truth that we must belong to Him in order to receive His favor and His hand of grace. It would be illogical to assume that God would care for those who don't first reach out to Him. When tragedy happens, people ask, "Why did God let this happen to me?" They say this as if God owes them something.

But isn't it we that owe God? Didn't He give us life, time, and place. Every good thing we have came from Him and yet, we often don't take the time to thank Him. And above all, He gave us His greatest Gift of all, His own Son. If we don't accept that gift, then why would we expect any rights as His child.

And so, this is what God would ask of us, to call on Him, to receive His offering of peace, and to become His child through adoption. And this can only happen if we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior. After that, even trouble and sadness begins to make sense. They are no longer hindrances to our relationship with Him.

Instead, they are steps which we must take in order to come to the place where His greatest blessings can be bestowed. Every step, every step, every step... leading to the perfect fulfillment of His plans for us.

**Closing Verse:** *LORD, what is man, that You take knowledge of him?  
Or the son of man, that You are mindful of him?*

<sup>4</sup> *Man is like a breath; His days are like a passing shadow. Psalm 144:3, 4*

**Next Week:** Ruth 1:6-14 (Bread in the Land of Promise) (2nd Ruth Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. He knows your trials, troubles, and woes and He is there with you through them. So cling to Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

## **A Famine in the Land**

Now it came to pass, as we understand  
In the days when ruled the judges  
That there was a famine in the land  
Which brought about difficulties, toils, and trudges

And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah  
To dwell in the country of Moab went  
He and his wife and his two sons

Until the time of the famine was spent

The name of the man was Elimelech

The name of his wife was Naomi

And the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion  
Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah, their place of residency

And to the country of Moab they went  
And remained there in a new emplacement

Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died  
And she was left, and her two sons  
A husband and a father, they were denied

Now they took wives of the women of Moab  
Orpah was the name of the one  
And the name of the other Ruth  
And they dwelt there about ten years under Moab's sun

Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died  
So the woman survived her two sons and her husband  
Surely at this time, God's plans had her mystified

We too live in a world of troubles, trials, and woes  
And often things occur which make us question God  
We shake our heads and take the path where it goes  
And each step can be a painful, heartbreaking trod

But at the end of the miserable, weary path  
We find that God was there all along guiding us  
We thought that we were the objects of His wrath  
But instead we were being molded to be like Jesus

His ways are far above ours, so let us in Him trust  
Let us never let our faith fail as each day we live  
He is tending to us, and all His ways are just  
And so let us to Him all our praises give

*Hallelujah and Amen...*

## **RUTH 1:6-14**

### **(BREAD IN THE LAND OF PROMISE)**

**Introduction:** Last week we saw the miserable state that Naomi found herself in after ten years in Moab. Her husband and both her sons had died and she was left alone with her two daughters-in-law. The story continues now with news from Israel that will impel her to make the move back to her homeland.

She had probably sat and talked about this with her daughters-in-law many times and they had probably made conversation about going back with her when she went. We all do this, saying things as if they would happen when the probability is that they never will. It is a way of filling time and filling our minds with hopes that please our thoughts.

With her time to move at hand though, the reality of those idle conversations will now be proven either true or false. Certainly, there was no malicious intent in either daughter-in-law, but just the wistful ruminations that would never really come to the point of being realized.

But during all that time, and through the moments of sadness and heartache, a preparation was being made for either of the girls who would really presume to make the move with Naomi. God has a way of making us hope for what is better by handing us difficulties in the present. Matthew Henry sums it up this way, "Earth is made bitter to us, that heaven may be made dear." Think about that...

Life in Moab was made bitter for Naomi and her daughters-in-law in order to make their hearts hopefully look for the pleasantness of a return to the land of promise. And it did. Naomi is ready to return home.

**Text Verse:** *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."*

*-Hebrews 11:6*

In the coming verses, we will see Naomi bless her daughters-in-law in the name of the Lord. But in order to receive such a blessing, it means they must seek Him. They will be tested by Naomi in her words to them as to whether their devotion is sincere or not. If it is, then their reward will certainly come.

What will seem like an honest plea by Naomi for them to depart from her is actually a plea for them to consider well the road they plan to take. The same is true for us who understand that following Christ doesn't always mean prosperity, wealth, and health.

Instead, God has granted affliction to His apostles and faithful followers for the past 2000 years. If we simply open our eyes to history, it should be apparent that we are bound to face such trials from Him as well. If we do, will we still be willing to follow Him?

Let us resolve in our hearts now to follow the Lord no matter what happens. And the best way to do that is to know Him intimately and to trust Him implicitly. The way we come to do both of those things is through knowing His superior word. So let's turn to that word now and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. The Lord Visited His People (verses 6, 7)**

**<sup>6</sup>Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab,**

This verse takes us back to verse 4 which said, "And they dwelt there about ten years." The word for dwelt, as we learned, meant "to sit." Now the time for "sitting" has ended and so the Hebrew says she "stood up." The imagery is exciting and shows that activity lies ahead.

And so, she arises with her daughters-in-law. Again, the Hebrew term is very descriptive. The word for daughters-in-law is *khaloteha* which means brides, as in the brides of her sons. It is with the two of them that she arises and begins her return from Moab. And there is a reason why she is now engaged in this course of action which is...

**<sup>6 (con't)</sup> for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had visited His people by giving them bread.**

Somehow, without the Bible further explaining it, word came to her that the famine was over and it was time to return. And the reason is given that the Lord, Jehovah, had "visited His people" by giving them bread. Naomi has stayed no longer in this foreign land than necessity required her to.

Again as in verse 1, the term *sadeh* or the "*fields*" of Moab, is used. It is another indication that the story was written in Israel because the term *sadeh* is used when speaking of foreign countries. We are asked to view these events from the perspective of the people who are the redeemed of the Lord. From that point of view, we are to look at how He deals with such events.

The Hebrew word translated as "visited" is *paqad*. It is a word which has no comparable single word in English, and so it must rather be described. It indicates "overseeing or looking into a matter and then attending to it." In other words, the Lord divinely looked into the affairs of Israel and attended to the famine which had gone on for so long by giving them abundance once again.

Because the book of Ruth is an insert story, showing God's attendance to the affairs of mankind in order to meet His redemptive purposes, then it can be rightly assumed that the entire scenario of the move to Moab, the marriage of these women, and then the sending of news to Naomi that the famine had ended was completely and surely for the purpose of directing the events of the book of Ruth.

The famine, the death, the marriages, the next two deaths, and the ending of the famine were all designed to bring about the events to come in the next verses and chapters of Ruth. Real people and real circumstances were used by the sovereign God to give us this story. Imagine the importance of the words we are now looking at!

**<sup>7</sup> Therefore she went out from the place where she was,**

Having "stood up" from the place of her ten-year "sitting," she next "went out" from the place where she was. It is a very descriptive sequence of events which has taken place. The words are used to put us inside the events and to move us mentally as she moves.

**<sup>7</sup> (con't) and her two daughters-in-law with her;**

As Naomi arose, so arose the two daughters-in-law. It is an indication that their house was merely a temporary residence which is now to be abandoned by all three of them.

**<sup>7</sup> (con't) and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.**

Only Naomi came and so only she can actually return. If the other two were to go, it would be not as a return unless they went with her. Instead it would be a journey that is

commencing. They had probably talked about this moment many times and said that when she left, they would go with her.

And now, they have arisen with her to walk with her at least a portion of the way, but there is nothing yet to suggest that it is a true commitment to go to Judah with her.

*The words of the Bible are spoken to us  
So that we may have peace in this world where we live  
They reveal the heart of God seen in Jesus  
And in the Holy Spirit who to us He does give*

*In the world you will have tribulation it is true  
But be of good cheer as on the difficult road you trod  
Jesus has overcome the world and His peace He grants to you  
Peace and contentment sent from our glorious God.*

*Be not despondent at the woe which does surround  
Wait patiently on the Lord through each test and trial  
And He will shower upon you blessings to astound  
The difficulties will end after a short while*

## **II. The Blessing of the Lord (verses 8-10)**

**<sup>8</sup> And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house.**

For however long they walked with Naomi, if they were to remain in Moab, there had to be a point where the walk would end and they would eventually turn around. Each step forward would be a burden on her, knowing that each step required another step back in the opposite direction. And so finally, she lets them know that it has been far enough.

Her words to them are to "return each to her mother's house." And yet, in the next chapter we'll see that Ruth's father is still alive. The wording is not intended to mean that the mother in Moab was the leader of the house, but rather to show that *she*, Naomi, isn't their mother and that they have mothers who are awaiting them.

In the return to the mother would be a return to the comfort and solace of a welcome and familiar refuge. Naomi wanted this for them rather than the privations that would

be expected in Israel. As widows, they would be extremely poor and dependent on the charity of the people for their livelihood.

There is no fault in Naomi here as many try to infer. They will say she is doing wrong to the daughters by not having them come to be a part of the covenant people. But the next half of verse eight shows that this is a poor analysis...

<sup>8 (con't)</sup> **The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.**

The marriage of a woman implied that she was uniting herself to the religion of her husband. In turning back to Moab, it would imply that they were no longer bound to that faith, but Naomi's simply-understood theology was that the Lord was the One true God and that He reigned not only in Israel, but in Moab as well.

Her words then are a pronounced blessing on them and an acknowledgment of His sovereignty. In her plea, she asks Jehovah to deal with these two faithful daughters-in-law just as they had dealt with her. It is an exemplary note of their attentive care to her through her many trials and sadnesses.

For those who are interested in these things, this verse contains a little peculiarity in the Hebrew. The pronoun which should be feminine is masculine. A literal translation says: The Lord "make" [masculine] grace upon **you** as **you** have "done" [masculine] with the dead [plural] and me.

In fact there are nine instances of gender discord in chapter 1 and seven of them are spoken by Naomi. Other gender peculiarities are found elsewhere in the book as well. These then are trying to tell us something either directly, or in the pictures they present.

In invoking the name of the Lord, she is here relying on His providence towards them. These two women married into the faith of Jehovah and so, through their kindness to her sons, she is pronouncing this blessing. No fault, but rather great faith is found in Naomi.

<sup>9</sup> **The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband."**

It is the second of a two-fold blessing where the divine name of the Lord, Jehovah, is invoked. Instead of saying "May *God* do these things," she again gives the specific title of the Lord, Jehovah. When this title is used, it is speaking of the One who monitors the covenant and the covenant people.

In the first blessing, she asked that "The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me." And now, she explains what the first general blessing meant by giving specifics. She asks the Lord grant that they may find rest, each in the house of her husband.

The term "in the house of her husband" is used in a locative manner. The natural, but unstated question would be, "Where will they find rest?" and the answer is given. "The place where you will find rest is in the house of your husband."

What she is implying is that they have tended to her with the same care that she had lost when her husband and then her sons had died. Her petition is that the Lord repay them in kind for this kindness.

Understanding this verse in connection to where Ruth ultimately finds rest and what it pictures is one of the secret keys of the book of Ruth and it is ultimately pointing to our own place of rest in the person of Jesus Christ.

The fourth chapter of Hebrews shows us the fulfillment of this petition of Naomi for her daughters as fulfilled in Him. It is when we believe in the work of Jesus Christ that we enter into His rest. Understanding this, gives us an advanced insight into what the book of Ruth is picturing.

<sup>9</sup> (con't) **So she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.**

In the customary Hebrew way, there is a preposition before the pronoun. And so it reads *va'tissaq la'hen* - "and she kiss to them." It shows the passionate imparting of herself to these cherished daughters-in-law.

And in response it says "they lifted up their voices and wept." Unlike our western way hiding of emotions, the opposite is true in the Middle-eastern cultures. There is often an unbridled showing of emotion during instances like this and the term "lifted up their voices" is certainly not an understatement.

There is true sadness and it is being truly vocalized by these three women.

<sup>10</sup> **And they said to her, "Surely we will return with you to your people."**



They must have talked about this before they left, saying they would go with her. And she would surely have said that it would be better for them if they stayed. But whether they were actually serious or not couldn't be determined until now.

Were they merely being polite and respectful? Or did they really intend to go the distance and start a new life in a new land? Where words fail, actions tell the truth and it is now time to determine which is which.

*Come to Me, all you who labor, come to Me  
You who are heavy laden, I will give you rest  
Put your confidence in My words and truly  
You will find your soul is eternally blessed*

*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me  
For I am gentle and lowly in heart  
Here your souls will find rest eternally  
Yes, My peace and My rest to you I will impart*

*For My yoke is easy and My burden is light  
And I will return You to the long lost Garden of delight*

### **III. Turn Back My Daughters (verses 11-14)**

**<sup>11</sup> But Naomi said, “Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me?”**

Her statement is direct, and her question is obvious. What would be the point of going with her? She is a widow and therefore she is destitute of anything except the house or land that her husband left in Israel before the famine.

Without a husband to take care of the house and to work in the field, she would be left poor, without an income, and wholly dependent on the goodness of others and whatever the law provided for her.

It would be a bleak and meager existence, and she was hoping to keep them from the same sad lot. And it was a lot which would be unexpected to change as we see next...

<sup>11</sup> (con't) **Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?**

This seems like an odd thought to us today. What possible difference could this make? But in the custom and culture of the times, her statement is one which is perfectly understood. Going all the way back to Genesis 38, we see the practice of what is known as the levirate marriage.

It comes from the Latin term *levir* and it is where a brother-in-law would fulfill the responsibilities to the wife of his dead brother. This was later adopted, in a form particular to Israel, into the Law of Moses. That was concerning land inheritances and family name, and is recorded in Deuteronomy 25 -

"If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be *married* to a stranger outside *the family*; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. <sup>6</sup> And it shall be *that* the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel." Deuteronomy 25:5, 6

Before the time of the law though, this was still a culturally mandated practice. And it is more in line with what Naomi is referring to now. In Genesis 38, Judah had three sons. The oldest, Er, had a wife Tamar. He died before Tamar had children and so she was given to the second son to raise a child up in Er's name.

This second son refused to adhere to the custom and so the Lord killed him. The third son, Shelah, was never given to her. This resulted in events that finally ended with Judah becoming the father of her child without even realizing it. That account is directly tied to this account in Ruth as we will later see.

Naomi is telling them that she has no children in her womb that could come forth and fulfill this cultural obligation.

<sup>12</sup> **Turn back, my daughters, go—for I am too old to have a husband.**

She is now going to begin a series of justifications for the daughters to consider and act on concerning a return to their homes. She's already asked rhetorically if she had sons in her womb. The answer is surely "no." Now she tells them that she is "too old to have a husband."

Although this certainly isn't literally true, it is culturally so. She is older, has had a husband and children, and is beyond the age where any normal possibility within her culture would indicate that a man would be interested in her. She is an elderly lady by society's standards, and she is poor on top of that. And so, it is an obvious conclusion based on her situation.

<sup>12</sup> (con't) **If I should say I have hope, if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons,**

Now she raises the level of the concern even higher. Suppose that even against the odds of culture and situation, she were to tell them, "I have hope. Come to Israel with me because I have a man who will marry me..." Even if this were the case, she would still have more obstacles ahead of her.

The first is obvious - would she have children at all, or has she passed the age where it would happen? Secondly, what if she remained barren even if she were still of child-bearing age? Thirdly, what if she had daughters instead of sons?

And fourthly, even if she had sons, would they be like Judah's son Onan and refuse to fulfill their roles towards their dead brothers?

The logical conclusion is that there was too much that would stand in the way of her bearing sons that could fulfill this levirate responsibility to one or both of the daughters.

<sup>13</sup> **would you wait for them till they were grown?**

And on top of all the other uncertainties comes another which they must personally consider. As she speaks, she states it in parallel thoughts. First, would they be willing to wait, despite all of the other unknowns that may arise?

Even if everything worked out in an exact and perfect manner, would they be willing to wait the many years that were necessary for one of her sons to mature enough to even fulfill his duty? The questions have been raised to the highest level of impossibility in any foreseeable scenario.

In the case of hoping for something from Naomi in regard to family life, there was nothing but her friendship left. And as she was older, it would become an increasingly one-sided relationship as the daughter or daughters would eventually have to take over more and more responsibilities as Naomi aged.

As a side note, this part of verse 13 is difficult to translate because the term "for them" as in "would you wait 'for them'" (meanings sons) is actually feminine, not masculine and so it doesn't make any sense. Many translators now translate this as "would you therefore wait till they were grown?" The word would then be an Aramaic term "therefore" instead of a Hebrew term "for them."

**13 (con't) Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands?**

This is the second half of the parallel thoughts. First, she said, "would you wait for them till they were grown?" And then she heightens it for them to consider further. "Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands?"

The first thought conveys the idea of time and patience, something they might have. But the second conveys the idea of human nature and our personal urges that either exist or may arise due to circumstance. The second is decidedly harder to withstand.

It is one thing to wait for something without any external pressures being applied. A person in jail will wait patiently to be reunited to his wife because no other opportunity exists. But it is another thing to wait for something while being tempted in the process. The wife who is not in jail will wait impatiently and possibly unfaithfully simply because opportunity exists.

A man at war in Germany is a faithful husband as he fights the battle, but once he gets his leave and goes to France for two weeks, circumstances are bound to change. King David found this out when he stayed home from the battle one fateful spring.

And so in this verse, she uses a word which is found only here in the Bible. It is the Hebrew word *agan* and it is translated as "restrain." It means "to shut oneself in" or "shut oneself off." In other words, it implies that they would completely isolate themselves from having a man and would remain in their unwedded state as they now were.

Naomi is asking them to consider everything carefully and not to make a sudden decision which will forever change their futures and their relationships. She is being just, wise, and noble in presenting to them the exact nature of what they are contemplating. If they were to come with her, there would more probably be inconvenience rather than good times. There would probably be poverty rather than abundance. And there would be expected sadness beyond hope of joy.

She is asking them to take stock of the situation before committing. And this is exactly what the Lord did when confronted by those who wanted a share in His ministry. In Matthew 8, we read this -

"And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side. <sup>19</sup> Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, 'Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.'

<sup>20</sup> And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head.'" Matthew 8:18-20

And even more to the point is the certainty that the family had told both of these women about the God of Israel. Despite the famine and the move, and despite the death of her husband and her sons, Naomi was returning to the land He gave to them.

If you wonder why she was so intent on dissuading them from accompanying her back home, even when she was determined to go, it was to ensure that they were doing it, not only for her sake, but for the sake of the religion they had heard of and joined to.

Beyond all of the hardships and sadness, there was said to be a God over Israel who transcended difficulties and who is much less interested in temporary affections and excitements than He is to a faithful commitment from His people. It is a novel and fun experience to travel to another country, yes.

But what kind of allegiance is there when the novel turns to the mundane? Naomi, above all else, is looking to the strength and sincerity of their commitment to the Lord God of Israel. Something she and her family had taught them, but which would need to be tested in a race of long endurance and many trials.

And this is exactly what Jesus referred to in His words to those who followed Him. See how they reflect this sentiment that we are seeing between Naomi and her daughters from Matthew 10:37-39 -

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>38</sup> And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>39</sup> He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

Were these two girls worthy of the God of Israel? Were they ready to give up on father and mother and pursue Him and Him alone? One more time Naomi shows them that

being a follower of this God doesn't always mean pleasure and prosperity, but it also means times when His hand is against you. And so she utters her final words of warning...

**13 (con't) No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!"**

The New King James Version doesn't at all give the correct sense here. These words are literally translated, "for it is bitter to me, exceedingly, beyond you." The daughters had suffered bitterly at the loss of their husbands, but Naomi had suffered more. She had lost her husband and her children.

And now the suffering would continue and it would continue to be more grievous to her than to them. Whether they came with her or whether they parted, her lot wouldn't change. And in fact, either way her lot would probably get worse.

If they stayed, she would be separated from these two daughters she had come to love. If they came, then she would continue to suffer knowing that they too were suffering because of her. Any course of action that she could imagine would bring heartache.

And the heartache was directly from the God that she was going back to. Is this something they were willing to accept, a God that would allow this? But she is adamant that it was because "the hand of the LORD has gone out against me."

Jehovah, her God, was the cause of her bitterness. Would they be willing to follow a God who brought both joy and adversity? It was a question that Job himself answered. After all of the calamities he endured, he faced the decision as to whether he should abandon his faith or not. Here is the account from Job 2 -

"Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!' <sup>10</sup> But he said to her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips." Job 2:9, 10

Would one or both of the daughters act in this same vein of faith?

**<sup>14</sup> Then they lifted up their voices and wept again;**

The emotions are beyond words to describe them, just as they are at the funeral of a loved one or the parting of lovers in a time of war. We can only understand the emotion when we have lived through them and known the feelings from personal experience.

These three women who had endured so much were now faced with their inevitable choices. There could be no more delay than this time of weeping. When it ended, the choices would be realized. *If* the weeping would endure forever, it would hold back the reason that the weeping had come. But it couldn't...

**<sup>14</sup> (con't) and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law,**

Implied in this is the Middle-eastern custom of kissing upon saying goodbye. Orpah has lived up to the name she was given at her birth. Her name Orpah means "Mane" or "Back of the neck." As she walked away, this is the last of what they saw of her. The word from which her name comes from is the Hebrew word *oreph*. As an interesting pattern, this word is used in Jeremiah 48:39 when speaking of Moab in a manner similar to Orpah's turning back to Moab now -

“They shall wail:  
‘How she is broken down!  
How Moab has **turned her back** with shame!’  
So Moab shall be a derision  
And a dismay to all those about her.” Jeremiah 48:39

Instead of going to the land of Israel and seeking out the face of God who gives both blessing and hardship at His will, she turned her neck from God to that which is not God and departed from the annals of history except as is recorded in this chapter of Ruth.

The act of kissing is a rare thing in the Bible. Only two kisses are mentioned in the book of Ruth and both of them have occurred during these eight verses. The first was as Naomi kissed her daughters after she blessed them in the name of the Lord, Jehovah.

The second is here when Orpah gives a farewell kiss to her mother-in-law and to the hope of Israel. There is a contrast between the two, but there is also a confirmation that God has granted us the freewill to pursue Him.

Orpah made her choice and Ruth will make hers. And each of us must make our own. God doesn't force His will upon us, but He gives us the choice to earnestly seek Him or to turn from Him. Orpah chose poorly. However, Ruth chose another course for life...

<sup>14 (fin)</sup> **but Ruth clung to her.**

In contrast to Orpah who continued to fade into the distance on that dusty road in Moab, Ruth clung steadfastly to Naomi. Though at this time, Naomi could hardly be said to live up to her name, Pleasantness of the Lord, Ruth was willing to endure the bitterness along with her.

In fact, the word "clung" is the Hebrew word *dabaq*. It is the same word used in Genesis 2:24 when speaking of the relationship between a man and his wife. It is also the same word used in the 63rd Psalm to describe the person who was absolutely determined to follow the Lord -

"My soul clings to You;  
Your right hand upholds me." Psalm 63:8 (NASB)

A good way for us to think of Ruth's grasp is when something sticks like glue. It is a binding which reflects permanence. Despite the trials that may lay ahead, Ruth was willing to endure the hand of the Lord through good or trial. She was steadfast in her heart.

And so Ruth also fulfilled her name, or at least one aspect of her name, in this act today. Her name means in one sense "Friend" or "Companion." And she proved that she is such a friend. One who would stick closer than any bond but death itself could separate.

Orpah may have loved Naomi, and Naomi's words testify that she was a faithful daughter-in-law. But her love wasn't so deep as to overlook the trials one might face in a walk towards the land of promise. Like her, many look at the value of heaven and decide it's not worth the walk to get there.

They cannot find the strength and the resolve to forsake family, home, addictions, or pride in order to walk by the Lord's side. They may love Him, just as Orpah loved Naomi, but they love Him as an unattainable ideal and not as a Savior worth giving up on life itself.



In the end, there are only one of two directions we can go. One is toward the face of God which is seen in the Person of Jesus Christ, or we can turn our neck and go in the opposite direction. The first leads to eternal life, the latter leads to eternal separation.

The choice belongs to each of us, so choose wisely.

**Closing Verse:** *O God, my heart is steadfast;  
I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.  
2 Awake, lute and harp!  
I will awaken the dawn.  
3 I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples,  
And I will sing praises to You among the nations.  
4 For Your mercy is great above the heavens,  
And Your truth reaches to the clouds. Psalm 108:1-4*

**Next Week:** Ruth 1:15-22 (Returning to the Promised Land) (3rd Ruth Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. He knows your trials, troubles, and woes and He is there with you through them. So cling to Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **One Choice, Two Paths**

Then she arose with her daughters-in-law  
That she might from the country of Moab return  
For she had heard in the country of Moab  
Words which made her heart churn

That the Lord had visited His people by giving them bread  
And so she prepared to move from Moab to Israel instead

Therefore she went out  
From the place where she was on that day  
And her two daughters-in-law with her  
And off they went on the way

To the land of Judah to return  
For her home her soul did yearn

And Naomi to her two daughters-in-law said  
“Go, return each to her mother’s house I say affectionately  
The Lord deal kindly with you my beloved  
As you have dealt with the dead and with me

The Lord grant that you may find rest  
Each in the house of her husband, may you be kept  
So she kissed them, after them she blessed  
And they lifted up their voices and wept

And they said to her through the streaming waters  
“We will return with you to your people, surely  
But Naomi said, “Turn back, my daughters  
Why will you go with me?

Are there still sons in my womb  
That they may be your husbands?  
Save yourself from this gloom

Turn back, my daughters, go—  
For I am too old to have a husband as you know

If I should say I have hope this day  
If I should have a husband tonight, no longer alone  
And should also bear sons, I pray  
Would you wait for them till they were grown?  
Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands too?  
No, my daughters; this I cannot ask of you

For it grieves me very much for your sakes as you can see  
That the hand of the Lord has gone out against me

Then they lifted up their voices  
And wept again as if a dirge was sung  
And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law  
But Ruth to her tightly clung

In reality there was but one choice to make  
Though down different paths it will lead

Will one cling to the God of Israel for heaven's sake  
Will they to His word pay heed?

If the answer is yes, the destiny is bright and sure  
If the answer is no, there is no true hope at all  
One must look to Jesus with a heart tender and pure  
And on His glorious name each must call

Lord God, thank You for Jesus our Lord  
Thank You for the chance to walk in His light  
Help us all our days to hold to Your word  
Until You bring us home to the land of delight

Until that day we will praise our Lord Jesus  
Who has done such marvelous things for us

*Hallelujah and Amen...*

## RUTH 1:15-22 (RETURNING TO THE PROMISED LAND)

**Introduction:** As we walk along life's highway, we never really know where we are going, do we? We may have plans, maps, and gas for a trip, but in reality, we are as blind to what will happen one second from now as if our physical eyes were blind and we were on a twisting, crooked, dangerous path.

Not to be morbid, but as we sit in church, a meteor could come through the roof and destroy us. A car could come through the front wall and crush us. Or a jetliner could have trouble on the way to the airport and plow through us like a steamroller.

And yet we sit here contently despite actually having no control over anything around us. Naomi had left Bethlehem to go to Moab with her family and she lost everything. When she left, she had no idea what would happen. Now as she starts her trip back to Israel, she has no idea what will transpire there.

Each moment of our life is uncertain and without God it is a useless, vain existence which ultimately ends in futility. However, with God, the unseen future may be a mystery, but it is not futile. Whatever happens along the way, the end... the final destination is assured. Naomi struggled to see this, but we have her life recorded to show us more than what she could see.

**Text Verse:** *"I will bring the blind by a way they did not know;  
I will lead them in paths they have not known.  
I will make darkness light before them,  
And crooked places straight.  
These things I will do for them,  
And not forsake them." Isaiah 42:16*

The Bible, with its many unusual stories and hard to figure details, is still very plain nonetheless. It shows us where we were, where we are, and where we are headed. And even though the details of our lives are left out, the Bible shows us the truth that there *is* an overarching hand of Providence which is guiding all things to a very good end for those who are willing to accept its premises.

It is a book of stories which tell one greater story. That God has a plan, that it is being worked out, and that it centers on His entrance into the world in order to make all things right. It is all focused-on Jesus Christ. Naomi didn't know this, but we do.

And so with the assurance that God loves us enough to give us His Son and to reveal Him in His superior word, let us turn to that word again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. Wherever You Go, I Will Go (verses 15-18)**

**<sup>15</sup> And she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods;**

Orpah has turned away to return home, thus as we saw last week, she lived up to the name she was given at her birth. Orpah means "Mane" or "back of the neck." As she walked away, this is the last of what they saw of her.

And so as they watch her depart, Naomi says to Ruth words of true sadness. She has "gone back to her people and her gods." In this verse is a confirmation that Orpah and Ruth had both previously accepted the God of Israel as their God when they married into the family. One cannot "turn back" to something they never left.

Therefore, they had to have left Moab's form of worship in order to be united to that of Israel. Now, with her husband dead and her mother-in-law departing, she is turning back to Chemosh, the god of Moab. She has become an apostate to the true faith of Israel.

Instead of going to the land of promise and seeking out the face of God who gives both blessing and hardship at His will, she turned her neck from Jehovah to that which is not God and is thus completely dropped from the biblical narrative from this point on.

In her words to Ruth about Orpah she uses the word, *elohim*, translated here as "gods." However, the word she uses doesn't necessarily mean a plurality. It could be singular or plural. A way of translating it so that this term would be understandable would be that she went back to her own forms of worship.

Because there isn't either an adjective or a verb to indicate a number, we can't really clearly translate the thought. But a way of understanding the worship of the word *elohim* - be it god or gods, is that it is "over there." *Elohim* is in another realm and that is where the worship is directed.

15 (con't) **return after your sister-in-law."**

As Orpah fades into the distance, Naomi now speaks again to Ruth. Are her words sincere, that she wants her to return with Orpah, or are they a final test of her allegiance to the God of Israel? The latter is certainly correct. She has already, several times and in various ways, shown that following the Lord requires understanding that hard times come with worshipping Him.

Her words that Orpah "has gone back to her people and to her gods" means that she wasn't willing to accept this premise, and she felt that the god of Moab would be more responsive to her physical needs and desires than the Lord. And this is exactly what drives people from Christianity or from right exercise of it.

We are self-centered beings and what we desire most is gratification and satisfaction in the "right now." People will walk away from the faith because of the death of a loved one, blaming God for their sadness.

And people will ignore the parts of the Bible that they don't like or that they don't agree with because their relationship with God is about them, not about Him. We want the good and none of the bad; but that is not how it works in reality.

Naomi has placed the reality of the situation before the daughters, and one has turned. The second is standing on the battlefield and the lines are drawn and set. This is a battle not unlike that which Jacob faced on the banks of the Jabbok River. As Fuller says -

"God wrestled with Jacob with desire to be conquered; so Naomi no doubt opposed Ruth, hoping and wishing that she herself might be foiled." (Fuller)

The fact is that Naomi does hope to be foiled in her attempt to persuade Ruth to depart. But she is not willing to be defeated without presenting the reality of the situation which Ruth will face. She must continue to embrace the true God as she had when life was sweeter. Will she be willing to do so?

The answer is "Yes" and it comes in one of the most memorable passages in the entire body of sacred Scripture. It is comparable to the words of Esther before her time of fasting and trial, and to the response of Job when he was told to curse God and die. Ruth's words are even as confident and faithful as those of Mary as she spoke out the words of the Magnificat. And her words begin with...

<sup>16</sup> **But Ruth said:**

**“Entreat me not to leave you,**

To "entreat" is to ask someone earnestly or anxiously to do something, even to beg. Naomi has entreated Ruth numerous times and in various, heightening ways, to thoughtfully consider her choice to go to Israel with her.

Now Ruth asks for the begging to cease. She will not be deterred, and the breath is wasted on continuing such requests. She will remain steadfastly with her and by her side.

<sup>16</sup> (con't) **Or to turn back from following after you;**

Naomi had just said, "return after your sister-in-law." Instead, Ruth will follow Naomi. Where Orpah goes will be up to Orpah. Her choice is made, but she will go alone. Where Naomi goes is where Ruth will follow. Naomi will have company on the path she takes.

<sup>16</sup> (con't) **For wherever you go, I will go;**

Whatever difficulties lay ahead. No matter what trials would come or the hardships of the journey, Ruth would accompany her. Didn't Naomi have the same distance to walk? Wouldn't she also be tired? Wouldn't there be the same chance of robbers or beasts attacking on the highway as for her?

If so, and she was older and more frail, then certainly Ruth could face the same challenges. If there were mountains to climb, she would climb. If there were rivers to cross, she would cross. If there were sharp, difficult stones to walk over, she would walk them too.

But more than the physical trials was the surety that the God she was following would be there too - through both good and testing. Ruth had certainly heard the family stories of the God of Israel - how he had led them out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and over the Jordan.

He was with Israel as they subdued the Canaanites and He would be with them as they travelled. Like Rahab at the time when Israel entered Canaan, Ruth was willing to live by faith because she knew of the power and the omnipresence of the Lord Jehovah.

Some years later, her own great-grandson, David, would demonstrate the same understanding of the Lord when he would pen these words in the 139th Psalm -

"Where can I go from Your Spirit?  
Or where can I flee from Your presence?  
<sup>8</sup> If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there;  
If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there*.  
<sup>9</sup> *If* I take the wings of the morning,  
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,  
<sup>10</sup> Even there Your hand shall lead me,  
And Your right hand shall hold me." Psalm 139:7-10

Ruth now understood this and she trusted in the providence of the Lord enough to commit to following Naomi on her travel home.

<sup>16</sup> (con't) **And wherever you lodge, I will lodge;**

The NIV translates this "where you stay I will stay." This might give the impression of the house they are heading to. The reference, however, is not to the final destination, but to the nightly stops on the way to the final destination. The verb, *luwn*, indicates to spend the night.

It could be at a cottage on the highway, it could be in a cave in a mountain, or it could be sleeping under the stars with a stone for a pillow like Jacob once slept. Whatever place they stopped - both on the journey to Canaan, or at any place during their earthy walk once in Canaan, she would be willing to sleep in that same spot.

<sup>16</sup> (con't) **Your people *shall be* my people,**

*Amekh ammi* - in the Hebrew, there is no verb. "Your people - my people." In her mind and forever afterward, Naomi's people would be her people. She, whether accepted by them or not, was counting herself and her destiny as entwined with Israel's common destiny.

The blessings they would receive from the heavens would be showered on her as well. The famines or wars they faced would be her portion and her lot. Should the mountains fall and the earth beneath her feet quake, she would remain steadfast amidst it all.



16 (con't) **And your God, my God.**

*veloha-yikh elohai* (3:19). Again, there is no verb. It is the assertion that the God of Naomi, who has been her God since her marriage, is and will remain her God. Whether He provides wealth and prosperity, or poverty and deprivation, she will serve this God to whom she is united.

Again as we have seen elsewhere, her words are reflective of other faithful souls seen in the Bible. What she says here is a beautiful match with the words of Job -

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.  
Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him.  
<sup>16</sup> He also *shall* be my salvation,  
For a hypocrite could not come before Him." Job 13:15, 16

As Matthew Henry says about her words, "Ruth is an example of the grace of God, inclining the soul to choose the better part."

Regardless of the state of this life, be it great or be it sore and displeasing, following the God of Israel is to always choose the better part. And although they are far distant relatives of Ruth, there is a group of people who will descend from her that will someday follow the Lord with the same marked determination. We read about them in Revelation 14 -

"These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from *among* men, *being* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb."  
-Revelation 14:4

It is the true mark of the redeemed throughout all ages. Enoch, the seventh man from Adam, and in the time before the Flood of Noah, was said to have walked with God. Abraham followed the Lord from his native land and walked with him all his days.

Time and time again, in both testaments of the Bible, we are told to walk in the commandments of the Lord and in a manner worthy of Him. Ruth is just one of countless examples of the faith which is found pleasing to God. Without seeing Him, but only hearing of Him, we please Him when we follow Him as we walk. In this, there is a reward waiting for the faithful. Even in death...

**<sup>17</sup> Where you die, I will die,**

"My dear mother, as we walk in life, so we will walk until death. And even after death, I will stay put until that day when I also die. I will not leave you in life and should you go before me, I will stay to lay flowers on your grave. And in that day when the God of Israel calls me to my place of rest, it will be in that same place of your calling."

**<sup>17</sup> (con't) And there will I be buried.**

We still often follow this practice today. There is a common burial ground or even a mausoleum where families are placed. The record of this began with Abraham and Sarah and it continued on in the heart of Ruth towards her beloved mother-in-law.

They would possess the same spot of soil in the hope of some day rising together at the call of the Messiah who was promised to the people of Israel by the God of Israel. She abandoned the worthless graves of Moab where death's hold would stay firm and welcomed the graves of Israel where death's sting would be removed in Him.

**<sup>17</sup> (con't) The LORD do so to me,**

In these words, Ruth now begins a petition of imprecation. It is the first such time it is used in the Bible, and it will be seen in the books of 1 Samuel and 1 Kings. She is invoking the name of the Lord, Jehovah, and calling down upon herself a curse from Him if she fails to adhere to the words of her solemn vow - may it be so.

Her words here and to follow are a sort of euphemism, which more conceal than reveal the true weight of the penalty that she should, and rightfully would, endure for violating the oath.

**<sup>17</sup> (con't) and more also,**

This is a way of adding additional weight to the imprecation she was calling down on herself. It is an impossible state, one which could never come about and yet it *should* happen if she were found to violate her pledge.

In essence, it is saying, "If there were something more punishing than what Jehovah could mete out, then that is what I would deserve. May such horrible and awesome terrors come upon me should the truth of my words be found wanting."

<sup>17</sup> (con't) **If *anything but* death parts you and me."**

To complete her oath, she utters the finality of her decision, *ki ha'mavet yaphrid beni uvenekh*. In these words, "death" is emphatic - *ha'mavet*; - the death. As the Pulpit commentary says, "It is as if she had said death, the great divider." Nothing but this will come between us.

<sup>18</sup> **When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her.**

Having heard the substance of Ruth's words, the exchange ends.

The very thing that Naomi had intended has come about. Her previous words were meant to show the reality of what lay ahead and to obtain a sure, truthful, and heartfelt commitment from Ruth if she were to actually return with her to Canaan.

And in fact, Ruth has shown her faithfulness to the road set before them. No greater promises could come from her mouth even if Naomi were to continue to dissuade her. Because of the gravity of what she spoke, she has shown that she will not be deterred. To Canaan, the two will travel together.

*Where can I from Your Spirit go?  
Or where can I from Your presence flee?  
If I ascend into heaven, You are there, I know  
If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there with me*

*If I take the wings of the morning, indeed  
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea  
Even there, me Your hand shall lead  
And Your right hand shall have hold of me*

*If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me  
Even the night about me shall be light  
Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You  
But even shines as the day, the very darkest night*

## **II. The Almighty Has Dealt Very Bitterly With Me (verses 19-21)**

<sup>19</sup> **Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem.**

This was a journey of no less than 50 miles in a land which is hilly, rocky, hot, and arid. It also would have included crossing over the Arnon and then the Jordan rivers. They would have had to carry whatever they owned and the water they would need to drink. It would not be an easy trip.

It would be like picking up from Sarasota and walking to Tampa. Driving there takes an hour, but walking there would be a long tedious venture. At a normal pace, it would be about 17 hours, but with carrying their things, stopping for rest and sleep and the like, it would take at a minimum between two and four days.

If they lived more than the minimum 50 miles, it could have been longer. And again, as seen last week, there is a masculine instead of a feminine pronoun in the words "the two of them." There are little treasures in the book of Ruth that are yet to be explained

<sup>19</sup> (con't) **And it happened, when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was excited because of them; and the women said, "Is this Naomi?"**

Upon their arrival the entire city was abuzz with the news. The translation here "and the woman said," is from a single word *vatomarnah*, which literally is "and they said" but it is in the feminine. The translators inserted the word "women" to make it understandable for us.

The women of the town were astonished at the person they once knew. More than 10 years had passed. Naomi would have gone out as a much younger lady and with her husband and sons. Now she has returned, certainly looking older, more worn down from the sadness and the years. She, a widow with only a daughter-in-law.

Any nice clothing or ornaments she had would be missing. The exclamation is certainly akin to us saying, "The years have been tough on her!" The entire picture is one which would have been shocking to the women who stayed in Bethlehem. The verse is a true to life, graphic touch of the reality of Naomi's situation.

<sup>20</sup> **But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi;**

The name Naomi, as we saw before, is translated in a variety of ways by scholars - beautiful, sweet, pleasant, lovely, or something like that. Some take the "i" at the end of her name to be possessive and so it would mean "my sweetness."

But the "i" at the end may be a reference to Jehovah and so it would be "Pleasantness of the Lord." This is certainly what is intended and for a reason we will see in a moment. But because of her afflictions and trials, she asks them to not call her Naomi. It is no longer a fitting name for who she has become.

<sup>20</sup> (con't) **call me Mara,**

Instead of Pleasantness of the Lord, she asks to be called Mara, which means "Bitter." In hearing her given name repeated time and again as she encountered the people of Bethlehem, she could only think that it was no longer appropriate.

The Lord, the covenant God of Israel, was distant from her and she felt the pain of it each time her name was repeated. And so a change to reflect her sad state was needed. Call me Bitter. Interestingly the way the name is recorded is not the normal Hebrew form of the word.

It is lacking the letter "h" at the end of the name which is the same letter that was *added* to Abraham and Sarah's name as a sign of covenant grace. It is as if she is outside of the Lord's covenant provision, wallowing alone in her bitterness.

<sup>20</sup> (con't) **for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.**

Only in the light of interpreting her name as "Pleasantness of the Lord" can the full implication of what she says in this verse be properly understood. Instead of being "Pleasantness of the Lord," who is the one who monitors the covenant and the covenant people, she is "Bitter from the Almighty" - the one who bestows or withholds fruitfulness.

It is a double play on her name; bitter instead of pleasant, and affliction from the Almighty instead of grace from the Lord. Her words here are almost mirror of the anguish that Job himself felt after all of his many afflictions. In Job 27 we read his words-

"As God lives, *who* has taken away my justice,  
And the Almighty, *who* has made my soul bitter," Job 27:2

Both of these people failed to see that the kindness of the Lord was just around the corner. Thinking they were the objects of God's wrath; they had misinterpreted the sad and troublesome hardships they had faced. What seemed at the time to be harsh and cruel was in due time to be replaced with joy and comfort.

But even more, the troubles they faced have served a larger purpose as their lives have been used to show us the greater, and often unseen, hand of God as He unfolds history in a way which displays His sovereignty and His redemptive plans for us.

**<sup>21</sup> I went out full,**

Naomi had forgotten that she went out with her family during a time of famine in search of bread and livelihood. If she was full, it was only because they ate their last meal before departing. But the overwhelming exaggerations of memories colored over the original reason why she had left.

All she could think of is who and what she had left with. Her memories were of a husband and two sons and the things they carried along for their temporary pilgrimage. She had forgotten that she had left a land which was beset by a lack of food.

**<sup>21</sup> (con't) and the LORD has brought me home again empty.**

The word translated as "empty" doesn't mean exactly that. It is an adverb rather than an adjective. Her words are *v'reqam hishivani Yehovah* (3:12) - "and *emptily* has brought me home again the Lord." It is as if the entire process of her journey has been without any positive benefit as the Lord continually drained her.

Again, in her misery, she failed to acknowledge Ruth who had clung to her and promised to continue clinging to her no matter what would come their way. The faithful words on that dusty road leading home from Moab were overshadowed by her own pitiful condition in the eyes of the women of Bethlehem.

And in her return, she is now in a land that is productive and fruitful once again. She may have come home emptily in some respects, but she has also come home with, and to, great abundance in other ways.

As she will find out before her days are through, the daughter-in-law she now has taken in is worth more to her than seven sons. The Lord will heap upon her a good and blessed latter life, just as He did upon His faithful servant Job.

**<sup>21</sup> (con't) Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has testified against me,**

In her words, and based on the meaning of her name, she is repeating a pun. "Why do you call me Pleasantness of the Lord, since the Lord has testified against me?" She is misreading what has happened. She is finite, in time, and unknowing of the future.

Like Job, what she sees as the Lord testifying against her is simply a lack of the full resource of information that God possesses. Job misunderstood his circumstances and Naomi has as well. And like Job's friends, she is seeing her afflictions as a result of penal punishment. In other words, she feels she must have done something wrong, and the Lord is punishing her.

But there are other forms of suffering that are not at all because of punishment. The book of Job shows this as do many other examples in both testaments of the Bible. A perfect example of this is found in John 9 -

"Now as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.'" John 9:1, 2

Like the man born blind, like Job, and like Naomi and many others, suffering is a part of the fallen world in which we live. At times that suffering is used by God to demonstrate His glory. This is the case with the life and trials of Naomi.

To some extent, every one of us fails to properly interpret the signs which surround us as we live out our lives before the Lord. What is needed is a firm belief in the promise found in Romans 8:28, that "...all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose." (LIFE APP)

21 (con't) **and the Almighty has afflicted me?"**

Her words in Hebrew are *v'shaddai heraa li* (4:21). This form of the verb *heraa* implies an evil doer, a doer of wickedness, or simply evil or wicked. If taken in that light, she is actually ascribing the evil that was accomplished *to* the Almighty. As the Pulpit Commentary says, she is "walking on a theological precipice, where it is not needful that we should accompany her."

Instead of ascribing the evils that come our way to God, it is right that we humble ourselves and our hearts before His providential hand. The afflictions we bear may not

do us good, but the way we carry ourselves in midst of them is what is right, honorable, and noble. And above all, we are never to ascribe evil to the Lord.

It is we humans who chose the path we are on and it is the Lord God who has worked to correct it and to put us on a new and eternally good path.

*Shall we indeed accept good from God  
And shall we not accept adversity?  
Who is it that lays out before us the path we trod?  
Let us never contemplate such perversity*

*It is fair when things go ill to be dejected and lacking strength  
But it is right to remember that God has not forgotten us  
He will return us to paradise and eternal joy in due length  
And we have this certainty because He gave His Son, Jesus*

*So when trials, heartaches, or much loss comes our way  
Remember to not blame God thus making matters worse  
For He is God and He is working out every single day  
His glorious plan when soon there will be no more curse*

### **III. The Time of the Barley Harvest (verse 22)**

**<sup>22</sup> So Naomi returned,**

So Naomi returned... She has come again to the land of her birth which is the land of promise. She had crossed the Jordan and now she has crossed it once again. She has again come to the land of favor and the land of blessing.

**<sup>22</sup> (con't) and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab.**

This continues to reiterate what we already know. Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law has come. It identifies her specifically as a Moabite to remind us of the account of Lot and his daughters. They were relatives of Abraham, but not of the covenant line.

And more, the Moabites had hired Balaam the prophet, to curse Israel as they travelled toward Canaan. Later, they caused Israel to trip up and fall into idolatry and sexual immorality. She is a gentile from what many would consider an unsavory line of people.



However, her ancestor Moab was born to a woman who was looking forward to the coming Messiah. Unless you saw the sermon on Lot and his daughters, you might not understand this. But it explains why this verse in Ruth continues with the unlikely thought that she "returned from the country of Moab."

One commentary said that this verse is both "remarkable, at once for its simplicity and for its inexactitude." (Pulpit) They said this, because Ruth didn't actually return from Moab. Rather, she came with Naomi who returned.

However, if this verse is taken in light of their great ancestor who slept with her father in order to have a child who would lead them to the Messiah, then Ruth did, in fact, return to the Land of Promise. They once lived in it and left many generations earlier. Now she had come home.

Words aren't wasted in the Bible. And words are neither redundant nor inexact. They are precise, carefully chosen, and intended to show us God's overall plans, which come in short, interesting sentences and concepts. In this, Ruth truly did return to Canaan through the loins of Lot and his faith-filled daughter.

<sup>22 (fin)</sup> **Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.**

Naomi and Ruth returned to Canaan and have arrived at the House of Bread, Bethlehem. It is the same spot where the Lord Jesus, a descendant of Ruth, will be born in a bit over 1000 years. And it is at the time of the barley harvest.

The barley is ready for reaping during the month of Abib which is our March/April time-frame. It commences during the Feast of Unleavened Bread when the firstfruits of the harvest are cut and presented to the Lord, a picture of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is at this same time of year when the Lord was crucified and then rose from the dead that these ladies arrive in the House of Bread. Barley is known as the crop of hairy ears because of its hairy appearance. The word "barley" in Hebrew is *seorah* which is closely related to the word *se-ar* or hair.

Hair in the Bible indicates an awareness of things, especially that of sin. The goat for example, which is used in Leviticus for the sin offering, is known as *sair*. We have an awareness of sin in the hairy goat sin offering. In Numbers there is a type of person known as a Nazirite. This is someone who made a vow or was consecrated to the Lord.

During the time of that vow, they were never to cut their hair. Samson was a Nazirite from birth as were Samuel and John the Baptist. Paul took a Nazirite vow in Acts. The hair on their head was a reminder of their state, just as the hairy goat is a reminder of sin. It is man's place to be aware.

We are sentient beings, ever in search of more knowledge and experience and hopefully seeking out the cure to the sad state we are in. These things are all going to be seen in and revealed in the story of Ruth as it continues. Much is in store in the coming three chapters and it all revolves around the work of God in Christ.

But it also is a true story of real people, living out their lives in the stream of time. God has carefully sewn them into pictures of greater things that affect us all. It is a marvelous way of Him showing us that He is attentive to the big things in history, but also the little details as well.

And one of the little details in the big picture, but the biggest detail of all in our individual lives, is where we will spend eternity. God has worked out a plan where we too can return to the Promised Land. And it revolves around the giving of His Son for us.

**Closing Verse:** *A man who has friends must himself be friendly,  
But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Proverbs 18:24*

**Next Week:** Ruth 2:1-7 (Whose Young Woman is This?) (4th Ruth Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. He knows your trials, troubles, and woes and He is there with you through them. So cling to Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **Your People, My People; Your God, My God**

And she said, "Look, as you can see  
Your sister-in-law Orpah has gone back  
To her people and to her gods  
Return after your sister-in-law, don't be slack  
But Ruth said in words heartfelt and true  
"Entreat me not to leave, please don't do so  
Or to turn back from following after you  
For wherever you go, I too will go

And wherever you lodge, I will lodge too  
Your people shall my people be  
And your God, my God, it is true  
I shall not ever leave you, this you shall see

Where you die, I will die, may it be so  
And there will I be buried, I speak plainly  
The Lord do so to me, and more also  
If anything but death parts you and me

When she saw that she was determined to go along  
She stopped speaking; her determination strong

Now the two of them went  
Until they came to Bethlehem  
When finally the miles were spent

And it happened, when they had come to Bethlehem  
That all the city was excited because of them

And the women said, "Is this Naomi?"  
She was a different woman, they could plainly see

But she said to them just the same  
"Do not call me anymore Naomi  
Instead now Mara is my name  
For the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me  
I went out full many years before  
And emptily has the Lord has returned me to my door

Why do you call me Naomi  
Since the Lord has testified against me

And the Almighty me He has afflicted  
I have been tried by His trial and convicted

So Naomi returned along with Ruth  
The Moabite her daughter-in-law with her  
Who returned from the country of Moab

Their future unknown and unsure

Now they came to Bethlehem the town  
At the beginning of the barley harvest  
There they together settled down  
As the Bible story does attest

Lord, help us to see Your hand in all things  
As directing our lives not for evil, but for good  
Help us to accept everything that our life brings  
And to honor you at all times as we should

Yes, troubles come our way, but there are always blessings too  
And both the troubles and the blessings are being used by You  
For our good and for Your glory  
Everything comes as a part of Your plan for us  
This is the message we find in Your gospel story  
And it is all because of our Lord Jesus

Yes, thank You Lord for such kind and attentive care for us  
And thank You for our blessed Redeemer, our Lord Jesus

*Hallelujah and Amen...*

## RUTH 2:1-7 (WHOSE YOUNG WOMAN IS THIS?)

**Introduction:** What is a menial task that you would never consider doing? Is there a job that you would simply refuse to do? In Israel, outside of being a leper and kept away from the people or being a beggar because you were physically unable to work, the lowest sort of existence would be to sort through people's leftovers.

We see this all the time in our own towns. There are people that sort through the garbage looking for food or something they could sell as scrap. We pass them by and try to ignore the thing that they are doing. In the third world, it's even worse. There are entire clans of people who live in the dumps and sort out the last remains of anything of value, which to most is of no value at all.

In Israel, there were poor people, just like everywhere else. In fact, in Deuteronomy 15, Israel is told that there will always be poor. There, in the 11th verse, it says this -

"For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.'" Deuteronomy 15:11

It is an issue that Jesus repeats in Matthew 26:11; there will always be poor among us. But the law, anticipating this, made provisions for the poor. One of them is something called "gleaning." It is where poor people were allowed to follow along behind the reapers of grain and pick up the grain that would fall to the ground.

A gleaner then would be our modern dumpster diver... a person who looks for scraps in a world of abundance. But to God, and hopefully to us, the value of the person isn't determined by that person's wealth. Nor is poverty a sign of being outside of God's favor.

**Text Verse:** *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; 19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke 4:18, 19*

Throughout history, the poor have been oppressed, even in the land of Israel. But this was never an intent of the law. Instead, the law graciously made provisions for the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the foreigner. There is another type of poverty that the law was set against as well. It is spiritual poverty.

The law served its purpose which was to point us to Christ and in Christ is found freedom from this spiritual poverty now, as well as freedom from all types of poverty some wondrous day which is yet future to us. We will see a poor woman take advantage of the provisions of the law in today's story and we will see someone take notice of her while she works.

In our own impoverished state, Christ has taken notice of us too. He has given us His word. Some of us are filled to abundance with it, reaping a great harvest of understanding and insight from it. Others are left to glean what they can from the pages of the Bible.

In such a case, it is up to those who have the abundant harvest to at least share their knowledge with an open hand, not charging for what has been so graciously given to them by God. The parallels are seen in the book of Ruth which is a part of God's superior word. So let's go to that wondrous book now and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. Faithful Ruth (verses 1 & 2)**

#### **<sup>1</sup>There was a relative of Naomi's husband,**

Chapter 2 begins right where chapter 1 left off. Naomi and Ruth have returned from Moab to Israel, arriving in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. As was seen last week, it is at this same time of year, that Jesus was crucified and then rose from the dead. Here, sometime shortly after their arrival, it mentions a "relative of Naomi's husband."

This term "relative" shouldn't be confused with another term which will be introduced later and which is translated "close relative." The word here is *mowda* which comes from *yada*, "to know" or "an acquaintance." The word is masculine; it is a male relative.

This word then denotes someone with whom another is intimately acquainted and thus it is a near relative. It's important to understand that this word is being tied to Naomi's husband while the other word for "close relative" in chapters 3 & 4 is tied to Naomi and

Ruth. Later, when we understand who each pictures, we will understand what this story is telling us.

1 (con't) **a man of great wealth,**

The Hebrew here says *ish gibbor khayil*. It is a phrase which is widely translated and which needs to be carefully evaluated because it points to the most important man in the book who in turn pictures the most important Man who has ever lived.

The phrase has been translated as-

- 1) a man of standing,
- 2) an influential man,
- 3) a worthy man,
- 4) a man of outstanding character,
- 5) a mighty man of strength,
- 6) a mighty man of wealth,
- 7) a powerful man, etc.

The idea which seems to be implied is that he is a strong and substantial prince of man in power, authority, riches, honor, and virtue. All of these are implied by the idea of "wealth." It doesn't merely mean riches, but rich in all ways. He is a type of Christ.

1 (con't) **of the family of Elimelech.**

This person is of the same family as that of Naomi's dead husband Elimelech, whose name means "God is King" or "My God is King." The term for family here is the word *mishpakhah* and it indicates a direct family tie between him and Elimelech.

1 (con't) **His name was Boaz.**

The name Boaz means "in strength" or "in Him is strength," meaning "in the Lord." Boaz pictures the Lord Jesus. As we continue through the story, keep this in mind. Eventually we will discover why the story was given and what it ultimately pictures.

*I will love You, O Lord, my might*

*The Lord is my rock and my fortress too*

*He is my deliverer, through day and night*

*My God, my strength, Him I will trust all my days through*

*My shield and the horn of my salvation  
My stronghold, it is He  
I will call upon the Lord with elation  
He is worthy to be praised now and for all eternity*

*So shall I be saved from my enemies  
From those who come only to destroy  
The Lord will protect my soul  
And lead me in paths of eternal joy*

## **<sup>2</sup> So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi,**

It might seem peculiar that it repeats "Ruth the Moabitess" here instead of just saying "Ruth." This is actually important to remember because she is in the land of Israel and is looking to participate in the fruits of the land despite being a gentile.

The use of the term once again then calls to mind legal phraseology. Moab is **who** she is, Israel is **where** she is, and the privileges and customs of the land are **what** she is looking forward to participating in. She is looking to gain the advantage of Israelite privileges despite being a gentile.

The verse also uses the name Naomi (Pleasantness of the Lord) even though she is Mara, or bitter. These words are selected carefully and keep leading us down a path of beauty and toward that which is wonderful.

## **<sup>2</sup> (con't) "Please let me go to the field,**

Using a gentle phrase, *na hassadeh*, "Let me, I pray to the field." She asks for permission to go out rather than simply saying that she is going out. What she intends to do is a self-demeaning act which will reflect on Naomi and so, despite her *needing* to go, she still asks for permission.

There is only the thought of respect and good intentions in her request, and it can only be taken in that way by Naomi. It would be like being at the beach with the family and grandpa is playing catch with one of the grandchildren. By accident, he throws the ball into the water, and it starts to drift out from shore.

Instead of dad getting up and saying, "I'll get it" which could hurt grandpa's feelings, showing that he is no longer capable of swimming in the waves and tide, dad says, "Do



you mind if I get it?" Both know it is a necessity that dad should get it, but making it a question is intended to protect grandpa's family standing.

This is what Ruth is doing for Naomi. She is being gracious in asking to do what she alone can and must do. Another thing to note is that the word for field is not intended to mean a plain, but rather plowed and cultivated land. It is similar in idea to our English word "field" which comes from the German "fold" which is a clearance of "felled" trees.

This word for field in Hebrew is singular, not plural - another important point to remember. There is one field of cultivated land which would be marked by stones or maybe a tree, but it ran continuously. Farmers would own their property and cultivate to the edges of it, probably leaving a walkway along the sides.

This type of marking is noted in Deuteronomy 19:14 and shows why the term field is singular here. It also shows the respect that people were to have for the rights and property of others -

"You shall not remove your neighbor's landmark, which the men of old have set, in your inheritance which you will inherit in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess."

<sup>2</sup> (con't) **and glean heads of grain after *him* in whose sight I may find favor."**

The word "glean" that we use comes from the French word *glaner* which simply means to gather ears of corn or grain. Gleaning from a biblical perspective is something that was specifically authorized under the Law of Moses. It is found in several passages, including this one from Deuteronomy 24 which explains what gleaning is and why it is mandated -

"When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

<sup>20</sup> When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. <sup>21</sup> When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean *it* afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. <sup>22</sup> And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this thing." Deuteronomy 24:19-22

This allowance was given as a means of caring for, as it says, "the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow." All three of these applied to Ruth in some sense. She was a stranger meaning a "foreigner." She was by oath united to Naomi whose husband was dead and therefore she was in essence "fatherless." And her own husband had died and thus she was a widow.

In every respect she is the person to whom God had directed this mandate of the law, showing that His care was not just directed just to the wealthy or just to the people of Israel, but to all people who would unite themselves to Him in the land He gave to them.

And so, Ruth has asked to follow this ancient custom which was especially directed to one in her state, and she says "after *him* in whose sight I may find favor." The word "favor" is literally "grace" and this phrase is in a very particular structure in the Hebrew. Her thought is as if there were only one reaper, who is the owner.

In other words, all of the laborers who are actually doing the reaping are merely hired hands. If you can see the connection, it is pointing to Christ. Even though His words in John 10 are speaking of sheep, the concept remains true for any hired help. Here is what He says there –

"I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. <sup>15</sup> As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd."

-John 10:14-16

There is One in charge of the grain and all others are His stewards. It is from Him alone that grace is to be found. Little hints such as these should help us to reflect on the pictures which this book, Ruth, is shouting out for us to see.

<sup>2</sup> (con't) **And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."**

Naomi knows that Ruth's words were of pure intent and that her actions are necessary to sustain the two of them and so her approval is given. In this past verse, we can see Ruth's humility and great love for Naomi, as well as her willingness to spare no hardship in order to take care of not only herself, but her mother-in-law. As Matthew Henry so courteously notes –

“Observe Ruth’s humility. When Providence had made her poor, she cheerfully stoops to her lot. High spirits will rather starve than stoop; not so Ruth. Nay, it is her own proposal. She speaks humbly in her expectation of leave to glean.” (Matthew Henry)

In Ruth here, we can learn proper respect for others, and especially toward our family as we speak. There is a way of communication which will convey an idea and yet offend and yet there is a way of communicating that same idea without offending.

Words are, in fact, sharp arrows and they can be painful when spoken without thought. But we see in Ruth a person who is willing to ask permission to do what she must do in order to protect the heart of the one that she must do it for. If we can learn and perfect this in our own speech to others, we will serve as really good examples of the noble sort that Ruth is.

**<sup>3</sup> Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers.**

The word for “the reapers” here is *ha’qowtsrim*. It comes from the word *qatsar*, which means “down.” In essence the reapers bring “down” the standing grain. This word is used metaphorically for the consequences of behavior, be it righteous or wicked. This symbolism continues in the New Testament, such as in this parable spoken by Jesus in Matthew 13 –

“He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked *one*. <sup>39</sup> The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. <sup>40</sup> Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, <sup>42</sup> and will cast them into the furnace of fire.”

-Matthew 13:37-42

Here are reapers in the field working and harvesting and along comes this foreigner who wants to participate in a small way. A picture of us should come to mind.

Lawson says that, "There are some, whose virtue and industry lie only in their tongues. They say, and do not. But Ruth was no less diligent in business than wise in resolution." Said differently, her diligence matches her words. She could have said that she was going into the field to glean and instead went and did something illicit in order to get the grain they needed.

But the record of her actions matches the record of her words. Again, Matthew Henry gives a thought on this verse for us to remember, "No labour is a reproach. Sin is a thing below us, but we must not think any thing else so, to which Providence call us. She was an example of regard to her mother, and of trust in Providence."

From time to time, I bring up my own weekly jobs. Even though I preach and teach the Bible, I still have a few jobs. I mow lawns, cut trees, pick up garbage, recycle scrap metal, and even clean toilets every day for a living so that we can pay our bills.

At home, I wash the dishes and do the laundry, including folding it. Working together with my wife, and in many jobs, others might find menial or even below contempt, we have a happy house and we live for the Lord through our work and our lives. Sin is below us, but no form of work that we do is, and we are content with that.

Ruth's example is one of many that shows us that the Lord favors our efforts in *whatever* work we do and in Him alone is our true reward. I would hope that the same is true with each of you. Should you find yourself in a bad spot, there is nothing degrading about picking up the scraps left by others in the fields of Bethlehem.

<sup>3</sup> (con't) **And she happened to come to the part of the field *belonging* to Boaz, who *was* of the family of Elimelech.**

*v'yiqer yiqreha* - "and her hap happened..." What seems like chance is so much more than that. It is an obvious shaping of the path before her and a directing of her every step which came from the unseen hand of the Lord so that His plans and purposes would come about.

His direction, even in the smallest of events, link together until they form a perfectly executed plan. We might think it is chance, fortune, or luck, but God views the events as careful design to bring about His good end.

In the case of Ruth's first day of gleaning to provide for herself and for Naomi, God directed her steps, as it says, "to the part of the field *belonging* to Boaz, who *was* of the family of Elimelech." This is especially poignant because as was noted earlier, there are no real field divisions.

There was one long, wide, and expansive field of land divided by ancient stones that she may not even have seen as she walked. And so to end on any particular parcel would seem like chance, but to come to the land that belonged to her relative Boaz would

have been an occurrence of truly remarkable odds; much more than chance would allow.

Surely God's directing of her little feet was intended for His glory and for her good, as well as for the good of all people who are redeemed through His Son, Jesus. Little steps in Bethlehem leading to immensely great things.

*I indeed with water baptize you  
But One mightier than I is coming, One who will inspire  
Whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose, it is true  
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire*

*His winnowing fan is in His hand  
And He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor  
And gather the wheat into His barn, all at His command  
But the chaff He will burn with voracious fire outside of heaven's door*

*Be ready, for the King is coming  
Be prepared for that great and awesome day  
Even now the drums are furiously drumming  
For the Lord to come and take His children away*

## **II. The Lord be With You (verse 4)**

**<sup>4</sup> Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem,**

If nothing else, this verse here has to strike a chord with each of us. If Boaz is to picture Christ, as he does and as we will see, then he will picture Christ in many ways. These words, "Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem," are an exacting picture of Christ to come as noted by the prophet Micah -

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,  
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me  
The One to be Ruler in Israel,  
Whose goings forth are from of old,  
From everlasting." Micah 5:2

Matthew reached back to this verse from Micah and cites it in his gospel record to show that in fact, "Behold, the Lord came from Bethlehem."

<sup>4</sup> (con't) **and said to the reapers, "The LORD *be* with you!"**

*Yehovah immak<sup>h</sup>em* are his words to the reapers. It is the tradition of the Jewish people today that the divine name of the Lord was never spoken. Anytime they read His name, they replace it with the word *Adonai* instead of saying the name.

However, this verse implies that blessings were made in the name of the Lord, using the name of the Lord. Had he said *Adonai* as others do when speaking directly to the Lord, the Bible would have said this. But it doesn't. The name of the Lord is not only acceptable to be spoken, it is a blessing in and of itself. And so, Boaz calls out to his men "Yehovah immak<sup>h</sup>em!"

<sup>4</sup> (con't) **And they answered him, "The LORD bless you!"**

In response to the master's greeting, they reply *y'berek<sup>h</sup>ekha Yehovah*. At least in Boaz' field there is harmony between master and worker. There should be something that stirs in each one of our hearts to emulate this when we greet others.

Whether such greetings were commonplace in Israel or whether Boaz was an exception, the words of Boaz are exceptional. They reflect a sense of cordiality that transcends our greetings of "Hello" or "Hey, how's it going." Instead, they redirect the plainly human tone of our words toward the divine and to the Creator.

If we were to consider the fullness of the meaning of Boaz' words, it would be comparable to saying, "May the Lord stand with you, guide you, protect you, uphold you, strengthen you, and heap upon you actively all things that are good and desirable for you to receive.

And in return, the reaper's words would be like saying, "May the Lord give you abundance, joy, contentment, fruitfulness, strength, and many other blessings." By tying the name of the Lord in with the blessing, it indicates a desire for the person to receive all that the Lord would choose to adorn that person with.

As I said a few minutes ago, the word for "the reapers" here is *ha'qowtsrim* which comes from the word *qatsar*, which means "down." We could call these reapers "the

downers." They are just mere servants not worthy of a kind eye or a note of blessing, but instead, Boaz gives them both. What a picture of the Lord he makes in this regard.

The depth of what is spoken in this 4th verse of chapter 2 is the reason why it is my personal favorite verse of the book. It is so much more than a greeting between people, but it is a look back to a harmonious interaction and the hope of a future where such interaction is the standard, not the exception.

It is a state which all of the redeemed of the Lord should desire here and now and for all eternity to come at that time when the Lord truly provides to His people what the words imply.

*May the Lord give you increase more and more  
May He bless you and your children too  
May you be blessed by the Lord, abundance at your door  
By the Lord who made heaven and earth, and me and you*

*May His hand of strength support you all your days  
And may He bless you with long life and health  
May His glory rest upon you in all ways  
And shower upon you all of heaven's wealth*

### **III. Beautiful Ruth (verses 5-7)**

**<sup>5</sup>Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?"**

This is the first verse to include both Boaz and Ruth together. Earlier Boaz was described as a man of great wealth which is the Hebrew word *khayil*. I noted that the word indicated not just material wealth, but riches in all ways. However, he was lacking a wife. So, the question is, "What kind of man was Boaz before he married?" Anyone? He was Ruth-less. That will now soon change.

In this verse is found the second meaning of Ruth's name. As we saw in chapter 1, her name means either "Friend" or "Companion", or "Beauty" or "Looker." It depends on the root word used to determine the end result. The uncertainty means that it is probably a play on both words.

The fulfillment of the first half of her name was when she clung to Naomi as a permanent friend and companion, vowing never to leave her except by death. The fulfillment of the second meaning of her name is seen as Boaz notices her amongst the other workers, indicating her beauty which was noticeable; she is a looker.

Because of the eye which has alighted on this radiant beauty, Boaz tactfully went to "his servant who was in charge of the reapers." The word for him is *ha'nitsav*, "the one standing." While the others are bending over with a sickle downing the grain, he is standing over them in superintendence.

It is to him who Boaz goes with his question. It shows a propriety in his demeanor which he doesn't want tarnished by asking just anyone. He is being careful about his eyes and trusting in his chief reaper to maintain his decorum, something he may not get from one of the subordinate reapers.

And his question is *lemi ha'naarah hazowt* (0.58). It is not, "Who is that young woman?" Instead, it is "Whose young woman *is* this?" Even to his servant in charge, he is being careful with his words. To ask, "Who is that young woman?" would show a direct and personal interest in her, and perhaps she is already taken. Rather, he asks who she belongs to.

"Whose young woman is this? To whom does she belong? What family does she belong to? Whose daughter is she?..... Whose, whose... (O, perish the thought!) whose wife is she?" This young woman has beauty which has caught his eye, she handles herself in a dignified way rather than a pauper or a beggar, and she is diligently about her business rather than idly talking and only half-heartedly working. Boaz sees her and the strings of his heart are pulled.

**<sup>6</sup>So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, "It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.**

Boaz asked specifically about "the" young woman, *ha'naarah*. However, the response from his chief reaper is vague. She is "a" young Moabite woman. There is no definite article in front of "young woman" as he speaks. To him, she is just another foreigner who has come to pick up what is left over from the fields of his master and from the land of Israel.



Outside of Hebrew scholars and two obscure translations, no other translation I could find captures the sense of what is being relayed. Boaz has shown a careful but discreet interest in this Looker.

However, the reaper has missed the cue and at the same time, looked down on her from his standing position. And though he knows who she is indirectly, he doesn't give her name, meaning he probably didn't even bother to ask. The irony of his words and what will later transpire is literally palpable.

To him, she is a young Moabite woman, but he says what we have already seen once before in chapter 1, that she "came back with Naomi from the country of Moab." Ruth didn't *come back* from Moab, she *came* from Moab. Only Naomi came back... well, unless one understands the premise of the story and how all people came from the same original place and some are returning to that place.

**<sup>7</sup> And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.'**

Again, like when she spoke to Naomi earlier, the words of Ruth are polite and humble. The word translated "please" that she uses is the Hebrew word *na*. More appropriately it means "I pray." And her request, even before going into the field to glean, was to "glean and gather after the reapers."

But what is translated here as "among the sheaves" doesn't make sense. Later, in verse 15, Boaz will give his workers permission for her to do this. What makes more sense here is to say, "Please let me glean and collect the gleanings into bundles."

This then would mean that she is asking permission to not only glean, but if she picks up enough, to be allowed to leave it in bundles to be collected later. It would make her job much easier by not having to carry what she had picked up and she could glean more and do so more quickly.

**<sup>7 (fin)</sup> So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house."**

Despite noting that she is just a foreigner, the chief of the reapers is careful to note her good qualities. She arrived early and has worked steadily and diligently right up until the present moment, taking only a short rest in the house.

And this shows another point of care by Boaz concerning his people. Because of the intense heat of the sun in Israel, a little shelter was set up by him for the workers to take a break in and cool down from the oppression of the heat on their backs. Ruth took advantage of this which means that even the gleaners were treated with this respect.

Boaz has proven himself to be descent as a man, a boss, and as a follower of the Lord. Ruth has proven herself to be a polite, humble, and hard-working person. If you have never read the entire story of Ruth, you can already guess where the story is heading, at least on this intimate level between the two. Boaz will not remain a Ruth-less individual.

It's time to stop our look into the book of Ruth for another Sunday. In the week ahead, think on why these details are here, who the people picture, and what God is trying to show us about ourselves and the world in which we live. Remember that it is all centered on Jesus and that in Him is the fullness of the glory of God, ready to call us to a happy relationship with our heavenly Father if we will but let Him.

If you have never understood your need for Christ Jesus and the importance of what His cross means to you, please give me another minute to share with you why He came, why He died, and the wonder of His resurrection. You can join Him in this and walk in God's heavenly paradise for all eternity.

**Closing Verse:** *"And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain." Isaiah 4:6*

**Next Week:** Ruth 2:8-16 (Bread and Grace in the Field of Boaz) (5th Ruth Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. He knows your trials, troubles, and woes, and He is there with you through them. So cling to Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **The Lord be With You and the Lord Bless You**

There was a relative of the husband of Naomi  
A man of great wealth and fame  
Of Elimelech's family  
Boaz was his name

So Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi  
"Please let me go to the field

And glean heads of grain after him  
In whose sight I may find favor; who grace to me will yield

And she said to her, "Go, my daughter  
It's hot out there; please take plenty of water

Then she left, and went and gleaned  
After the reapers, in the field  
And she happened to come, it seemed  
To a place where grace to her one would yield

To the part of the field belonging to Boaz, came she  
To the field of Boaz who was of Elimelech's family

Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem  
And said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you!"  
"The Lord bless you!" they answered him  
Yes, the Lord bless you too!

Then Boaz said to his servant  
Who was in charge of those who reaped  
"Whose young woman is this?"  
When he saw her, maybe his heart leaped

So the servant who was in charge  
Of the reapers answered and said  
"It is the young Moabite woman  
Who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab  
Now she lives here instead

'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers, she said  
Among the sheaves, was her request, to me this she pled

So she came and has continued  
From morning until now  
Though she rested a little in the house  
She has worked steadily as her strength does allow

Though a foreigner to the land of Israel

Ruth has proven to be a humble, diligent soul  
And though her state is lowly as the words do tell  
It is apparent that she knows the Lord is in control

Oh if we could learn from her such a lesson!  
To be faithful and diligent in our duties whatever they may be  
Then we wouldn't spend our time fretting and a'guessin'  
What God has in store for us, instead we'd trust implicitly

We'd trust that He has every step of our life  
Properly planned and carefully selected  
Even the times of trials and strife  
Can be times which are used to get our walk corrected

So let's be like Ruth and hand our fate to the Lord  
Trusting that He has it all under control  
And let us continue to read, and love, and cherish His word  
Let it nourish us and feed our hungry soul

For in this there is a great reward indeed  
As we cling to Him and wait upon His return  
May that day come soon and come with lightning speed  
For this is what our longing hearts should yearn

Thank You O God for the hope which is instilled in us  
Thank You O God for our Lord and Savior, our precious Jesus

*Hallelujah and Amen...*

## RUTH 2:8-16 (BREAD AND GRACE IN THE FIELD OF BOAZ)

**Introduction:** There is a lot of truth in the saying "The Lord helps those who help themselves." We live in a time where Christians have been taught that we can claim our way into prosperity or that being a Christian implies that we should automatically be blessed with overflowing abundance.

Quite often, those promises come along with hints that these blessings will be even bigger, better, and more lavish if you give money to the person who tells you this stuff, but that's beside the point. The Bible never teaches these things. There is, even among the greatest figures in Scripture, hardship, trial, sadness, and death. Just ask Jesus about the cross when you get the chance.

But there is also the truth that those who are industrious, hard-working, dedicated and honest, and who rely on God's already- granted blessings of life, health, and ability, will inevitably be further blessed. This truth is seen clearly in the main figure of the book of Ruth... a gentile woman who bears that name.

She has already proven herself faithful, dedicated, hardworking, and caring. And today we will see more noble qualities demonstrated by her - humility, a subservient attitude, and a person willing to keep right-on working without complaint.

We'll also see that her honorable attributes didn't go unnoticed by a well-to-do and likewise noble person. Because she was willing to reach out and work in order to support herself and her mother-in-law, Ruth will be blessed for her efforts. It should be a lesson to us that we should be about our business as well, working hard, acting honorably, and doing so without complaint.

These things will not go unnoticed by the Lord, and they will be repaid in due time. So let us trust this, not claiming worldly wealth and prosperity as if it was our expected due, but working for what we desire and honoring God in the process.

**Text Verse:** *"Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me!  
For my soul trusts in You;  
And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge,  
Until these calamities have passed by." Psalm 57:1*

We are not promised a life of ease. Calamities can be expected, but we need to keep working through them, honoring God as we go, and serving the King, even if it involves tiring labor which seems to be unrewarded. It isn't. The reward is coming and it will be astonishing when it does so. This truth is found in God's superior word, so let's turn to that wondrous book once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. Grateful Ruth (verses 8-10)**

**<sup>8</sup> Then Boaz said to Ruth, “You will listen, my daughter, will you not?”**

We begin today with Boaz' first recorded words to Ruth. Instead of asking about how she likes Israel, or why she came with Naomi to the land, or any other type of small talk, the Bible records words of grace, exactly what she sought after back in verse 2 when she said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after *him* in whose sight I may find favor."

His words are, *ha-low shamaat biti* (1:29) "Will you not hear, my daughter?" They are a fatherly expression which would be used by an elderly man towards a younger woman. And his admonition is...

**<sup>8 (con't)</sup> Do not go to glean in another field,**

After her first day of gleaning, she might have decided to go into another field so that she wouldn't appear annoying or troublesome to the people around her by gleaning continuously in the same place. Boaz is telling her this is not a problem.

In turn, his care for her is perfectly evident. She is undoubtedly of interest to him as his words indicated to us last week, and she is also the daughter-in-law of his deceased relative and his widowed wife. It is his desire to show attention and care to her and thus to Naomi as well.

**<sup>8 (con't)</sup> nor go from here,**

His words now are *v'gam lo taaburi mizzeh*. He says "and also not go from here." This is not a repetition of what he just said. His previous words applied to moving to someone else's property. These words apply to the movement of those cutting the sheaves.

He is directing her, probably with hand motions, to go and glean directly behind those who bound the sheaves. She had probably been staying further back from the reapers and binders, but by being closer to the hired hands, she would have much better chances of finding more food among the other gleaners in the field.

His directions allow her to stay, to feel welcomed during her stay, and to take full advantage of everything the law allowed for her without keeping back and letting others work ahead of her. He is giving her an equal standing with any Israelite who was also out gleaning.

<sup>8</sup> (con't) **but stay close by my young women.**

The word Boaz uses here for "stay close" is *dabaq*. It is the same word which was used when she *clung* to her mother-in-law, refusing to allow her to return to Israel alone. It is also the same word used in Genesis 2:24 when it says that "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

He is asking her to not depart from being near them as they work binding the sheaves that were cut by the reapers. This was probably a way of ensuring that she would begin to make friends with others as they worked together as much as for anything else. He is tending to both her physical needs as well as her need for human interaction.

<sup>9</sup> **Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them.**

His words here though seemingly obvious are actually intended as a careful protection for her. As she was gleaning, she would be looking down and not really paying attention to where she was going. If you've ever picked blueberries on a mountain side, you might have picked yourself off a path and found yourself lost.

Time can slip away, and the mind can become inattentive, except to the task at hand. If she were to do this, she could actually wander off Boaz' field entirely and find herself on the property of someone who was far less sympathetic to gleaners.

And so, he is ensuring that she pay attention and go directly behind the reapers while staying close to the women who bundled the sheaves. The words in these verses switch back and forth between the reapers and the women doing the bundling so that it seems the women are the reapers. But that's not the case.

Instead, the reapers continue working in steady progression, but the women would be coming back and forth behind them, gathering sheaves and carrying them to a central place. Each has a set task which isn't noticeable in the translation.

<sup>9</sup> (con't) **Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you?**

These words are a euphemism. To touch someone implies to hurt them, but instead he says it this way to show that she will be completely safe. Not only will she be unhurt, but the reapers will leave her literally untouched as well. This form of speech where touching implies hurting another is found in the 105th Psalm -

"When they went from one nation to another,  
From *one* kingdom to another people,  
<sup>14</sup> He permitted no one to do them wrong;  
Yes, He rebuked kings for their sakes,  
<sup>15</sup> *Saying*, 'Do not touch My anointed ones,  
And do My prophets no harm.'" Psalm 105:13-15

With such an assurance from the owner of the property, she would not fear in coming closer to where the fallen grain would be more abundant rather than staying back where it would have already been mostly gleaned.

<sup>9</sup> (con't) **And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn."**

This is an exceptionally kind gesture in itself. Water is heavy and drawing it from a well takes effort. After that, it is poured into containers and would have to be carried from the well to the field. Because of all the effort, the heat of the sun, and the fact that water would have to be carried in quite often, it is unlikely that gleaners would normally be allowed to have something which took such laborious effort.

The old saying "time is money" would ring true in the value of the water. All of the time and effort it took to bring it to the field would be considered a part of what the owner would calculate into his profit and loss statement at the end of the day. Allowing Ruth to drink this water was truly a privilege of distinction.

It would allow her to come to the field without carrying her own water and it would make her entire day much, much easier to bear. As a side note, the well where this



water was drawn was probably the same well which her great-grandson longed after during his time fighting with the Philistines which is recorded in 2 Samuel -

"David *was* then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines *was* then *in* Bethlehem. <sup>15</sup> And David said with longing, 'Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which *is* by the gate!'"

-2 Samuel 23:14, 15

<sup>10</sup> **So she fell on her face,**

To fall on one's face is the humblest form of reverence that one can show. If to another person, it is considered high civil reverence. If it is to God, then it is the highest of religious reverence. The face is literally pressed to the ground, almost as if acknowledging that "from this I came, and to this I deserve to return."

In her case, she was intimating that the kindness shown to her was far above the lowly position she possessed. Her immense gratitude is seen in the act of assuming such a position.

<sup>10</sup> (con't) **bowed down to the ground,**

This literally reads "'and' bowed herself to the ground." One can bow to the ground without falling on their face, but she did both at the same time. In a delicate and reverential way, she completely submitted herself to him in gratitude and thanks. The two actions, though described separately, form one united movement of astonished humility.

<sup>10</sup> (con't) **and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes,**

The amazement in her words shows how astonished she was. She was probably pondering a thousand possibilities all at the same time. Once again, the translation of the NKJV lacks the force of the word *khen* which she uses. They translate it as "favor," but rather, it means "grace."

It isn't just favor, but unmerited favor that she is acknowledging. In what she says, the words of Kris Kristofferson from his song, Why Me Lord, come to mind -

"Why me Lord what have I ever done  
To deserve even one of the pleasures I've known

Tell me, Lord, what did I ever do  
That was worth lovin' you or the kindness you've shown"

Anybody who has ever come to the foot of the cross and been cleansed by the blood of Christ must certainly have asked the same question. "Lord, why have I found such favor in Your eyes?" After many years, the question still perplexes me. "What is it that would make You look down in favor on one such as me?"

<sup>10</sup> (con't) **that you should take notice of me, since I *am* a foreigner?"**

From a biblical standpoint, to "take notice" of someone means to show any form of kindness or respect, including affection. She not only acknowledges his grace towards her, but that it is grace towards a foreigner. As a Moabite, she was entitled to glean from the fields, but nothing more could be expected.

Instead, he has lavished upon her grace in abundance. Even more than she could have imagined possible. Once again, the picture between Ruth and Boaz and us and Jesus should be painfully clear. As gentiles, we are not even of the same covenant line as the people from whom He came.

But the apostle Paul explains that despite our foreign-born status, Christ also has lavished His grace upon us. Here are his words from Ephesians 2:11-13 -

"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—<sup>12</sup> that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

As we progress through Ruth, we should be able to see ourselves represented by her because we have been shown such great favor and unmerited kindness and grace from the Lord Jesus.

In this verse there is an interesting paronomasia in the two words which are translated as "take notice of me" and "foreigner." In Hebrew, they are *nak<sub>h</sub>ar* and *nak<sub>h</sub>ri*. Because she is a foreigner and thus unknown, she is actually all the more noticeable.

*Therefore remember that you, as you realized  
Once Gentiles in the flesh, by birth and not decision  
You who are called the Uncircumcised  
By what is called the Circumcision*

*Made in the flesh by hands, this rite  
A sign which is perceived by eyesight*

*That at that time you were without Christ  
Being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel  
And strangers from the covenants of promise  
Having no hope and without God in the world, destined for hell*

*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away  
Have been brought near by the blood of Christ, your debt He did pay*

## **II. The Lord Repay Your Work (verses 11-13)**

**<sup>11</sup> And Boaz answered and said to her, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband,**

His words, translated as "fully reported," form an antique idiom - *huged hugad* - "showed, showed." Somewhere along the line since their return to Israel, and most probably from Naomi herself, Boaz heard that Ruth had come along with Naomi and of her tender care and love for her. It wasn't just a passing comment, but it was a tapestry of a fine description concerning her as his words indicate.

Though humble and willing to endure trials, privation, and an obscure life, notice was taken of her and her commendation has come. It is reflective of the words of Jesus from Matthew 6 -

"But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly." Matthew 6:3, 4

Ruth now receives open praise for deeds which were quietly done in a corner and without the sound of any blowing trumpets.

**11 (con't) and *how* you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth,**

In respect and in love for Naomi, Ruth was willing to give up all of her childhood memories, her family, and the sweet smells and tastes which accompany life on home soil. This shows a depth of character far different than the vast majority of people on earth.

Instead of self-gratification and the certainty of what would be a much easier life, she was willing to accept whatever her lot would be as she ventured with Naomi to the Land of Israel. Her character is known by her actions.

**11 (con't) and have come to a people whom you did not know before.**

The phase from which the word "before" is translated is *temowl shishowm* - or literally "yesterday and the day before" - it is a primitive way of representing time past. Not only was the land different, and not only would the cherished memories of her youth slowly fade away, Ruth had come to a people whom she had no knowledge of at any point in her life.

Her knowledge of Israel was limited to that of her dead husband, brother-in-law, and father-in-law, along with that of Naomi. They had left Israel in a time of famine and hardship. So, for her to return with Naomi after knowing all this showed that she was willing to accept the people of Israel in a manner far differently than other foreigners would.

Boaz understood that she was determined to be not a foreigner in a foreign land, but she was willing to be a foreigner in a new homeland. Though not an Israelite, she was willing to accept life as one.

**12 The LORD repay your work,**

This phrase brings to mind the words of Jesus from Luke 18:14 which said that "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Ruth has humbled herself, but Boaz asks for her to be exalted and repaid by the Lord Himself for her noble deeds. And the use of the word "repay" doesn't mean that the Lord is in debt to her. Rather he is calling for the grace of the Lord to be upon her.

<sup>12 (con't)</sup> **and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."**

It is almost certain that Boaz had Abraham in mind when he said this. First in Genesis 12:1, we read this -

"Now the LORD had said to Abram:  
'Get out of your country,  
From your family  
And from your father's house,  
To a land that I will show you.'" Genesis 12 :1

Abraham left his country, his family, and his father's house and because of his faithfulness, we read this later in Genesis 15:1 -

"After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I *am* your shield, your exceedingly great reward.'"

Boaz's words to Ruth reflect this same sentiment that is seen towards Abraham. She had left her country, family, and father's house and has acted faithfully toward Naomi. Because of this, he is asking for the blessing and reward which Abraham received to come upon her as well.

However, it is not a general blessing which Abraham received, but a specific one. It was a blessing which transferred to but one son, Isaac. And from Isaac, it transferred to but one son, Jacob, who is Israel. For this reason, Boaz asks for the reward to be "by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."

This is a specific blessing upon a foreigner who has come to participate in the covenant line and with the covenant people. Ruth has come for refuge under His wings. This is a sentiment repeated several times in the Old Testament, including this verse from the 36th Psalm -

"How precious *is* Your lovingkindness, O God!  
Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings."  
-Psalm 36:7

Interestingly, the very blessing that Boaz pronounces upon her now, is a blessing that will be fulfilled by the Lord through him in a detailed way in the time ahead. It is an exceptionally nice touch to be found in the book of Ruth.

**13 Then she said, "Let me find favor in your sight, my lord;**

Many translators say, "I have found favor in your sight" instead of "Let me find favor in your sight." This makes more sense because she then explains what she means in the rest of the verse. But the NET Bible does a great job of saying it in a way that is more understandable to the modern reader. They simply translate it as, "You really are being kind to me, sir."

She isn't *asking* for favor, she has already found it. But, she isn't bragging about it either. Rather, she is acknowledging it in a grateful way. And the reason is found in the continuation of the same verse...

**13 (con't) for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."**

His words have given her a new light of hope. Other than Naomi, she was alone and probably wondered what source of joy she could ever expect. As a foreigner and a poor person, there was no true solace in dreaming about great things to come. But then this stranger, through his comforting actions, had shown her an affection that she had not yet encountered.

Likewise, she said that he had "spoken kindly" to her. The term she uses is *al lev*, literally meaning "to the heart." His words had transformed sadness to joy. They had given her rays of hope instead of thoughts of sadness or despondency. Her heart was comforted because of him. And she felt none of it was deserved.

Unlike his maidservants, she was a foreigner. They were hired hands; she was one who gleans. Their language was familiar, hers probably sounded awkward. Their customs were known to him, hers were strange and unknown. And yet, he had spoken to her and treated her as if she were like them in his eyes. The heart of Ruth was encouraged by the owner of the harvest field.

*When you do a charitable deed as you're going  
Do not let it be that your left hand will know*

*What your right hand is over there doing  
Keep it a secret, yes even so*

*That your charitable deed may be in secret  
And your Father who in secret sees  
Will Himself reward you openly  
Because your actions Him they did please*

*This is the mark of a humble and gentle soul  
One who is willing to do what is just and right  
So keep your pride always under control  
And you will be ever-pleasing in God's sight*

### **III. The Gracious Hand of Boaz (verses 14-16)**

**<sup>14</sup> Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, "Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar."**

When it was time for the reapers and gatherers of the sheaves to eat, Boaz made sure that she was included in the meal as well. Therefore, not only is he fulfilling the law by allowing her to glean and also showing kindness to her through his words and actions during working time, he is also tending to her at mealtime as well.

Interestingly, According to John Gill, "The Midrash [the ancient commentary on the book of Ruth] gives an allegorical sense of these words, and applies them to the Messiah and his kingdom, and interprets the bread as the bread of the kingdom, and the vinegar of the chastisements and afflictions of the Messiah." They then equate this meal with Isaiah 53:5 which says -

"But He *was* wounded for our transgressions,  
He *was* bruised for our iniquities;  
The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him,  
And by His stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5

There is no reason to not see this either. Jesus Himself said that He is the Bread of life. And at His cross, as is recorded in all four gospels, He was given the same type of sour wine which is mentioned in this verse here in Ruth.

Ruth's meal with Boaz is prefiguring the Person and work of Christ in no small way. Especially we can discern this because after the bread and sour wine we see the continuation of verse 14...

**14 (con't) So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched *grain* to her; and she ate and was satisfied,**

There is a requirement in the Law, recorded for the Feast of Firstfruits, that says this -

"You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; *it shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings." Leviticus 23:14

First came the bread and sour wine and then they partake of parched grain. Understanding that the Feast of Firstfruits is a picture of the resurrection of Christ is what brings sense to the order of the verse. First came Jesus the Bread. Then came the cross, which is connected to the sour wine, and then came the resurrection. Only after this do we partake of the benefits of the harvest.

**14 (con't) and kept some back.**

The parched grain that was passed to her was more than enough for her to eat. Boaz was being extra-abundant in generosity to her, knowing that she would need the meal if she hadn't eaten well of late and also giving her enough for leftovers, which she carefully kept back for a special purpose.

An obvious connection to us in this is that Christ has given us all that we could ask for and more. We have, whether we acknowledge it or not, been given an abundance, in life, in His word, and in His spiritual blessings. And so, the obvious question for each of us is, "What will we do with the excess?"

Ruth has kept some back for a special purpose which we will see in next week's verses. It is to give it to Naomi, a poor and deprived Jewish woman. Are we willing to do the same for the spiritually deprived around us? Will we tell about Jesus or keep it quiet?

**15 And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her.**



As an additional hand of grace, Boaz tells his servants after her departure that Ruth should be allowed to glean even among the sheaves. This is an extra benefit that was being granted. If others were to do this, they would be carefully watched, or simply told to move away from the reaping.

The grain is first cut and then gathered together into bundles which would be tied together. These are the sheaves. In this area, there would be an especially large amount of extra grain lying around because as the bundles were combined and as they were carried off, individual stalks would fall out.

If gleaners were allowed around this area, it would be easy for them to steal right out of the sheaves. So normally, they would be kept back until the sheaves were removed and then they could pick up the abundant amounts of grain left on the ground.

But in the case of Ruth, Boaz had enough confidence in her to know that she wouldn't steal out of the bundled-up sheaves. It is a true vote of confidence in her character and integrity.

**<sup>16</sup> Also let *grain* from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave *it* that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."**

And as we finish today, this is a final demonstration of his care for Ruth and Naomi. She's been instructed to stay in the field of Boaz and to follow close behind the women who gathered the stalks into sheaves.

She had been granted protection from any harm which could come from the laborers. And she had been granted all the water she needed from the laborer's supply. She was also granted the right to sit among the reapers, to dine with the laborers, she had extra food to take home, and special permission to glean among the sheaves.

And along with all of that, Boaz adds this final blessing upon her that she is unaware of. The reapers have been given instruction to purposely let some of the stalks that they have in their hand fall to the ground for her. It would be like intentionally dropping money on a sidewalk that a poor person was following along on.

As the reapers cut, they would continue to grasp the stalks until their hand was full and then take that to where the sheaves were being bundled. In the midst of this process, they were to deliberately, not accidentally, drop some for Ruth.

The entire scene that we see is a picture of the grace of God in Christ towards the gentiles. He keeps us safely in His field of harvest, allows us to work alongside his own people, grants us protection from harm, supplies us with the water of life, bestows upon us a seat among his people at mealtime, gives us an overabundance at the meal so that we are never hungry, and allows us access to the riches of heaven itself with all of its superabundance.

We have been granted exceptional care and many tender-mercies by the Lord who loved us enough to go to the cross for us so that we could partake of heaven's meal together with Him. God personally selected the details in today's verses to show us a minute glimpse of the immense care He shows for those He loves.

And it is all available to us by a simple act of faith. Ruth showed faith in the God of Israel by clinging fast to her mother-in-law and in turn joining herself to Him. We, by a mere act of faith in Jesus Christ, can likewise be joined to this wondrous God.

**Closing Verse:** *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! 1 John 3:1*

**Next Week:** Ruth 2:17-23 (Gleaning Through the Harvest Season) (6th Ruth Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. He knows your trials, troubles, and woes and He is there with you through them. So cling to Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **Bread and Grace in the Field of Boaz**

Then Boaz said to Ruth  
"You will listen, my daughter, will you not?  
Do not go to glean in another field  
Nor go from here, not from this spot

But stay close by my young women here  
You will be safe and shall have no fear

Let your eyes be on the field which they reap  
And go after them, this you shall do  
Have I not commanded  
The young men not to touch you?

And when you are thirsty  
Go to the vessels and drink the water  
From what the young men have drawn  
Do this too, won't you my daughter?

So she fell on her face  
Bowed down to the ground, and to him said  
“Why have I found in your eyes this grace?  
Such wondrous favor and not sternness instead?

That you should take notice of me  
Since I am a foreigner, and thus unworthy

And Boaz answered and said to her  
“It has been fully reported to me  
All that you have done for your mother-in-law  
Since the death of your husband, that calamity

And how you have left your father and your mother  
And the land of your birth also  
And have come to a people, yes another  
Whom you did not before know

The Lord repay your work  
And a full reward be given you too  
By the Lord God of Israel  
Under whose wings for refuge have come you

Then she said, “Let me find favor in your sight my lord  
For you have comforted me  
And have spoken to your maidservant a kindly word  
Though I am not like one of your maidservants, but unworthy

Now Boaz said to her at mealtime  
“Come here, and eat of the bread

And dip your piece of bread in the vinegar  
Come, and feel free as I have said

So she sat beside the reapers  
And parched grain to her he passed  
And she ate and was satisfied  
And kept some back, feeling full at last

And when she rose up to glean  
Boaz commanded his young men, saying  
“Let her glean even among the sheaves  
And do not reproach her, this to you I am relaying

Also let grain from the bundles  
Fall purposely for her from your hand  
Leave it that she may glean  
And do not rebuke her, this please understand

Boaz' care for Ruth is but a mere reflection  
Of Jesus' care for us, gentiles by birth  
In Him there is a spiritual reconnection  
So that now we have new and eternal worth

Thank You O God for the wondrous love You have lavished upon us  
And for the surety of life for eternal days  
For You have sent us Your Son, our Lord Jesus  
And so to You we extend all of our praise!

Yes! Now and forever hear our praise, O God  
From our hearts and souls as in Your presence we trod

*Hallelujah and Amen...*

## RUTH 2:17-23 (GLEANNING THROUGH THE HARVEST SEASON)

**Introduction:** There are different kinds of work detailed in the Bible, but for the most part, they can be divided into two main categories, physical work and spiritual work. The two can be separate or they can overlap. One can picture the other as well.

For example, there is the physical work of sowing and watering crops and yet there is the spiritual work of evangelizing and teaching which is pictured by the physical work. Paul speaks about that in 1 Corinthians 3. There is the physical work of being a soldier or warrior and yet that pictures the spiritual warfare which goes on around us.

In fact, if we look closely at the workers mentioned in the Bible and the types of work that they do, we will inevitably see a spiritual truth being presented to us. And yet, at the same time, some of these jobs are jobs that any of us might do ourselves at any given time without any real connection to a spiritual application.

Most farmers don't go out in the morning and say to their wives, "I'm going out to water the crops today, so expect the children to understand the book of Romans when I'm done." Instead, the farmer simply waters the crops, comes home, and hopefully teaches the children Romans.

If he thinks his work during the day will transfer to his children's knowledge of Romans in the evening, he should probably be put away for a rest. However, even in his farming work, there should be a spiritual connection. Paul gives us this advice in Colossians 3:17-

"And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Colossians 3:17

So if we work in a bank, on a farm, or in a restaurant, we can and should accomplish our work in the name of the Lord Jesus and give thanks to God the Father through Him for the work, for the chance to receive our daily wages, for the chance to use our work to motivate others, and for the opportunity to show others Christ through our efforts.

**Text Verse:** *"...each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. <sup>14</sup> If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."*  
-1 Corinthians 3:13-15

We are told that the motivations of our work will become clear. Everything we do, even if it is a menial physical task, can be done with a spiritual connection. The waitress who leads others to Christ through her quiet, steadfast, and faithful work ethic will surely be rewarded more than the pastor who preaches every Sunday but who has no heart for the Lord.

Today, we will see a woman who is faithful in her work, who demonstrates humility in her circumstances, and who is obedient to the sure calling she has received in the Land of Israel and under the care of the God whom she once determined to follow through any circumstance.

Her reward is coming in several ways, but at the time she certainly wasn't thinking about the rewards, she was thinking about her commitment to her mother-in-law, her honor as an individual, and being a dedicated and faithful person to the God she had called as her own.

We can and should learn from her example and from the many other lives who have been revealed in the Bible's pages as people of faith, people of honor, and people who were dedicated to the tasks they were called to – whether lofty and exalted or tedious and menial. God's eyes are never indifferent to those who are faithful. We find this truth time and time again in God's superior word. So let's turn to it once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **18. Blessed Be the One Who Took Notice of You (verses 17-19)**

**<sup>17</sup> So she gleaned in the field until evening,**

Earlier in this chapter, Boaz arrived at the field and we saw the following exchange –

"Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, 'Whose young woman *is* this?'"

<sup>6</sup> “So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, ‘It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.  
<sup>7</sup> And she said, ‘Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.’ So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house.’” Ruth 2:5-7

So in this first verse today, we see that other than a few short breaks, Ruth has worked steadily throughout the entire day, even until evening. Another, less diligent person, may go to the field to glean just enough for the day and not bother with much extra, but she stayed in order to glean as much as she could.

In this, she is a perfect example of the proverb of Solomon which says –

“He who has a slack hand becomes poor,  
But the hand of the diligent makes rich.” Proverbs 10:4

<sup>17</sup> (con’t) **and beat out what she had gleaned,**

In this act, Ruth is assuming a great responsibility which she could have easily shared with Naomi. Instead of binding up all of the stalks and carrying them on her head to home, she instead takes time to beat the grains out, probably using a stick, or maybe even a small rock. It is a laborious and tiring job known as threshing.

Once the grain is threshed, it then has to be separated from the stalks and chaff. The stalks are picked out and then the grain and chaff is winnowed. This involves throwing it up into the air and allowing the wind to blow away the lighter chaff while the grain falls into a pile.

By doing this, she will bring home grain ready to be milled and then cooked. At the same time, she is keeping all of the difficult work for herself. The milling of the grain is something that she and Naomi could do together as they talked. In her actions, she is taking immense care of her mother-in-law at her own expense.

As I said in the introduction, physical tasks often carry spiritual applications. The job of winnowing actually pictures something else later in redemptive history. Jeremiah shows us just what in his prophecy to the people in Jeremiah 15 –

“You have forsaken Me,” says the LORD,  
“You have gone backward.

Therefore I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you;  
I am weary of relenting!  
<sup>7</sup> And I will winnow them with a winnowing fan in the gates of the land;  
I will bereave *them* of children;  
I will destroy My people,  
*Since* they do not return from their ways.” Jeremiah 15:6, 7

As you can see, winnowing symbolizes purification, in this passage it is the removal of the defiled people from the land. Everything is recorded for a reason and understanding symbolism in stories like Ruth can often help us more clearly see what is being pictured.

<sup>17</sup> (con’t) **and it was about an ephah of barley.**

This is no small amount of grain. In today’s measure, it would be approximately a bushel of barley. It would be rather heavy after the long day of gleaning and then beating out the grain and she would have to be careful carrying it so that it wouldn’t topple over and spill.

In all, the grain that she obtained was enough to feed both herself and Naomi for five full days. This can be determined from what is recorded in Exodus 16 which says this –

“And Moses said to them, ‘This *is* the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.  
<sup>16</sup> This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: ‘Let every man gather it according to each one’s need, one omer for each person, *according to the* number of persons; let every man take for *those* who *are* in his tent.’” Exodus 16:15-16

One Omer is a tenth of an ephah. So if she obtained one ephah, then that would last two people for five days. If she could obtain this much throughout the harvest seasons of Israel, they would be able to survive when the harvesting seasons were over.

<sup>18</sup> **Then she took *it* up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned.**

Imagine the dual pleasure of this moment. After her first day of working in the fields, Ruth was certainly tired, even worn out. The load she carried from the field to the city would have become heavier with every step.



And so, to set it down would have been a truly satisfying feeling physically. And yet, at the same time she would be overjoyed to see Naomi's face when the labor was presented to her. And so, both physically and spiritually, she would have been renewed.

At the same time, Naomi had probably fidgeted throughout the day, wondering how Ruth was and wondering if she had found any favor at all among the landowners. The long time that she was gone may have concerned her even more, wondering if she had found so little that she felt she needed to stay out all day just to find enough to survive for a single day.

She would have been tired from the thoughts which wore her down and so to see the large basket of grain would be like balm for her, restoring her both emotionally and physically, filling her with both wonder and gratitude. Solomon speaks of how two can build one another up in this way and make life much more bearable –

“Two *are* better than one,  
Because they have a good reward for their labor.

<sup>10</sup> For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.

But woe to him *who is* alone when he falls,  
For *he has* no one to help him up.

<sup>11</sup> Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm;  
But how can one be warm *alone*?” Ecclesiastes 4:9-11

So there is a mutual benefit in their relationship, one which Ruth has taken the lead in by being such a great blessing to Naomi, but she had still more coming with which to bless her...

<sup>18</sup> (con't) **So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied.**

Earlier in this chapter, we saw this from last week –

“Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, ‘Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.’ So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched *grain* to her; and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back.”

-Ruth 2:14

That portion, which she had kept back, was with her mother-in-law in mind. Rather than having a second meal, she gave what was left of her lunch to Naomi for a dinner. In this,

she beautifully fulfills the words of Paul concerning the responsibility of the younger children to their widowed mothers -

"But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God."

-1 Timothy 5:4

**<sup>19</sup> And her mother-in-law said to her, "Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work?"**

The astonishment of Naomi is perfectly evident in the repetition of her words. Even if we didn't know how much an ephah was, just reading this would let us know that it was no ordinary day of gleaning. And in her words is a sense of heightening the thought and thus complimenting Ruth.

First, she said, "Where have you gleaned today." This is what she set out to do and this is what she did, but she did so much more as Naomi acknowledges with the words "And where did you work?" Gleaning is working, but Ruth did much more. She came home with grain which was ready to be milled.

This means that she had to have a spot to thresh and winnow the grain and this means that she had to have someone allow her to use their threshing floor to do it. It is both a compliment of Ruth and an acknowledgment that someone else had blessed both of them.

**<sup>19</sup> (con't) Blessed be the one who took notice of you."**

Knowing Ruth's character, there isn't even a hint of wrongdoing in her words. If she were any other person, thoughts of stealing or even gain in some other illicit way may have come to mind. Were it not faithful Ruth, how could such an abundance have come in any other way? But instead of such thoughts, Naomi's confidence in her character is never questioned.

Instead, she realizes that someone must have taken notice of her and purposefully blessed her. Seeing her character and hard work, they took notice and were kind to her. It is the only explanation. And so, she exclaims, *yehi makhireckh barukh*, (4:16) "Blessed be the one who took notice of you

19 (con't) **So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, “The man’s name with whom I worked today is Boaz.”**

Repeating the second thought of working, rather than merely gleaning, she gives the name of the owner, Boaz. And technically, she didn't work *with* Boaz, but because he is the owner of the field, it must be considered as working with him.

He allowed her to glean, he allowed her also to thresh the grain, and in the process he gave her water and food. And so, it was technically with him that she worked. In this day of gleaning and working by Ruth which Naomi asked about, we can and should see a parallel to our own lives in Christ.

We should daily ask ourselves what is it that we have done in His fields? When our day comes to a close, we should take a moment to ponder this. As Matthew Henry wisely states -

"It is a good question for us to ask ourselves every night, Where have I gleaned to-day? What improvement have I made in knowledge and grace? What have I done that will turn to a good account? When the Lord deals bountifully with us, let us not be found in any other field, nor seeking for happiness and satisfaction in the creature."

*Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, with blessings bounteous  
That we may rejoice and be glad all our days!*

*Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us  
The years in which we have seen evil in so many ways  
Let Your work to Your servants appear  
And Your glory to their children*

*May they behold it in the future, year by year  
And let upon us be the beauty of the Lord our God  
And establish the work of our hands for us*

*Yes, establish the work of our hands while in this life we tread  
And as we await our Redeemer, our Lord Jesus*

## **II. Blessed be He of the Lord (verses 20 & 21)**

**<sup>20</sup> Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Blessed *be* he of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!"**

There is a bit more in these words than might seem evident right away. First, Albert Barnes wisely notes, that "We may gather from Naomi's allusion to the dead that both her husband and son had been faithful servants of Jehovah, the God of Israel."

This takes us right back to the first chapter where some find fault in her husband and children as if they were being disobedient to the covenant by moving to Moab during the famine. The logic then is that God killed them as an example for us to learn from. This is not the case. There is no hint of disobedience recorded, and it is an inference which is not supported by her words.

God directs famines based on the obedience or disobedience of the nations, not individuals. The individuals, like Abraham, like Isaac, like Jacob, and like others elsewhere in Scripture, all sought assistance and relief from the famine in foreign areas, not out of disobedience, but out of necessity. In the process, they remained faithful to their God, even in foreign lands.

The second aspect of this verse which is actually rather complicated is answering the question, "Just *who* has not forsaken his kindness to the living and the dead?" The Hebrew is ambiguous and so to whom she is referring - the Lord or Boaz? It is completely uncertain. The Lord is the nearest antecedent and so it seems likely, but it is difficult to be certain.

The NIV assumes it is Boaz and reads, "'The LORD bless him!' Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. 'He [Boaz] has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.'"

God's Word sides with the NKJV and says, "Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, 'May the LORD bless him. The LORD hasn't stopped being kind to people-living or dead.'"

The difference may sound unimportant, but it does matter to Naomi! As Boaz is a picture of Christ to come, the ambiguity could have been intentional. The Spirit may have wanted either option to be considered because in the end, the kindness of Boaz now would be reflective of the kindness of the Lord in the picture being made. He, in fact, has not forsaken the living or the dead.

<sup>20</sup> (con't) **And Naomi said to her, “This man *is* a relation of ours, one of our close relatives.”**

These words here include the first of many times that the close relative will be used in Ruth. It is literally a redeemer. Boaz is in this position in relation to them. Such a person is given the responsibility to avenge the killing of the relative, the marrying of the widow who has no son to continue the family name, and the redeeming of an inheritance of the person.

Some of the details for this close relative are found in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Here is one such passage that Naomi may have been thinking of from Deuteronomy 25 -

"If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be *married* to a stranger outside *the family*; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. <sup>6</sup> And it shall be *that* the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel."

-Deuteronomy 25:5, 6

In this, he is a picture of Christ who is our true Redeemer and He is also our Avenger of blood. However, at this time Naomi only calls him "one" of our close relatives. There may be, and as we will see there is, one who is closer. If Boaz is a picture of Christ, then who is the one who is closer picturing? Think on that as we continue through the story.

<sup>21</sup> **Ruth the Moabitess said, “He also said to me, ‘You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.’”**

Suddenly, in the verse following the explanation about who Boaz is in relation to these two widows, three most unusual things come about. The first is that it again repeats (which is actually a re-repeat) that Ruth is a Moabitess. Thus, it says, "Ruth the Moabitess said."

She is suddenly shown again to be distinct from the people of Israel as if the Author wants us to not forget this fact. The second peculiarity is the abrupt way she responds to Naomi's words. She has just been told he is a close relative, or redeemer, but she doesn't directly address it. Instead, she adds to it with *gam ki amar*, or simply, "Also to me he said."

And finally, she erringly repeats the words of Boaz when she says, "You shall stay close by my **young men** until they have finished all my harvest." This is the *substance* of what he said, but it isn't exactly as he said it. Instead, in verse 8 his words were -

"You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my **young women**." Instead of Boaz' words about "young women," she says, "my young men."

Why would the verse emphasize her foreign status once again? What was she thinking when she responded to Naomi as she did, referring back to Boaz' directive about where she should work? And why would she say *the men* instead of *the women*?

And in her citing Boaz, she uses words which are emphatic, "my young men" and "my harvest." When he spoke to her in verse 8, the words weren't emphatic like she says them to Naomi now. And finally, she finishes with the thought that he has told her to stay "until they have finished all my harvest."

This isn't recorded earlier, but it implies both the barley and the wheat harvests. His protection extends throughout the entire harvest cycle. And there is one more point to make on this verse, Ruth did tell Naomi the kindness that she was shown by Boaz, but she didn't tell her the glowing words of commendation that he spoke to her.

Her words here indicate humility. It is a tenet opposite that of pride. In the humble, not the proud, is the favor and grace of God revealed. Her humility has been a consistent theme of the book, and she will be rewarded for it in the time ahead.

*Fear not, for I have redeemed you  
I have called you by your name  
You are Mine from now on, it is surely true  
This word I do proclaim*

*When you pass through the waters  
I will be there the whole time through  
And in the midst of the rivers  
They shall not overflow you*

*When you walk through the fire  
You shall not be burned at all  
Nor shall the flame scorch you*

*On you no disaster shall fall*

*For I am the Lord your God who watches over you*

*The Holy One of Israel, your Savior - ever faithful and true*

### **III. A Season of Gleaning (verses 22 & 23)**

**<sup>22</sup> And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law,**

Like a moment ago when she was called Ruth the Moabitess, the Author now speaks of her as "Ruth her daughter in law." Though she is a foreigner, she has married into the family and the covenant people. We are continually being reminded of these facts so that we can better sort out what is being pictured. And so, to her she says...

**<sup>22</sup> (con't) "*It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women,***

In verse 8, Boaz had said for her to "stay close by my young women" using the feminine word *naarotay*. In verse 21, Ruth had said Boaz' words were "You shall stay close by my young men" using the masculine word *nearim*.

Now, without knowing Boaz' true words, but knowing the customs of the land, Naomi instinctively says that it is "good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women" using the feminine *naarotav*. Why have these things occurred?

Let's go back now to chapter 1 and reread Naomi's words to her daughters in law when they were at the crucial moment of deciding to continue on to Israel or turn back to Moab. There we read this -

"But Naomi said, 'Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? <sup>12</sup> Turn back, my daughters, go—for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, *if* I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, <sup>13</sup> would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!" Ruth 1:11-13

As soon as Naomi mentioned a "close relative" or "redeemer," Ruth stepped back from the picture and mentioned staying close to the young men, implying that maybe a relationship could come up between Naomi and Boaz. She is removing herself from any intended relationship with Boaz.

By saying that she would stay by the men, it means that she would make herself available to them. In doing this, it would keep Boaz from being interested in her and instead willing to redeem Naomi.

It is once again an act of humility by implicitly saying to Naomi, "He is also your kinsman redeemer." But now Naomi corrects her thinking. In essence, "I am not the one who will receive him, you are. You need to stay close to the women, not the men, just as he instructed you."

She can already perceive that she is too old to bear a child for Ruth and so the kinsman must redeem the line through Ruth, not her. And further, she can tell that with all of the attention Boaz has doted upon Ruth in this one day and in the promises of the rest of the harvest, that he is interested in her and might redeem the family through her. Elimelech's name will be carried through Mahlon and Mahlon's name will be revived through Ruth.

In order for this to come about, and for Boaz to grow more fond of her than he is already, she instinctively tells her to "go out with his young women" not with the "young men" which could only lead to trouble.

The story and the words have been most carefully selected to show us a much greater picture of redemptive history. And yet, at the same time, they show the hopeful intent of these women for the chance to be redeemed by an honest and honorable man of Israel.

<sup>22</sup> (con't) **and that people do not meet you in any other field."**

In the field of Boaz there is safety, abundance, and fullness which has already been offered. To not stay there would be tantamount to snubbing his exceptional kindness and also to doing so in a contemptuous and open manner, thus disgracing him in public.

Along with this, it would be opening herself up to the possibility of being violated in another field. The word she uses implies this. It is a perfect example of what would happen to a person who comes under the protection of the God of Israel and yet goes out and looks for spiritual enlightenment in another, strange religion such as Mormonism which claims the same God and yet which is foreign to Him.

If we have called on Christ, we are His and He expects us to remain in His field. Should we start attending the Jehovah's Witnesses, we would open ourselves up to being



violated by their doctrine. The picture of Ruth staying in Boaz' field is exactly intended to show us the importance of staying in Christ's own field as we gather in the grain, which pictures the word of God.

**<sup>23</sup> So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz,**

In fulfilling the certain hope of Boaz from verse 8, and in accepting Naomi's admonition in the previous verse, we read this beautiful verse here which begins with the words *v'tidbaq b'naarowt* - "and stayed close to the young women."

Ruth has first demonstrated humility and grace in her dealings with her mother-in-law and she has done it with tact and kindness in her heart. Now that she understands that she is the likely one to be used in the family's redemption, she stays close to the young women to not allow any words of scandal to arise. She is truly a woman of noble character.

**<sup>23 (con't)</sup> to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest;**

She faithfully continues her duty from the time of the Passover shortly after which the barley harvest began, all the way through the wheat harvest which begins at the time of Pentecost. The entire harvest season then lasts for a period of three or more months, depending on the exact location and elevation.

During all of this time, nothing more is recorded of the lives of these three people other than the final note of verse 23...

**<sup>23 (fin)</sup> and she dwelt with her mother-in-law.**

In this final section, the word used is *v'teshev*, "and she dwelt." However, some translators use the same word with a different pronunciation. Instead of *v'teshev*, they use *v'tashav*, "and after she returned."

If this is correct, then it would imply one of two things, she returned to Naomi after working both harvest seasons, which makes no sense at all, or that she returned after working with the young women of Boaz each day.

Either way, the context of the passage implies that she continuously lived with her mother-in-law throughout the harvest season, not "after" the harvest season.

As she went out to work each day, she returned home to Naomi each evening. It is through this entire time that she is being watched by Boaz. Her character and her dedication to Naomi, and her diligence working in the fields and staying close to the women will not go unnoticed.

And the same can be true for each of us. The Bible says that "the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose heart *is* loyal to Him." (2 Chronicles 16:9).

But for the Lord to search us out and reveal Himself to us in this way means that we first have to be His. The way we demonstrate our loyalty to Him is to call upon Jesus as our Savior. Without Christ Jesus, the Lord is not our friend, but our foe. There remains a wall of enmity between us.

The only way to break down that wall is to go through the shed blood of Jesus

**Closing Verse:** *Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage. Ecclesiastes 5:18*

**Next Week:** Ruth 3:1-5 (Go Down to the Threshing Floor) (7th Ruth Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. He knows your trials, troubles, and woes and He is there with you through them. So cling to Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **Gleaning Through the Harvest Season**

So she gleaned until evening  
Out there in the field  
And beat out what she had gleaned  
And about an ephah of barley her effort did yield

Then she took it up and into the city she went  
And her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned  
The effort for which her day was spent

So she brought out and gave to her from her pack  
After she had been satisfied what she had kept back

And her mother-in-law said to her  
"Where have you gleaned today?  
And where did you work?  
The one who took notice of you, blessed be he I say  
So she told her mother-in-law, probably elated  
With these words she did say  
With whom she had worked, and she stated  
The man's name is Boaz with whom I worked today

Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law  
"Blessed be he of the Lord, yes a blessing upon his head  
Who has not forsaken His kindness  
Both to the living and the dead!

And Naomi said to her as she spoke  
"This man is a relation of ours  
One of our close relatives is this bloke

Ruth the Moabitess said then  
"He also said to me, I do attest  
'You shall stay close by my young men  
Until they have finished all my harvest

And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law then  
"It is good, my daughter, as he revealed  
That you go out with his young women  
And that people do not meet you in any other field

So close by the young women of Boaz she did stay  
To glean, until the end of barley harvest did draw  
And the wheat harvest too, yes all the way  
And she dwelt with her mother-in-law

Though the work was hard, hot, and tiring  
Ruth continued with it day by day  
Her example to us should be all the more inspiring  
Knowing that God used her efforts in such a wondrous way

In the end her deeds and life have been given

As sure examples to follow for each one of us  
To be humble, dedicated, and loyal in this life we are livin'  
And as we anticipate the coming of our Lord Jesus

As surely as Ruth will receive her just due  
So the same is true for us as we bring glory to God  
In Christ there is the certainty of reward for me and you  
For all we do in His name while on this path we trod

Thank You heavenly Father for your kind hand upon each of us  
Thank You for the greatest gift of all, our Lord and Savior Jesus

*Hallelujah and Amen...*

## RUTH 3:1-5 (GO DOWN TO THE THRESHING FLOOR)

**Introduction:** Today we enter into the third chapter of Ruth, which continues the story of redemption and wedded love between Boaz and Ruth. In order to properly understand what this third chapter will relay; it needs to be compared with what already occurred in Chapter 2.

At that time, the two women, Naomi and Ruth, had just returned from Moab and they were in a state of distress. It was *Ruth* who stepped forward to accomplish the work necessary to sustain the life of the two of them. She offered to go glean in the fields of Bethlehem and Naomi consented, submitting to the will of Ruth.

Ruth wasn't sent into the fields; she volunteered to go into them. Now in chapter 3, when the time of hardships have lessened because of Ruth's efforts, Naomi now takes the lead by initiating the action to be taken. And it is an action directed toward securing a place of rest for Ruth in the house of her own husband.

And so there is the contrast which is evident. The idea of working in order to help Naomi originates with Ruth, but the thought of happiness and contentment for Ruth, and the carrying on of the family name originates with Naomi. Despite the originator of each idea though, it is Ruth in whom the mission is accomplished.

When she went to glean, it was as a widow and a foreigner, exercising her rights in that status to work in the fields of Israel. Four times in chapter 2, her Moabite origin was noted. She went with no definite place to glean, but merely where happenstance brought her. And with no set plan. Whatever happened would be at the providence of the Lord.

On the other hand, she will now be given definite instructions to go to a specific place and with a set plan. Instead of uncertainty in what she would do, she will have a set purpose and she will be determined in her mission. Instead of widow's garments, she will be wearing her finest apparel. And yet, she will be going with the redemption rights of a widow under the law of Israel.

Never in this chapter will her country of origin be mentioned. The last chapter showed her rights to glean in order for her and her mother to physically live. This chapter will show her rights to be redeemed so that their family name will continue to live. In both

chapters though, there is a difficult task to undertake and in some ways, the second is actually more difficult than the first.

As a gleaner, she could have been physically abused or humiliated, and yet she found grace. In this chapter, though it is unlikely that she would be physically abused, she could still be humiliated or cause another to be humiliated.

In the previous chapter she acted openly and yet with humility, faithfully working to feed herself and her mother. In this chapter she will act secretly and with even greater humility to carry on the name of the family.

In the previous chapter she acted to overcome hunger and physical needs. In this chapter she will act to overcome love, to fulfill her emotional needs. In the previous chapter, she demonstrated her promised faithfulness to Naomi. In this chapter she will demonstrate obedience to her.

In both chapters, what is often mistaken as wrongdoing in Naomi for allowing Ruth to venture out, is actually a credit to her. The faithfulness of Ruth shows that Naomi had truly won her love and Ruth felt indebted to her for that affection.

And in both chapters, we cannot assign our modern code of ethics or law upon the actions of either woman. In both the gleaning and the attempt to secure a kinsman redeemer they are conducting themselves under the provisions of the law of Israel and within the accepted customs derived from that law.

Ruth had the right to glean, and the additional blessings which were heaped upon her were by the grace of the one who granted them. But in granting them, they led naturally to the hope of fulfilling the second right. If Boaz had been harsh to her, then Naomi and Ruth would never have entered into exercising this second right, the right of redemption.

**Text Verse:** *"Thus says the LORD:*

*'The people who survived the sword*

*Found grace in the wilderness—*

*Israel, when I went to give him rest.'*

<sup>3</sup> *The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying:*

*'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;*

*Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.'" Jeremiah 31:2, 3*

The Lord allows hardships into our lives for His own reasons, but He also intends for His people to find rest and grace in Him. These two are not contradictory. Instead, we often merely fail to see that the hardships are leading us *to* our place of rest.

Naomi and Ruth had hardships that most of us have never known, and yet, they were guided by the hand of God each step of the way. They truly found grace in Ruth's happenstance arrival in the fields of Boaz and today we will see them also look for rest in his care.

Whatever hardship you are facing, it is being used for a good end. And when the grace comes, it will be far sweeter than it would have been without first going through the hardship. These lessons continuously come forth as we read and contemplate God's superior word. And so let's go to that word again this morning and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. Securing a Place of Rest (verses 1 & 2)**

In the law of Moses, there is a provision that if a man dies without having a son, his brother is to go in to the woman and raise up a child in his dead brother's name. This is how it is recorded in Deuteronomy 25, something we also read last week -

"If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be *married* to a stranger outside *the family*; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. <sup>6</sup>And it shall be *that* the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel." Deuteronomy 25:5, 6

This right is actually the right of the *surviving widow*. It is something that *she* can demand of him and there is a provision that if the man doesn't fulfill her request, that he is to be marked as a public and open shame in Israel.

This was something that actually predated the law in a cultural sense as we saw in Genesis 38 in the account of Judah and Tamar. It, in essence shows the importance of preserving the family spirit and body within the nation of a people through propagation.

If this is so, and it is, then we can further contemplate who Naomi pictures, who Ruth pictures, and what the ultimate purpose of the book of Ruth is given for. Each chapter

and each verse is leading us through a snapshot of a portion of redemptive history and showing us at the same time the marvelous work of God in and through His son, Jesus.

Although the law doesn't specifically mention the details of a close relative other than a brother fulfilling the rights of the widow, it is implied throughout this story and thus it was an accepted custom in Israel. This is the basis for the verses we will see today as we begin with the first verse of chapter 3 -

**<sup>1</sup> Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her,**

Naomi initiates the details of this chapter. Boaz has shown an interest in Ruth, and she may at the same time be disheartened, wondering where life was leading her. While gleaning, she would have seen Boaz daily and received his grace and felt productive and helpful towards Naomi.

And yet, at the same time, she may have been a lady who was downcast in her soul, desiring a husband to raise up the name of Mahlon. Naomi perceived this and so she decides it is time to take measures into hand for the benefit of her beloved Ruth.

**<sup>1</sup> (con't) "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?"**

Her words here, though given as a question are actually a statement of affirmation. In essence, she says "My daughter, I shall seek security for you, that it may be well with you." As the parent, in this society and within the times of this culture, it is her duty and responsibility to arrange the marriage for the child.

And this is exactly what the idea of "seeking security" implies. The word in Hebrew is *manoakh* and it implies "rest" such as in a place of rest, like when Noah's ark settled on the mountains of Ararat, or a state of rest, such as when there is freedom from labor resulting in general ease and contentment, such as when Adam was placed in the Garden before the fall.

This is what Naomi is relaying. She intends for Ruth to be granted a place of rest in a marriage which would be for her comfort, contentment, and peace for both her body and her soul. Ruth has steadfastly worked in the harvest field and now Naomi will look to give her body rest.

And she is certainly lonely, frustrated, and feeling like a fifth wheel as well. And so Naomi will look to find rest for her spirit also. The words from her to Ruth are



exquisitely simple and to the point in what they imply - "Ruth, I am going to find you a good husband to take care of you."

In chapter 1, this was Naomi's desire for both of her beloved daughters in law. At that time, she said this to them -

"Go, return each to her mother's house. The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. <sup>9</sup>The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Ruth 1:8, 9

When she spoke those words, all of their hearts were filled with sorrow and uncertainty, but now there is comfort and hope. At that time, there was self-forgetting on Naomi's part in hopes of a better future in store for each of them.

Now there is again self-forgetting in hopes of a better life for Ruth. Because Ruth refused to forget Naomi and instead clung tightly to her, Naomi is returning the love and looking for her to be united to a man whom she can now cling to.

Naomi's words, though stated as a question, should be taken as a statement which expresses an intentional result. To be a wife who is secure and at rest is assumed to be a good thing. And so, the words "that it may be well with you" convey the idea of intent.

And so, we can see that Boaz isn't just a close relative, but he is a place of security and rest. As Parker notes about this verse, "Menuchah [meaning rest] means an asylum of rest, a protection of honour, a security that cannot be violated; and then in its last signification it means the very omnipotence and pavilion of God. In this respect Boaz was the type of Christ."

Understanding this, we certainly see a glimpse of the work of the Lord. In Him is our rest, our contentment, and our peace. This idea of rest as a stated aim is given in Isaiah 63 -

"As a beast goes down into the valley,  
And the Spirit of the LORD causes him to rest,  
So You lead Your people,  
To make Yourself a glorious name." Isaiah 63:14

And again, in the New Testament, we see that joining to Him through faith is what brings us to our state of rest. In Hebrews 4:3, it is explicitly stated -

"For we who have believed do enter that rest..." Hebrews 4:3

When we understand who Ruth pictures and who Boaz pictures, we can see very clearly the beauty of Naomi's words to her realized in our relationship with Jesus. (LIFE APP - ADAM'S REST IN GARDEN)

*O! Precious rest of God, blissful and filled with joy  
As we trust in Jesus, and place our souls in His hands  
By faith we call out to Him and His grace He does employ  
He bestows it upon all who trust, from all nations and all lands*

*In Him we find our rest because in Him we do believe  
He fulfilled the law and died to give us life  
And in Him alone do we eternal life receive  
Because in Him has ended all our enmity and strife*

*Yes, O God! We praise You for the marvelous work of Jesus  
We thank You for this wondrous Gift which You bestowed on us*

**<sup>2</sup> Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative?**

What is probably very happy news for Ruth, Naomi mentions Boaz in the context of her *rest*. Though he's older, he has demonstrated exceptional kindness to her and she is probably more attached to him than any other man that she had met. In Naomi's words, she implies that she has a right to recommend the course of action she will now convey to Ruth by using a term *modaath* to describe him.

He is a relative who is aware of her circumstances and who should be aware of his obligations to her family. This is the only time the word is used in this manner in the Bible, which is in the feminine form. It comes from the idea of "to know." In chapter 2, the word in its masculine form was used in this verse -

"There was a **relative** of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name *was* Boaz." Ruth 2:1

So here we have a gender discord. In chapter 2, Boaz is called a relative using the masculine word *mowda*. Now in chapter 3, he is called a relative using the feminine word *modaat*. Scholars are perplexed about this, and I've read no comment clearly

explaining why this is the way it is. So, I spent all night this past Tuesday thinking about it. Here is what I believe is why:

In chapter 2, Boaz is connected to Naomi's husband, Elimelech, as the relative, but now in this chapter, he is called "our relative." Yes, he is Naomi's relative through Elimelech, but he is also Ruth's relative through marriage. There is a connection between the two which implies there should be knowledge on the part of Boaz towards his responsibilities as their relative.

An example of the word's meaning can be found right at the beginning of the Bible which speaks of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The word for "knowledge" is the word *daath*, to which *modaat* is connected.

The word *daath*, according to the Haw Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, is knowledge "possessed by God from whom nothing can be hidden. He teaches it to man. It appears parallel with wisdom and understanding, instruction and law... *daath* is also used for moral cognition." They go on like this for several detailed paragraphs concerning the word *daath*.

So I believe there are two possible reasons for using the feminine word instead of the masculine. The first is that Boaz pictures Christ who possesses all knowledge. Therefore, the word is being tied, not so much to his relationship between him and these women, but to the knowledge which is being conveyed concerning the process of redemption. For example, the Hebrew word for "instruction" or "law," which is *Torah*, is feminine.

The second reason, which may be idle speculation, is that it may be making a pun (which puns often occur in the Bible) on the words "Moab" and *daath*, thus *modaath*. Ruth is a Moabite and is the one Naomi is indicating will be redeemed, and Boaz possesses the knowledge of the redemption process. Boaz has the knowledge concerning them as close family and what he is to do for them.

But this knowledge doesn't imply an obligation on him which he is required to act on first. One of the women has the right of the marriage and Naomi is implying that it is to be Ruth's. As Ruth has this right, then the first step towards such a marriage doesn't begin with or belong to Boaz. Such assertion of a right belongs to the possessor of the right.

An example of this is the act of gleaning. Boaz owned a field, and it was his obligation under the law to allow those who desired to glean to let them do so - he could not

forbid them from gleaning. But he was under no obligation to go after them in order to glean. The gleaners possessed the right and so they had to initiate the exercising of the right. TALK ABOUT THIS - BOAZ OUT IN TOWN MAKING ALL THE POOR FOLK COME GLEAN

Ruth possessed the right to a near-relative redeemer, which means *she* had to initiate the exercising of being redeemed as the law provided. In this, we can see the biblically evident truth that salvation which is *provided* by God, and which is in accord with His law, is a right which *we* possess, and which requires an action that *we* must initiate in order for it to be acted upon.

A good example of this would be God's redemption of Israel at the Exodus. He gave them a law to place blood on the lintels of the doors on their houses. When He did, He also said,

"And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt." Exodus 12:13

The Lord gave the law, but the people had to respond to the law. They could have skipped this step and died. And when they were brought through the sea, they could have turned back and stayed in Egypt. God allows us to be obedient to Him and He allows us to initiate the actions which His law requires and offers in the redemptive process.

It is a picture of man's free-will in election. Though God knows what our free-will choice will be, it does not negate that we have to make it. God doesn't selectively choose some for salvation and some for condemnation as Calvinist doctrine incorrectly states.

Instead, the right to redemption is in the hands of the one to whom the right belongs *after* the law allows the right. *We must choose* to exercise our right to redemption in order to be redeemed... And you thought this was just a story about a guy meeting a lovely young girl from Moab. Rather, it is a story of you and me as we come before the gracious Redeemer, our Lord Jesus.

It should be noted here that if the marriage proposal works, it will not only ensure that Ruth finds her rest, but that any children born in the marriage will raise up the seed of Naomi's dead son and thus preserve the family name.

<sup>2</sup> (con't) **In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.**

Having noted that she was looking for a husband for Ruth, and then noting the fact that Boaz was in the know concerning her status and relationship to him, she now goes further in her match-making plans by noting that "Oh boy, I happen to know where he will be this very evening!"

It is an exceptional excuse for her to meet him as it was nighttime, outside of the city, and away from where he lived. And he would be out there working alone.

And on top of all that, it would be after a feast with the dayworkers. After harvesting and bringing in the sheaves, they would have a meal before going home. The owner however would stay at the threshing floor to guard the grain.

At such a time, he would be in good spirits, satisfied with the day behind him, having a full stomach, and happy from the wine. He would be in a good mood because of the satisfaction of a excellent day of harvesting. He would lay among the grain content with the labor of his hands. It would make for the perfect moment and place for Ruth to exercise the right of redemption.

Naomi's words indicate that she had paid close attention to the movements of Boaz and also to the kindness that he had shown to Ruth. Her proposal was certain to have a positive outcome because she could tell that his heart was in no way unsympathetic to Ruth.

Ruth began her gleaning at the start of the harvest and now she begins a new undertaking during the time of threshing and winnowing of barley. During the intervening time, Naomi had observed enough to know that both of them were suited for each other and that both of them were inclined toward one another. And so, she directs Ruth to the threshing floor of Boaz.

A threshing floor was a place where the grain was taken. It would often have a covered top to keep rain off the grain, but the sides would be open. It would be situated where the breezes would come through the best - either on an open field or on a the top of a hill.

In the land of Israel, the winds start to rise from the sea about four o'clock or so, just like in Florida, and it continued until after sunset. The floor of a threshing floor would be

mixed with chalk to both keep weeds from growing up and to keep the ground from cracking during the dry season. This would be compacted and perfectly flat.

In the middle of the floor, the stalks would be threshed to separate them from the grain and also to break the kernels of grain open. After that, the grain would be tossed into the air and the wind would blow away the lighter chaff as the heavier grain fell back down on the floor, thus purifying it.

Here in this spot of labor and industry, Boaz, the "man of great wealth" participated along with his laborers in the winnowing of his barley and then he would lay down by his large heap of grain and sleep for the night, satisfied and content.

## **II. Go Down to the Threshing Floor (verses 3 & 4)**

**<sup>3</sup>Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your *best* garment and go down to the threshing floor;**

Since the death of her husband, Ruth had probably worn widow's garments. For the first time since that occasion, she will now adorn herself in beautiful raiment and be prepared in a most radiant way. Her clothes would smell wonderful, her face would glow from the bath, and her hair would be shiny from a handful of olive oil.

If she caught the notice of Boaz while hot, sweaty, and wearing widow's clothes as she gleaned, imagine how naturally lovely she must have been. And so with the added beauty, only the word *radiant* could accurately describe her. At the time of the covenant with Israel, God through Ezekiel describes them in a similar way -

"When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time *was* the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine,' says the Lord GOD. <sup>9</sup>Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil." Ezekiel 19:8-9

If the covenant with Israel was comparable to Ruth's appearance, then Ruth, a gentile who is meeting with Boaz must be picturing a New Covenant with the Lord. Again, we are brought to ask why this story is included in the Bible. Listen to how Paul describes us as the church and how closely it matches what we would think of Ruth at this time -

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." Ephesians 5:25-27 (NIV)

If this story were merely to introduce Ruth as an ancestor of David and Jesus, then a short note in a genealogical record somewhere in Chronicles would have sufficed. But instead, more detail is given to this story than any other such story of its type in the Bible.

Every word and every detail is given to show us of a greater story of love, redemption, and restoration. Every person mentioned is emblematic of another figure or precept which leads to the work of Jesus Christ. It is truly a work of beauty. God has taken these real people with their truly human needs and desires and has used them as examples of His redemption for the people of the world.

As an appropriate parallel thought to this verse, Starke says, "The bride of Christ is pleasing to her Bridegroom only when anointed with the Spirit and clothed in the garments of salvation." Without these, we cannot be a part of God's plan of redemption, but with them, we are His - once and forever redeemed.

<sup>3</sup> (con't) **but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.**

One could ask why would she bother with her best garments if she were only to come to him in the dark of the night. That assumes that Naomi's words mean that he would *only* see her at that time. Rather, she probably went at the time of the evening feast in order to be seen by him and maybe eat with him, but that she wouldn't make herself and her intentions known until after that time.

The term "known" here then is referring to the intentions of the evening, not the seeing of the person. She would be seen, and it would be seen in such a *ka-pow* loveliness that the meal and the drink would only make his sleep sweeter.

As the bearer of the right to request redemption, she could do so publicly, but the approach recommended by Naomi is one which is of heartstrings and human urges, not just one of legal propriety. The question is, why would she do it this way? And the answer is that Boaz is *not the closest relative to Ruth*.

There is one who is closer, as we will see in a few verses. If she were to abruptly claim her right to Boaz based on the law, he could just as abruptly say that she had to follow the letter of the law. However, if she were to follow the intent of the law mixed with a pleasing and humble manner, Boaz would still follow the letter of the law, but he would do it in a way much more conducive to a favorable outcome for a marriage.

If that doesn't sound like us before the law, relying on the work of Christ rather than on our own works, I'm not sure what better picture could ever be made.

Life application: Christ fulfills the law; He is our rest.

**<sup>4</sup>Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies;**

At the end of the work, Boaz would be alone to watch the grain, and it would be getting dark or it would already be dark. Any lamp he used would be put out and he would hit the proverbial hay. At this time, she would need to mark the spot mentally and to know it because it would otherwise be too dark to avoid stepping on him as she went to finish her instructions.

**<sup>4</sup> (con't) and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down;**

To uncover his feet is literally "the places of his feet." It would be comparable to saying, "the foot of his bed." Boaz would probably be sleeping in his clothes and merely have a cover over his feet to keep them warm through the night.

With this cover, she could lay next to his feet and cover herself as a sign of submission. It would be as a servant might do when sleeping in a room with their master. Some scholars take great offense against this particular instruction and find blame in both Naomi and Ruth for being so unwise and acting in such an unbiblical manner.

This is what happens when we insert our own cultural norms into someone else's cultural setting. The action, as instructed by Naomi and carried out by Ruth, would have been perfectly acceptable in the culture.

She is offering herself to the one who has the right to redeem her by taking advantage of the very law of redemption which the culture was guided by. Boaz had meticulously cared for Ruth and had revealed his intentions to her through his actions, but it was *her* right of redemption, not his.



He is the one to perform the redemption if so asked. And he had implicitly demonstrated his desire to do so through his care of her, maybe hoping that she would respond. And so, it is with the Spirit. He calls us in anticipation of us responding, but it is we who must respond to the call.

Christ has the power to redeem, but He allows us the choice to ask for it. This is perfectly evident here and throughout the rest of Scripture. It makes no sense to say that one would call on the name of the Lord to be saved if the Lord were first to have regenerated them to call on the name of the Lord. Boaz offered in his own way and waited for Ruth to respond.

Having said that, it is certain that Ruth, the hard yet humble gleaner in the field, would never have summoned up the courage to go to Boaz, even at Naomi's instruction, unless she wanted to have him in marriage and unless she knew that she would be received favorably by him. In essence, Boaz gave her the faith to come forward to be redeemed by his actions toward her. It is an exact match to Paul's words in Ephesians 2:8, 9 –

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Through His loving actions towards us, we are given the faith to call out to Him for salvation. And through His grace, we are saved when we call out. The entire process is credited to the Lord. This is seen in the story of Boaz and Ruth.

Nothing improper or vulgar can be deduced from this passage. It is the culmination of a demonstration of interest by both parties for a legitimate union provided for by the law under which they both lived. Naomi knew that both parties were in favor of it and she simply followed the cultural norms in order for their hearts to be united as one.

<sup>4</sup> (con't) **and he will tell you what you should do."**

With her offer made as she was instructed to do, Boaz would in turn fill in the finer points of what would occur. Naomi had no fear that Boaz would act in an irresponsible matter. Whatever he did, would be an act which would be followed up on in the manner appropriate to the actions he took that night towards Ruth.

*At the threshing floor where the chaff from the grain is parted  
There the grain is made pure and ready to eat*

*The chaff is blown away as the winnowing is started  
Until it is all gone and the process is complete*

*And so it is with the harvest field of man as well  
There is good grain and there is chaff also  
And the two are separated, destined for heaven or for hell  
Let us decide now that to heaven we will go*

*It is a choice and the choice should be to receive Jesus  
Who is gracious enough to leave the choice up to us*

### **III. Ruth Agrees (verse 5)**

**<sup>5</sup> And she said to her, “All that you say to me I will do.”**

It's obvious to Ruth that Naomi desires her to claim the right of redemption and that she believes she will benefit from it just as if she were to exercise it herself. The name of her husband and two dead sons can live through the wife of the dead son.

It is also evident that Boaz has an affection for Ruth and that Ruth probably felt that same affection for Boaz. Having received his grace certainly led to feelings of affection for him by her. None of this would have escaped Naomi's eyes and she knew that Boaz would be willing to go to extra lengths to procure Ruth as a wife.

In this hopeful union then there is the chance for the family line to continue despite the sad times of the past. And so, because of these things she has given instructions to Ruth which are in line with the norms of the culture and are in no way improper or immodest.

Instead, they are instructions which have used the law and have also used the charm of Ruth to bring about a good end to the matter. As we proceed on, we will see more specifics which should lead us to an even clearer picture of why God included this book in the Bible.

And yes, each of those specifics will show us hints of the work of Jesus. He is the Lord not only to the Jews, but to the Gentiles as well. Though foreigners to the covenant at Sinai, we can be grafted into the commonwealth of Israel through the work of the Redeemer. In Him, Jew and Gentile alike have equal standing before God.

**Closing Verse:** *"For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'"*

*-Isaiah 57:15*

**Next Week:** Ruth 3:6-13 (Midnight at the Threshing Floor) (8th Ruth Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. He knows your trials, troubles, and woes and He is there with you through them. So cling to Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **Go Down to the Threshing Floor**

Then Naomi, her mother-in-law, to her said  
"My daughter, shall I not seek security for you  
That it may be well with you and not difficult instead?  
I will give instruction on what you are to do

Now Boaz, whose young women you were with  
Is he not our relative whom we know?  
In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight  
At the threshing floor. Yes! It is so

Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself also  
Put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor  
But do not make the man yourself to know  
Until he has finished eating and drinking, and is ready to snore

Then it shall be, when he lies down for his rest so sweet  
That you shall notice the place where he lies too  
And you shall go in, uncover his feet  
And lie down; and he will tell you what you should do

And she said to her, "All that you say to me I will do  
Ruth's actions showed a daughter-in-law both faithful and true

Like Ruth we are to submit ourselves to the Lord  
And to walk before Him in the Spirit and in righteousness  
To learn how we can, we should attend to His word

And in doing so, our souls He will bless

Yes, God has given this wondrous treasure to us  
In hopes that we will daily seek His face  
And to fellowship with Him through our Lord Jesus  
Living in His blessings and showered with His grace

Thank You, O God, for all You have done for us  
Yes, heavenly Father, we thank You through Your Son  
Our Lord, our Savior, our Redeemer, Jesus

*Hallelujah and Amen...*

## RUTH 3:6-13 (MIDNIGHT AT THE THRESHING FLOOR)

**Introduction:** Michael Jerome Williams, Jr., was born in Memphis, Tennessee. He was one of 12 children born to Denise Oher, an alcoholic and crack addict. His father was frequently in prison. With such tough surroundings, he received little attention or childhood discipline.

He repeated first and second grade and was at 11 different schools during his first nine years. He learned that life was tough, having been placed in foster care at seven, and he went back and forth between foster homes and homelessness. His biological father was murdered in prison when he was a senior in high school.

His life was bleak and filled with disappointment, but in time a couple with a daughter and son attending the same school as him welcomed him into their home and eventually adopted him. They tended to his needs once they understood what he had been through and they hired a tutor for him, who worked with him 20 hours per week.

During this time, he earned letters in track and basketball. In basketball, he averaged 22 points and 10 rebounds a game, earning All-State honors. He was also a state runner-up in the discus as a senior. During this time, he raised his GPA from 0.76 to 2.52.

After that, he went on to complete college and was signed into the NFL in 2008 under the name Michael Oher. Little things in life can truly produce immense changes in one's direction. Today, we will look at a moment in time which set up events which will forever change the life of Ruth.

Though the outcome won't be known as we finish today, the divinely orchestrated appointment will lead to a vow from Boaz that whatever the end result, it will be a favorable one for Ruth. It is times like these which demonstrate that even things which seem random never are. Michael Oher, in his own walk with Christ, has certainly found this to be true in his life.

**Text Verse:** *'Trust in the LORD with all your heart,  
And lean not on your own understanding;  
<sup>6</sup>In all your ways acknowledge Him,  
And He shall direct your paths.'* Proverbs 3:5-6

There are times when the outcome of something we must do may seem scary or overwhelming to face. It's at times like these that we need to remember this proverb and cling to it. Ruth had seen Naomi return to Israel *despite* the many heartaches and losses she had suffered.

In witnessing Naomi's implicit trust, Ruth learned also to trust implicitly. She trusted Naomi who trusted the Lord and her trust in the Lord has led her to where she will arrive at tonight, with a blessing and a promise of rest in the home of a kinsman redeemer.

We too have a Kinsman Redeemer, and we too must trust the Lord that our redemption is ahead. We who have believed have entered His rest, though we wait on its fulfillment. Until that day, no matter what, let's just keep trusting the Lord. He led Michael Oher this far and he will continue to lead us too. It's a sure promise that we see pictured again and again in God's superior word, so let's turn to that word now and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. Ruth's Faithful Obedience (verses 6 & 7)**

To get a clearer picture of what our first verse today includes, it would be good to go back and re-read the verses which precede it –

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? <sup>2</sup> Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, *is he* not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. <sup>3</sup> Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your *best* garment and go down to the threshing floor; *but* do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. <sup>4</sup> Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do.” <sup>5</sup> And she said to her, “All that you say to me I will do.”

From this, we come to our first verse of the day:

**<sup>6</sup> So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her.**

Naomi would never have asked Ruth to do something she felt was inappropriate. Ruth knew this and she also felt an obligation through love to follow the instructions as they

were given. Her love for Naomi led to her child-like obedience in how she conducted herself through this delicate ritual.

And yet, Naomi's love for Ruth is also evident in searching for a place of rest for her daughter-in-law. If Ruth were to marry, there was nothing to guarantee that Boaz would build an addition on his house for Naomi. Although unlikely, she could be left in a lonely position through her actions.

But their mutual love is what is driving their decisions and actions as they go about fulfilling the hope-filled plan. And so the Bible records Ruth's obedience in the words that she, "went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her."

**<sup>7</sup> And after Boaz had eaten and drunk,**

This is exactly what Naomi had specified, that she should not make herself known, meaning her intentions, until after Boaz had eaten and drunk. It's an obviously-understood maxim to most people. Another person will normally be more well-disposed to a matter after having first eaten.

In the book of Esther, before requesting an especially important matter from the King of Persia, Esther first invited him to a banquet, knowing that this would make the chance of him granting her request more favorable. Likewise, one should never go shopping before eating a meal unless they have a very fat wallet.

People tend to act more impulsively and without great thought before a meal than they do after one. Naomi understood this in her directions to Ruth. Ruth in turn trusted Naomi's directions and carefully followed them.

**<sup>7 (con't)</sup> and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain;**

The word here translated as "cheerful" is *yataw*. It signifies something good, well, glad, or pleasing. Thus, his mood and his disposition after a long day of work was that of a refreshed laborer. Ecclesiastes speaks of the work of a laborer and how it affects his sleep -

"The sleep of a laboring man *is* sweet,  
Whether he eats little or much." Ecclesiastes 3:12

If the sleep of a laboring man is sweet even if he eats little, how much more sweetly will he sleep after he has had a good meal. Boaz was well-fed and well-filled and probably on a soft bed of the stalks which had been separated from the grain.

There, at the end of the heap of grain, he probably sweetly slept and maybe he dreamt of that beautiful young woman who came to glean each day in his fields...

<sup>7</sup> (con't) **and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.**

Again, Ruth followed Naomi's directions exactly as given. Naomi's direction for her to wait until he was asleep was certainly an intended precaution, not because she didn't trust either Boaz or Ruth, but because she understood human nature.

To come to him after a meal and yet before he slept is the time of man's greatest weakness in regards to his *natural inclinations*, but that quickly fades as the minutes and hours pass from a light sleep to the deep sleep which causes the brain to become foggy. The natural inclinations for companionship are replaced with the natural inclinations for more sleep.

Naomi, a widow who had borne two children understood these things well enough to know them intimately. Ruth obediently followed her directions and came softly. The Hebrew word used here is *lat* and indicates secrecy or a mystery. In other words, she crept in, maybe on tippy toes, in order to not disturb his slumber.

Upon her arrival, she uncovered his feet and lay down. In these actions, neither she nor Naomi who recommended them, have done anything wrong or even mildly inappropriate. Ruth is offering of herself to a person who has the right to redeem her. She is doing this under the provisions of the law and culture of the land.

*I know that there is nothing better for people  
Than to be happy and to do good while they live  
Following the Lord and worshipping under the church steeple  
And to the Lord praises and honor to give*

*That each of them may eat and drink  
And find satisfaction in all their toil  
This is certainly the gift of God, so let us think  
To honor Him, and to Him always remain loyal*



## II. A Midnight Meeting (verses 8-10)

**<sup>8</sup> Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled,**

The Hebrew here uses the term *bakhatsi halaylah* (1:18), "in the middle of the night." Until this point, he was unaware of anything that had come about and was instead in his deeply-sweet slumber. But at some point, there in the middle of the night, he was startled. The word used to describe this is *kharad*.

This wasn't merely a light startle, but he was truly afraid as one would be when they didn't know whether it was a lion or a man with an axe there at his feet. The same word was used for the first time in Scripture to describe Isaac's reaction when he realized that whoever he blessed wasn't the son he thought he had blessed -

"Then Isaac **trembled exceedingly**, and said, 'Who? Where *is* the one who hunted game and brought *it* to me? I ate all *of it* before you came, and I have blessed him—*and* indeed he shall be blessed.'" Genesis 27:33

In response to Boaz' fear, we read the following...

**<sup>8</sup> (con't) and turned himself;**

This word is *laphat*. Here, it is a reflexive form of the verb which means to grasp with a twisting or bending motion. In other words, he bent forward and grasped as if in an instinctive self-defense motion. Instead of finding a large predator or a strong-armed foe, he realizes it is something entirely different...

**<sup>8</sup> (con't) and there, a woman was lying at his feet.**

The translation here is lacking. Rather than a mundane, "and there" it should be translated "behold!" or maybe a more modern "whoa!" Instead of whatever he may have expected, he came across the entirely unexpected, "a woman was lying at his feet!"

**<sup>9</sup> And he said, "Who *are* you?"**

Suddenly realizing that there is minimal threat and that it is a woman who is lying at his feet rather than a man or beast ready to attack, he adjusts his mind and asks her directly

who she is. It is that moment when one realizes safety, but a state of confusion still rules the moment.

<sup>9 (con't)</sup> **So she answered, "I *am* Ruth, your maidservant.**

This first response brings to clarity the *who*, but not the *why*. She says, *anokhi rut amatekha* - "I am Ruth your maidservant." In essence, she allows him to momentarily grasp that it is the young lady who has gleaned and worked diligently in his fields and to whom he had been so generous.

<sup>9 (con't)</sup> **Take your maidservant under your wing,**

Following up her identification, the words she uses here will take careful explanation to fully understand. Literally she says, "and spread therefore your skirt over your handmaid." It is a proverbial expression which implies marriage, and her request is that it be him who would perform that duty for her.

She has been sent by Naomi to request that this ancient right be fulfilled by Boaz. The right had a unique symbol by which it was claimed, that of wings. Naomi had said she would look for a place of rest for Ruth. Marriage is that place of rest and it is represented by being under the husband's wings, or under his skirt.

In essence, the covering of the man is the covering of the woman. The word for "wing" here is *kanaph* and can be translated as wing, garment, skirt, edge, extremity, etc. It is the same word that Boaz used in the previous chapter when he said this to Ruth -

"The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge." Ruth 2:12

She is calling that to reminder, understanding that Jehovah the Lord often works through human representation. Just as the High Priest of Israel was a human mediator, and as the Judge of Israel or a prophet of Israel represented the Lord, she also understood that a husband was the representative of the family before the Lord.

She was asking to come under his wings because she had come under the wings of Jehovah. In Ezekiel 16, the same terminology is used by the Lord concerning His relationship with Israel -

"When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time *was* the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine,' says the Lord GOD." Ezekiel 16:8

The rite of marriage is a resting place. God equated his relationship with Israel to marriage. In the Old Testament, He is the loving Bridegroom of his people, but that symbolism translates into the New Testament as well in our relationship with Christ.

He, the embodiment of Jehovah the Lord, had called Israel and they had continuously failed to respond as He relayed to them on Palm Sunday, just a few days before they crucified Him -

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing!" Matthew 23:37

In understanding Ruth's words now, and who she and who Boaz picture, the story takes on a wonderful portrait of the unfolding events of redemptive history. Each verse is being used to show us marvelous hints to ponder and then to hopefully recognize what God is doing throughout history.

The Pulpit commentary translates Ruth's words as an affirmative statement, "And thou hast spread thy wings over thy handmaid, for thou art kinsman." In essence, even though she placed herself under his covering, she says it as if it were "his own deliberate act."

In other words, it would be as if she said, "Me lying here under your garment demonstrates the true relationship in which we already stand. You are my kinsman and therefore I am yours if you wish." She is offering herself to him while stating that he already has the rights to her because of his relationship to her.

It is her consent to a right that he possesses, which is based on her consent. If you think for a moment as Ruth, being you and Boaz being Jesus, it will make sense. Jesus is our Kinsman and He possesses the right to redeem us. When we offer ourselves to Him, it is because He possesses that right of redemption.

He has *potentially* spread His wings over us by joining with humanity. He *actually* spreads them over us when we exercise our right to allow Him to do so. It is a picture of

God's offering and our free-will to accept that offering. Without being presumptuous, we could say "You have redeemed me, therefore, redeem me."

<sup>9</sup> (con't) **for you are a close relative."**

When Boaz was first introduced into this story, a different word was used to describe him as a "relative." That word was *mowda*, a male relative. That denotes someone who is intimately acquainted and thus a near relative.

However, the word used in this verse for "close relative" is *goel*. It is a kinsman redeemer as prescribed by the law. In essence, it is "one who enforces a claim which has lapsed" and thus a person who "re-claims." The verb of this word can be used in the redeeming of a house or property after it has been sold and even for an Israelite that sold himself into slavery.

The *goel* had the right to reclaim the property or the person. In the case of Ruth, if Boaz turned down the redemption, both he and Ruth would suffer disgrace. Knowing this, Naomi would never have sent Ruth out in this way unless she was absolutely certain that Boaz would agree.

This is all the more sure because in Ruth's words, she acknowledges that Boaz has this right, but she uses no definite article. He is not "the" *goel*, but "a" *goel*. As there are others who could perform this duty, it would be unnecessarily humiliating to both of them for no reason at all.

Unless there was some certainty that he would favorably respond, both Naomi and Ruth would never have gone through with any of it. What they have done is honest, lawful, and tenderly emotional. The elegant ritual we have been allowed to witness shows the purity, love, and noble actions of Ruth. And these in turn are acknowledged and testified to by Boaz when he speaks...

<sup>10</sup> **Then he said, "Blessed are you of the LORD, my daughter!"**

The response of Boaz here vindicates Ruth's actions as being pure and noble. No hint of accusation and no note of condemnation is given. Instead, he explains that she is truly blessed of the Lord. Jehovah Himself has smiled upon her actions.

But Boaz also remains content to call her "my daughter." Nothing has been settled yet and nothing will be settled through his words during this night. And so he says nothing

to yet stir her emotions or give hint that she is any closer to him than she was before she came to the threshing floor. And yet, at the same time, he continues with his praise of her and her actions...

<sup>10</sup> (con't) **For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning,**

This term used by Boaz is like saying "You have been faithful from square one, but your faithfulness has grown all along." She married into a family of Israel and was willing to forsake the gods of her land. When her husband died, she remained faithful to her mother-in-law and the God of Israel whom Naomi worshipped.

But these things occurred when times were tough. People will always draw closer to one another and to God during the tough times, but when things become better, those close connections often drop by the wayside. Families separate and worship of God is left behind in the midst of a more prosperous existence.

Ruth was exceptional in that she stuck it out through the hard times and continued to stay in the good. In the fields of Boaz, there were many young men whom she could have followed. Naomi could have asked for the right to redemption personally. Ruth hinted that to her once before, but when Naomi excused herself from that position, Ruth willingly accepted the responsibility.

She instead committed to her husband's family and name and declined to seek a new marriage outside of that. In essence, as Michaelis paraphrases this verse -

"The kindness which thou art showing to thy husband, now that he is gone, is still greater than what thou didst show to him while he lived." (Michaelis)

In using the term *goel* when referring to Boaz, she was respectfully considering the duty which she owed to her dead husband's name and memory. Boaz realized this and certainly was even more struck by the nobility of her actions, especially considering his age.

He was a contemporary of her father-in-law, Elimelech. What may have seemed repugnant to some women in making such an offering to such an old man was considered the right and honorable course of action by Ruth.

<sup>10</sup> (con't) **in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich.**

In Ruth, Boaz sees that she deliberately refrained from any young men as the plural indicates. The entire spectrum is included - whether handsome and poor, ugly and rich, or even handsome and rich, she completely shut out personal desires for either wealth or physical pleasure.

Instead, she devoted herself to Naomi and she has now devoted herself to the memory of her dead husband. And yet, it is apparent from Boaz' words, that she was young, beautiful, and vibrant. Those physical qualities could have brought her into the favor of any willing man, but she instead kept away from such possibilities.

*Though many trials and temptations may come my way  
I pray for strength to remain faithful to You, O God  
Grant me the ability to turn and walk away  
From any form of sin which lies ahead on the path I trod*

*Oh, that I would be faithful to Your word!  
And that I would never displease You with the life I live  
Help me to bring honor and glory to You my Lord  
In this one life which to me You did give*

*Thank You for Your kind hand of grace upon me  
And thank You for looking after Your other children, each of us  
I know that it is a gift which is granted for all eternity  
And it came through the precious shed blood of Jesus*

### **III. A Woman of Virtue (verses 11-13)**

<sup>11</sup> **And now, my daughter, do not fear.**

There is no doubt that her voice was trembling as she spoke. Boaz' words are given as an assurance that he has found her actions appropriate and that she can now rest easily. He won't attempt to defile her, he won't attempt to shame her by saying she came as she did to him, and he won't allow her dead husband's name to remain in the unhappy state of being cut off.

And again, in his words of comfort, he calls her "my daughter." Though he has responded favorably, he has not responded in a way which yet acknowledges that he

will be the one to fulfill her request. It will be fulfilled, and she should not fear in that regard, but he has not yet changed his words of relationship to her. She's still a younger lady that is not yet his; hence, the term "my daughter."

**11 (con't) I will do for you all that you request,**

In verse 5 from last week, Naomi said this as she instructed Ruth -

"Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do." Ruth 3:4

However, Boaz now says, "I will do for you all that you request." The words of Ruth to Boaz are those very things which Boaz has agreed to. Here we can see how the hand of the Lord guided the events of Ruth's life. Her words, which were the desire of her heart, will be fulfilled through this meeting with Boaz.

**11 (con't) for all the people of my town know that you *are* a virtuous woman.**

These words actually say "for all the gate of my people know..." The word translated "town" is *sha'ar*, a "gate." The gate of a city then is similar to the courthouse today; it represents the city. Those who sat at the gate were the elders and judges of the city. They would render their decisions there for probably many reasons.

If someone was to be expelled from the city, they would simply toss him out the gate. If a person were to be commended or punished, the gate would be the perfect spot to do so because those coming in and out of the city would see it as it took place.

Another reason is that anyone who wanted to go into the city would have to meet with their approval. And likewise, if someone wanted to leave, they could determine that he wasn't an escaping criminal or some type of defector from the community.

An interesting example of the last type is found in Jeremiah 37. He was instructed by the Lord to buy a piece of property from his uncle, which he did. On his way out of Jerusalem to go and claim his property, he was accused of being a defector to the enemies -

"And it happened, when the army of the Chaldeans left *the siege* of Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, <sup>12</sup> that Jeremiah went out of Jerusalem to go into the land

of Benjamin to claim his property there among the people. <sup>13</sup> And when he was in the Gate of Benjamin, a captain of the guard *was* there whose name *was* Irijah the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he seized Jeremiah the prophet, saying, 'You are defecting to the Chaldeans!' <sup>14</sup> Then Jeremiah said, 'False! I am not defecting to the Chaldeans.' But he did not listen to him.'" Jeremiah 37:11-14

Paying attention to the many times such incidents occur in the Bible will give a clear picture of Boaz' words to Ruth. The elders and judges of the town, picturesquely called "the gate of my people," were well aware of the noble character of Ruth since her arrival in Israel.

She would have been seen faithfully leaving alone early in the morning with an empty basket in order to go out gleaning. And she wouldn't have been seen again for many long, hot hours. Upon her return, her basket wasn't only full of grain, but it had been threshed and winnowed. She had done this difficult work instead of bringing it home to Naomi.

And as she walked in, she would be alone once again, not laughing with boys. Likewise, for them to be aware of her nature meant that she was respectful to the elders as she passed through the gate. If any made a pass at her, she would have carefully said, "I need to get home to take care of Naomi" and she would have passed along.

Anyone attending the gates and seeing her day by day during the harvest season, would by now know that she was a model of integrity and hard work. And so Boaz uses the term *khayil* to describe her. It is the same word the Bible used to describe him when he was first introduced into the narrative in verse 2:1.

There is no single word that we have to accurately translate *khayil*, but rather it includes many aspects of a person - moral, physically willing to work, honorable, respectful, and so on. It is the word that Solomon used to describe a woman of noble character in Proverbs 31. In that, he spent 21 full verses to describe such a woman.

That same word was used by Boaz to describe Ruth now, a woman who would become Solomon's great, great grandmother. It is possible that the family stories about his long dead ancestor Ruth were what inspired him to write those words about the woman of noble character!

This lovely and virtuous woman was an ideal match for the noble and virtuous man named Boaz. Just as the gate was the logical place for all legal transactions it was also a



place which could testify to the soundness of the actions of Ruth. It is to the gate, and to those same people that he is referring to, that Boaz will soon go to settle the matter which has been presented to him.

**<sup>12</sup> Now it is true that I *am* a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.**

Boaz acknowledges that he is, in fact, a *goel* and that he can perform the duties that she has requested. However, he is also a *khayil*, a man of virtue. It would be wrong for him to exercise his right without first granting the right to a kinsman closer than he was, and there was one closer.

His own personal desires, which are perfectly evident from the story, were less important than obedience to the law, customs, and culture in which he existed. The symbolic act, which Ruth engaged in by covering herself and requesting a *goel*, was an act that pertained to the rights of the family first and foremost.

His personal emotions could not interfere with what is just and right before the law. Again, as I ask from time to time, is anyone seeing Jesus in these words and concepts? If so, then who is the nearer relative? Why has God given us this beautiful story? Or is it just a beautiful story without any greater beautiful picture?

**<sup>13</sup> Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be *that* if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you—good; let him do it.**

The old saying, "Love is quick-witted" applies here. In a short conversation in the dark of night, Boaz developed a plan to ensure the law would be met, that Ruth's integrity would be preserved, and that both of them, if able, could get a little more rest.

Or at least she could. Boaz would certainly mull over the next day's affairs, carefully deciding what he should do, where he should do it, and what he should say. His first thought is of Ruth and her protection, asking her to stay the rest of the night.

At the late hour, only troublemakers or wild animals would be out and she could be harmed. And the guards at the gate would be far less friendly, especially to an unaccompanied young woman. This thought is seen in the Song of Solomon -

"The watchmen who went about the city found me.  
They struck me, they wounded me;

The keepers of the walls  
Took my veil away from me." Song of Songs 5:7

Boaz wants to keep her from such troubles at this late hour. The second thought is again for Ruth. It is that she would be cared for by his introduction of her request to the nearer *goel*. He would ensure that her matter was immediately brought up to him and that she would be tended to.

In this verse, is an interesting anomaly that occurs only a few times in the Old Testament. Hebrew letters are always written the same size, but there are several exceptions of smaller or larger letters being used. It is unsure exactly why they occur, and so only speculation can be made, but the first letter of this verse, the letter lamed, is larger than the rest.

The letter lamed indicates a shepherd's staff which is used to move and direct sheep and to protect the sheep from predators. The meaning of the letter is "to" or "toward moving something" and so it is often used as a prefix to nouns meaning "to" or "toward." It also signifies authority as it is the sign of the shepherd.

Interestingly, Dr. Lightfoot has noted that as there is a special mark over a word in the story of Lot's oldest daughter lying with her father and then there is a special mark in this verse in the story of Ruth going to the bed of Boaz, the larger lamed.

Both relate to one another, and both together point at the great providence of God in bringing light out of darkness. He notes that Ruth is a mother of Christ out of the incest of Lot, but Lot's oldest daughter is as well. It appears that both of these special marks are given to lead us "to" Jesus who is the Shepherd of His flock.

<sup>13</sup> (con't) **But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, *as* the LORD lives!**

Boaz' third thought is for Ruth as well. If the nearer *goel* doesn't desire to fulfill the duty, then he will step in and fulfill it instead. And he confirms his words with a vow, *khai Yehovah*! It is untrue that vows shouldn't be made, but if they are to be made, they are only to be done so in the name of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 6:13 says, "You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him and shall take oaths in His name." Any lesser vow is tantamount to idolatry and any vow made in the

Lord's name is inviolable; it must be performed. Boaz has sworn in the name of the Lord and so he will fulfill.

<sup>13 (fin)</sup> **Lie down until morning."**

Finally, Boaz' words again are for Ruth's concern. Not only is she to stay the night, but she should lie down until morning. There is no need for her to lose sleep, but to rest quietly and not fret. The vow has been made; she should be at peace.

This is where we end today, with the promise of action by Boaz on Ruth's behalf. Whatever happens, she will be taken care of and the name and memory of her dead husband and his family line will be secure. A kinsman will redeem her.

We like Ruth are actually alone and destitute in this world. No matter how much we think we might have, even if our basket is overflowing now, there are no guarantees that it will continue. Ruth understood this, but often we fail to see it. *When*, not *if*, the basket is empty, it will too late to call out for redemption.

God, in his word says "Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation." If you have never thought it all through, maybe today you should. Tomorrow may never come.

**Closing Verse:** *"The LORD redeems the soul of His servants,  
And none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned." Psalm 34:22*

**Next Week:** Ruth 3:14-18 (Six Measures of Barley) (9th Ruth Sermon)

So you know, this past year, Michael Oher signed a \$20 million dollar contract with the Tennessee Titans. Not bad for an often homeless boy who nobody seemed to want. How much more do you think the Lord wants you and will bless you as you seek Him!

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. He knows your trials, troubles, and woes and He is there with you through them. So cling to Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **Midnight at the Threshing Floor**

So she went down to the threshing floor  
And did according to all

That her mother-in-law instructed her  
At the time of nightfall

And after Boaz had eaten and drunk  
And his heart was cheerful as well  
He went to lie down at the end  
Of the heap of grain to sleep for a spell  
And she came softly, uncovered his feet  
And lay down under the corner of his sheet  
Now it happened at midnight  
That the man was startled, to be sure  
And turned himself; and there, ending his fright  
A woman was lying at his feet; hard to figure

And he said, "Who are you? Tell me this thing  
So she answered, "I am your maidservant Ruth  
Take your maidservant under your wing  
For you are a close relative, this is the truth

"Blessed are you of the Lord, My daughter!, he said  
For you have shown more kindness at the end  
Than at the beginning, instead  
In that after young men you did not go  
Whether poor or rich, you did not do so

And now, my daughter, do not fear  
I will do for you all that was requested by you  
For all the people of my town here  
Know that you are a woman of virtue

Now it is true that I am a close relative, one cannot deny  
However, there is a relative closer than I  
Stay this night, and in the morning light  
It shall be that if he will perform the task  
Of a close relative for you, as is right  
Good; let him do it, for this is what you ask

But if he does not want to perform the duty for you  
Then I will perform the duty for you, it is true

As the Lord lives! Lie down until morning  
Until the day dawns anew

Ruth has sought a kinsman to redeem  
And she has found a man willing to do so  
Whether it will be Boaz or another it would seem  
That the new day the truth will show

We too have a Kinsman willing to redeem each of us  
He is near to us because He is also a Man  
And yet none other than the Lord God, Jesus  
Such is the wisdom of God's glorious plan

Let us come to Him and let Him His garment spread  
Willingly over each one of us  
For He is Christ the Lord, our Savior and our Head  
He is the Incarnate Word - our glorious Jesus

*Hallelujah and Amen...*

## RUTH 3:14-18 (SIX MEASURES OF BARLEY)

**Introduction:** The hardest working person I've ever known is actually an uncle of mine. My guess is that every person who has ever met him will agree this is true. We all know someone who is exceptional at what they do, and they may be restless to get at it from day to day, but even the hardest worker would literally stagger and fall when working by his side.

He never was a big guy, and over the years he wizened up quite a bit so that now he's smaller than me, but the work effort he puts out today in his late 70s is more than most could in their prime. He lives on a mountain which was once where a town that made charcoal settled.

Eventually, they cut down all the trees and the charcoal business disappeared. The town remained, but it's no more than 50 or so people who live there year-round. Over the years, the trees all grew back - some are astonishingly big, and every year the forest gets thicker and thicker.

I remember talking to him once and he told me when he was young, loggers started coming up to the mountain to cut the timber that had come back and he said, "I couldn't stand hearing them work. This is our mountain, and I'll take care of it. But after a while I realized that nobody could ever take care of the trees alone. There's enough work to go around."

We cut; the Lord replaces. The wounds of our abuse fade into memory and the earth is designed to put out more trees which make more forests. It seems as if it is a never-ending cycle of work... futility really. The work never ceases. There is no time when true rest can come about.

At least not in the sense of freedom from the bondage of our labors. We're a prisoner to our need for staying ahead of having stores of food, roofs that leak, and roads that need repair. However, this wasn't the way it was originally intended. Instead of working the garden, we were placed there to serve and worship God.

Soon enough we were expelled from the garden, but at the same time, we were given the hope of returning some day to that restful place and that contented state. The Law of Moses gives snapshots of that lost 7th day and the reclaiming of it. The book of Ruth

uses those snapshots in an interesting way to point us to the One who offers us the true rest that we lost so long ago.

**Text Verse:** *"For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.'" Hebrews 4:4*

Today's five verses contain a short set of words which have always puzzled me, *v'yamad shesh seorim* - "and measured six of barley." I thought about them as I read them each time, but never enough to figure them out. I knew I'd get around to them someday though.

That time came as I began typing this sermon. Because of the insights of others and some of my own personal thoughts, I was thankful to the Lord for finally opening them up to me. We'll start to open them up to you today as well.

Eventually, the whole story of Ruth and why it was included in the Bible will be revealed and yes,,, it points to the work of Jesus, all of it. This wonderful little book, contained within the marvelous larger book we call the Holy Bible is replete with details about Him because He is the center and focus of it.

It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. *Shesh seorim* - "Six of Barley" (verses 14 & 15)**

**<sup>14</sup> So she lay at his feet until morning,**

Whether awake or asleep, but surely not asleep, Ruth continued to lay in the same spot throughout the rest of the night. The Hebrew here is the same as it has been three other times in this same chapter. It literally says that she lay "at the places of his feet."

There, awaiting the daylight, her mind probably went around and around about what would occur the next day. The name of her dead husband would be raised up, but through who? She probably thought through every possibility and every contingency that would arise, even with her limited knowledge of the actual circumstances ahead.

The kindness that Boaz had shown to her must have made her heart yearn for the nearer kinsman to refuse the offer. No matter his age, wealth, or position within the

society, she had the certainty of Boaz' actions. In another person, she would have only uncertainty.

Matthew Henry, always the one to look for Christological significance in a passage, beautifully relays words for us to consider here -

"This narrative may encourage us to lay ourselves by faith at the feet of Christ: He is our near Kinsman; having taken our nature upon him. He has the right to redeem. Let us seek to receive from him his directions." (Henry)

In like manner to those words for us, Ruth lay herself at the feet of Boaz and awaited his directions. Even to this day we use the same terminology for obtaining instruction from one wiser than ourselves. To sit at the feet of someone indicates a reverential fear of, or a desire to learn from, that person. It is the place of submission and even servitude. This was where Ruth spent the rest of her night, certainly pondering how the events of the next day would unfold.

<sup>14</sup> (con't) **and she arose before one could recognize another.**

At the earliest showing of light on the horizon, she arose, or literally "stood up." The intent was to depart before the shadows turned to recognizable faces. The Hebrew here instead of "before one could recognize another" more appropriately says "before a man could recognize his friend."

Without a verbal greeting, there would only be an unrecognizable shape passing by. The early departure was a necessary precaution to preserve the integrity of both Ruth and Boaz. Ruth, because she was an unmarried woman, and Boaz, so that the events of the coming day would not seem tainted by preplanning in order to deceive or manipulate what would transpire.

<sup>14</sup> (con't) **Then he said, "Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."**

In this, the NKJV translation is just right. Most translations say, "a woman." Look at your Bible and see if it is right. The word has a definite article in front of "woman." It literally says, *ha'ishsha*, "**the** woman." "Do not let it be known that 'the' woman came..."

This might not sound overly important, but it has caused a lot of conversation and speculation by scholars for the past 2500 years or so. Because of the wording, some



have speculated that this was something that he said to his hired hands, not to Ruth. But that isn't supported by the account because she came secretly. It would involve inserting something not indicated elsewhere.

Others suppose that he said this as a prayer to God, as if he were petitioning God to keep the matter secret. If this were the case, the Bible would have certainly said that "he said in his heart" or "he said to God." Again, it is inserting an idea which is forced.

In the next verse, it will say "And he said" when speaking to Ruth. In other words, it is one continuous conversation with her, not with his workmen, nor in a prayer to God. Therefore, the term "the woman" is used in a particular way by Boaz to meet a particular purpose and it makes a particular picture for us.

What it logically indicates is that he is speaking to Ruth *about Ruth*. "You, Ruth, do not let it be known that 'the woman' (meaning you, Ruth), came to the threshing floor." He is concerned about her integrity being stained and possibly about the perception of him being in collusion with Ruth concerning the matter before it was settled.

In his words to her, as recorded in the Bible, he has acted rightly, fairly, and in a judicious manner. He has acknowledged that there is a kinsman closer than he, and that kinsman must be given the first opportunity to accept or decline the right of redemption. And this then leads to the contingency that he might accept the right.

If he did and he later found out that Ruth had been with Boaz, he could assume, though incorrectly, that they had been intimate. This would, in turn, reflect negatively on both of them. There is an order and a propriety which Boaz had ensured would be followed so that all was done according to the law.

In this, we can see a picture of Christ who came in a proper fashion to redeem those who were under the law. He didn't circumvent the law, but worked within the parameters *of* the law, to redeem His people. Paul explains this in Galatians 4 -

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." Galatians 4:4, 5

If you substitute Boaz for Jesus and Ruth for Gentile believers, you can get a better understanding of the point I'm making. The Bible scholar, John Lange, describes the actions of Boaz as follows -

"It would have been very unpleasant to Boaz to have people connect himself with any woman in a suspicious way; but scandalous rumors of this kind, with Ruth for their object, would have been exceedingly injurious. To say nothing of the fact that an undeserved stain would have been fixed on the good name of Ruth, it would have rendered it very difficult for him to prosecute her claims in Bethlehem." (Lange)

As I said, there is an order and a propriety which Boaz is adhering to based on the law and customs of his people. Likewise, the same was found in Christ. He came under the law and fulfilled the law in order to redeem us. Thus, God is both "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:26)

*When the fullness of the time had come about  
God sent forth His Son, our Lord Jesus  
Born of a woman, born under the law, not without  
To do something wonderfully marvelous for us*

*To redeem those who under the law do tread  
That we might receive adoption as sons of God*

*And because you are sons, adopted this way  
God has the Spirit of His Son sent forth  
Into your hearts, so that you can more than say  
Yes, even crying out, "Abba, Father!" in this new birth*

**<sup>15</sup> Also he said, "Bring the shawl that is on you and hold it."**

Before her departure, Boaz makes a gesture that is intended, as we will see, for Naomi. He asks for Ruth's shawl. Because the word for "shawl," which is *mitpakhat*, is used only twice in the Bible, once here and once in Isaiah 3, its meaning isn't sure and so it is translated a variety of ways - veil, shawl, cloak, garment, cape, mantle, covering, etc.

It is something other than her dress. Rather it was a garment either over her head, over her shoulders, or maybe tied around her waist that could be used for any such purpose, or any other purpose. The word comes from another word, *taphakh*, which is also only used twice in Scripture. *Taphakh*, means to "bear" such as in having children as is seen Lamentations 2 -

"You have invited as to a feast day  
The terrors that surround me.

In the day of the LORD's anger  
There was no refugee or survivor.  
Those whom I have **borne** and brought up  
My enemies have destroyed." Lamentations 2:22

*Taphakh* can also mean to "spread out" such as in these words in Isaiah 48 -

"Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth,  
And My right hand has **stretched out** the heavens;  
*When* I call to them,  
They stand up together." Isaiah 48:13

To bear children implies the spreading out of a family. The stretching out of the heavens demonstrates God's sovereign, "all powerful, and eternal attributes" (HAW). By understanding this root, translators can determine at least partly, the type of garment. It would be, like a shawl, capable of spreading out.

<sup>15</sup> (con't) **And when she held it, he measured six *ephahs* of barley,**

The word *ephah* is not in the original. It has been inserted here by the NKJV translators, but the impossibility of their translation is astonishing. An *ephah* equates to about a bushel of wheat. One *ephah*, or one bushel, would be as much as a Ruth could carry in a basket, just as she did at the end of her first day of labor in the fields back in verse 2:17.

Unless Ruth was as large as a cow, and equally strong, there is no way she could carry *six ephahs* of barley. It is doubtful that Boaz wanted to see her dragging a shawl full of barley the size of a recliner home that morning, so we can ignore this translation.

The next Hebrew measure down from that is a *seah*. Six *seahs* would equal two *ephahs*, an amount still too much for her to carry unless she worked out at Golda's Gym on a regular basis. Some translations say six measures, some six scoops, and some six units.

Each of these is vague enough to let us know that six of some particular but unknown size were put into her shawl. The unit of measure though is *not* what is significant here. There are three separate and distinct points of importance to consider.

The first is *why* he gave her the barley. The answer is two-fold. First, if she were to go home walking freely and wearing her best shawl and she were seen, someone could make a supposition that she had been out all night doing something, whatever

"something" might be - and it might not be a good thing that they supposed. Instead, she would appear far less suspicious if she had a sack full of grain. They could even suppose that she worked so late that she fell asleep while working. Thus her image would only be improved, not diminished.

The second reason is that this is a gift for Naomi. She is the one who stood in relation to Ruth as a parent and so she would have to consent to any marriage. One scholar of the past, S. A. Cook, shows that this was a cultural norm even as far back as the Code of Hammurabi. The widowed mother was the one who was approached by the intending bridegroom.

This is actually a right analogy for what is being pictured here in relation to Christ and the church. And that brings us to the second and third major points to consider, and one which has caused me to stop and ask "why" every time that I have read the book over these past many years. Why *six* measures, and why *barley*?

The Bible specifically gives the number, even though it doesn't tell the size of the measure. What is it about the *number six* and what is it about *barley* rather than wheat that the Bible is trying to tell us? The number six, according to EW Bullinger,

"...has to do with *man*; it is the number of imperfection; the human number; the number of MAN as destitute of God, without God, without Christ." As he says, "it is certain that *man* was created on the *sixth* day, and thus he has the number *six* impressed upon him. Moreover, *six* days were appointed to him for his labour; while *one* day is associated in sovereignty with the Lord God, as His rest."

Insightful as ever, Bullinger rightly tied the number six in with *labors* and that *at the end of the labors* there is the anticipation of "the Lord God, and His rest." It is exactly what Naomi was seeking for Ruth, and thus implicitly, for herself *through* Ruth." One cannot enter rest until the work is done.

And so Bullinger gives us one more thought to consider concerning the number six - "*Six*, therefore, is the number of *labour* also, of man's labour as apart and distinct from God's rest. True, it marks the completion of Creation as God's work, and therefore the number is significant of *secular completeness*."

This is actually spoken of in the Law of Moses. We'll take a moment to read two passages, one from Exodus and then one from Deuteronomy to show us insights into this demonstration of *labor resulting in rest* –

"Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, <sup>11</sup> but the seventh *year* you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard *and* your olive grove. <sup>12</sup> Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed." Exodus 23:10-12

"If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. <sup>13</sup> And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed; <sup>14</sup> you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. *From what* the LORD your God has blessed you with, you shall give to him. <sup>15</sup> You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today. <sup>16</sup> And if it happens that he says to you, 'I will not go away from you,' because he loves you and your house, since he prospers with you, <sup>17</sup> then you shall take an awl and thrust *it* through his ear to the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also to your female servant you shall do likewise. <sup>18</sup> It shall not seem hard to you when you send him away free from you; for he has been worth a double hired servant in serving you six years. Then the LORD your God will bless you in all that you do." Deuteronomy 15:12-18

In an astute observation, Lange gives us these words to consider concerning what this is showing us - "Naomi receives what she may take as an intimation that the time has come, when after long labor she must let Ruth go out free. The day of rest is at hand." If we see this in relation to "the fullness of times" when Christ came and then our relationship to Him through *His work*, we can see the reason for *six measures*.

That explains the number six, but why barley? The reason for specifying barley is because of *what* barley pictures. First, it is a picture of the resurrection of Christ because barley was what was presented at the Feast of Firstfruits. Leviticus 23 gives the following instruction concerning this feast -

"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>10</sup> 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.'"

-Leviticus 23:9, 10

This first sheaf was from the first crop to mature, the barley crop. Paul, in the New Testament, shows that this feast was fulfilled in Christ's resurrection -

"But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming." 1 Corinthians 15:20-23

Barley also, as we saw in a previous Ruth sermon, is known as the crop of hairy ears because of its hairy appearance. The word "barley" in Hebrew is *seorah* which is closely related to the word *se-ar* or hair. Hair in the Bible indicates an awareness of things, particularly that of sin.

The goat for example, which is used in Leviticus for the sin offering, is known as *sair*. We have an awareness of sin in the hairy goat sin offering. In Numbers there is a type of person known as a Nazirite. This is someone who made a vow or was consecrated to the Lord.

During the time of that vow, they were never to cut their hair. Samson was a Nazirite from birth as were Samuel and John the Baptist. Paul took a Nazirite vow in Acts. The hair on their head was a reminder of their state, just as the hairy goat is a reminder of our sin. It is man's place to be aware.

The time of the barley harvest, the design of the barley resembling hair, the tied-in significance of an awareness of sin, the six measures of barley, and so much more - all of it is important in grasping the hidden treasures found in this book of Ruth. God uses real, tangible things to show us spiritual truths about His Son, Jesus.

Imagine the wisdom of God who created the grains, who ordained the time the grains would come forth, and who designed them with particular traits, each resembling Christ's work. Imagine the pomegranate which has many seeds, pointing to the many individual laws within the Torah.

Think of the almond which points to the duration of God's attentive care over His redemptive plans, and even the barley which has a hairy appearance, and which comes forth at the same time that His Son came from the grave.

These, and a trillion other items in nature have all been created and ordained to show us truths about His immense love for us as is found in the giving of His Son and the reconciliation which is possible because of that Gift!

The simple words *v'yamad shesh seorim*, or "and measured six of barley" are far more important to this story than we otherwise may appreciate. God ensured the number, and the type were included, not for us to hurriedly pass over, but to ponder and to savor when the pondering is rewarded with knowledge.

And the same is true with the continuation of verse 15...

15 (con't) **and laid *it* on her.**

The six measures, intended for Naomi, are placed where? *On Ruth!* Ruth's time of labor is done and eventually Naomi will receive the fruit of that labor as well. Every word has particular meaning, and every word shows us hints of Christ and His plan.

15 (con't) **Then she went into the city.**

Actually, the Hebrew is masculine, not feminine. "He" meaning "Boaz" when into the city. Different texts read either "he" or "she" and so translators have to choose which is correct and why. The Masoretic Text, the Septuagint, and the Jewish Targums, read "he" and this is certainly correct, not the word "she." Even ye olde King James Version blew it on this one.

The reason for choosing "she" is simply because she is the one who was mentioned as receiving the barley, but both of them have missions to perform. Hers was to go back to Naomi; his was to go to the city and to bring the matter to a completion.

In picture, only translating it "he" makes sense. It was Jesus who rode into Jerusalem and accomplished the work necessary to redeem His people. And only He rose from the dead in fulfillment of that work. In type and picture, the correct reading is "he." And so off they go to their respective places for the day ahead.

In his work of Contemplations, Bishop Hall beautifully summarizes this blessed night there on Boaz' threshing floor -

"Boaz, instead of touching her as a wanton, blesseth her as a father, encourages her as a friend, promises her as a kinsman, rewards her as a patron, and sends her away laden

with hopes and gifts, no less chaste, but more happy, than she came. O admirable temperance, worthy the progenitor of Him in whose lips and heart there was no guile!" (Bishop Hall)

*But now Christ is risen from the dead  
And has become the firstfruits of those  
Who have fallen asleep; over whom many tears were shed  
In this veil of time, of trials, and woes*

*For since by man came death, including you and I  
By Man also came the resurrection of the dead  
For as in Adam certainly all are destined to die  
Even so in Christ all shall be raised to life instead*

*But there is an order to the Resurrection call  
Christ was first, the pattern for the rest when He comes  
When He does, He will make a shout out to us all  
And we will rise as if to the sounds of heavenly battle drums*

## **II. Sit Still, My Daughter (verses 16-18)**

**<sup>16</sup> When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "Is that you, my daughter?"**

In another curious use of wording, Naomi asks, *mi at biti*, or literally "who are you my daughter." There is ample speculation about this, such as it was too dark to see and so she asked who it was. That's illogical because she says "my daughter" in the next breath.

Other ideas are that she is actually asking "how have you fared." That doesn't follow either because if she wanted to know how it went, she would have asked, "How did it go?" Rather, the Pulpit commentary rightfully notes that "there is something arch intended" here.

In other words, there is an over-arching nature to her question of "Who are you?" The question isn't asking "Who are you" *in person*, but "Who are you" *in standing*. Stated differently, the question is, "Are you the widowed Ruth, or are you the betrothed of Boaz? Who are you, my daughter?"



<sup>16</sup> (con't) **Then she told her all that the man had done for her.**

The answer to Naomi's question is still left open. Rather than a "I am Boaz' betrothed," she relays the hopes discussed in the dark hours of the now-passed night. "Boaz has made a promise. He will secure a kinsman redeemer for me, be it our closer relative or be it he, I shall be redeemed."

The joy of such a thought to both of them must have been immense. Just a short time earlier, they stood on the dusty roads of Moab weeping at the grim prospects of the future. Now, they were within hours of finding security and rest in one who would perform the redemption. The only question left isn't "if," but "who."

<sup>17</sup> **And she said, "These six *ephahs* of barley he gave me;**

Now the barley is presented. Though to them it was merely barley as a sign of hoped-betrothal, to us it bears the significance of the completion of our work and the hopeful entrance into the rest which was anticipated since the dawning of man. A rest which was lost to Adam, and which had not yet been available again until the coming of Christ and the resurrection of Christ.

<sup>17</sup> (con't) **for he said to me, 'Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.'"**

It is significant that the barley passes from a Gentile to a Jew, not the other way around. Though it originally came from a Jewish man, it went through Ruth and *then* to Naomi. It is a Gentile who carried it until it was time to be handed to the one for who it was originally intended. \*Anyone seeing a parallel to the story of Judah and Tamar here? How about the church and Israel?

Despite his intentions to be betrothed to Ruth if possible, he still maintained compassion for, and a desire to support, Naomi. Again, it is an important consideration to understanding the entire scope of what is pictured.

<sup>18</sup> **Then she said, "Sit still, my daughter,**

Naomi would know the anxiety of Ruth's heart and constitution at this immensely nervous moment of her life. She was probably already pacing, and it would only intensify as the moments passed. And so, Naomi rightfully asked her to sit and relax until the matter, which was out of her control, would be settled.

<sup>18</sup> (con't) **until you know how the matter will turn out;**

In the Hebrew, Naomi's words are *ekh yippol davar* (3:31) - "how will fall word." The word *davar* means "word," but it carries the idea of a matter or an affair here. Where the word falls is where the matter is settled. This type of terminology shows the certainty of an occurrence. A great example of this is found in Ecclesiastes 11 -

"If the clouds are full of rain,  
They empty *themselves* upon the earth;  
And if a tree falls to the south or the north,  
In the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie." Ecclesiastes 11:3

When the tree has fallen, it isn't getting up and moving. When the matter of Ruth's redemption falls, it will be once and for all-time decided. And when a man breathes his last and falls to the ground, his eternal fate is settled. There is a finality in the idea of that which falls. Here in this verse, it is "Who will be Ruth's redeemer?"

<sup>18</sup> (fin) **for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day."**

Boaz gave his assurances to Ruth, he gave a token through Ruth to Naomi, and he had departed at the first dawning of the morning to work out the consummation of his plans. Naomi therefore knew, with all certainty, that he was intent on seeing the matter through.

Having seen his actions towards Ruth in the past and his kind attitude which accompanied him, she knew that he had his heart set on her and he had every intention of having her. But first it had to be determined if he was the one qualified and able to bring about her redemption.

Again, as we have asked several times so far in Ruth, can you see Jesus and his actions in this story? Everything so far has been carefully detailed and recorded for the sole purpose of us beholding His work on our behalf. It is a story of great love and affection, both in the immediate story, but also in the picture it presents.

Christ waited patiently for the fullness of times to come and then He went about the business set before Him in order to procure a bride for Himself. He also followed the law to the letter, fulfilling it completely. Thus, He embodies the law for us. In the coming chapter, we will see the only obstacle to Boaz' right to claim Naomi.

We will come to understand how everything in Ruth is simply a mirror and a picture of the great plan and work which was set before Christ Jesus as He came to clear every obstacle which could hinder Him from receiving His own bride.

There is a time, and it may not be far off now, when we will see the consummation of this great plan. Christ will come for His bride and He will sweep her away to be with Him forever. God chose this beautiful story of Ruth to show us hints of how that was made possible.

**Closing Verse:** *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*  
*Matthew 11:28-30*

**Next Week:** Ruth 4:1-6 (To Perpetuate the Name of Elimelech) (10th Ruth Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. He knows your trials, troubles, and woes and He is there with you through them. So cling to Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

### ***Shesh Seorim - Six Measures of Barley***

So she lay at his feet until morning  
And she arose before one could tell another by name  
Then he said, "Do not let it be known, as a gentle warning  
That the woman to the threshing floor came

Also he said, "Bring the shawl that is on you and hold it  
And when she held it, he measured six of barley  
And laid it on her, this gift he did submit  
Then she went into the city at that hour so early

When she came to her mother-in-law at the dawning of the sun  
She said, "Is that you, my daughter?"  
Then she told her all that the man for her had done  
And she showed what she had brought her

And she said, "These six measures of barley he gave to me  
For he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law with hands that are empty

Then she said, "Sit still, my daughter  
Until you know how the matter will turn out, I pray  
For the man will not rest  
Until he has concluded the matter this day

Like Ruth whose time for rest will come soon  
We have a time of rest from our labors as well  
Which is graciously granted to us by an act of faith  
And with that we enter our rest as the Bible does tell

In Christ the hope of the seventh day is here  
His victory over the devil ensures that we may so partake  
Of this marvelous gift so precious and dear  
Granted to us through a decision we make

Call on Christ Jesus and your labors will end  
In Him there is an eternal blessing marvelous and grand  
In His presence eternal life we will spend  
As He sits on the throne at His Father's right hand

*Hallelujah and Amen...*

## RUTH 4:1-6 (TO PERPETUATE THE NAME OF ELIMELECH)

**Introduction:** What are some excuses for someone to fail to take a necessary action when it was within their ability to accomplish that action? Greed, fear, pride, stupidity, arrogance, superstition, and hatred are some reasons that come to mind immediately.

Within the past few years, the US president failed to act on and support a movement which was occurring in a terrorist nation, Iran. If that movement had taken root and prevailed, there may have been a new leadership and an easing of world tensions.

Also, they may have been more aligned with the common interests of the US and her allies. But for several of the abovementioned reasons, he failed to act. Since that time, the situation in the Middle East has spun out of control and the world is a far less stable place.

One of the most prevalent reasons for people to not act is superstition. There are people that live by the horoscope and won't do certain things if it gives a bad word. People are afraid of certain numbers. Thirteen is a common one. The number four is too.

In China, the number four has almost the same pronunciation as the word "death" and so nearly an entire nation is paralyzed by *tetraphobia*. They would rather not act on something necessary, than do it if the number four is somehow involved.

The list is long, and it is complex, but it is real. Unlike some phobias which are not grounded in superstition, the ones that are become sinful because they fail to rely on God's overarching providence and attention.

Instead, they demonstrate a fear that He is not in control, and that acting - even if it is in accord with His will, is not our first priority. The prophets of Israel spoke of these things and told what the cure and remedy for them is...

**Text Verse:** *And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? <sup>20</sup> To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Isaiah 8:19, 20*

Instead of seeking answers in horoscopes or mediums, and instead of failing to act out of superstitious fears, we are told to seek the Lord. As Isaiah says, "To the law and to the testimony!" In order to seek the Lord and be in His will, we actually have to open His word, study it, and follow its precepts.

Today, we will see someone superstitiously turn away from following the law of the Lord in order to protect his earthly inheritance. What a shame it is for him. He enters the pages of redemptive history, and he fades from them as well without his name ever being mentioned... all because of superstition.

Instead of being obedient to the law and becoming a great name, he fades into the unknown obscurity of history. Let us not be found in such a sad state. Instead, let us follow the Lord, trust the Lord, and be obedient to His word above all else. The way to do these things is to know His word and so let's turn to that superior word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. At the Gate of Bethlehem (verses 1 & 2)**

#### **<sup>1</sup> Now Boaz went up to the gate**

Now Boaz went up... In the previous chapter, we read this as spoken by Naomi -

"Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, *is he* not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. <sup>3</sup> Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your *best* garment and go down to the threshing floor; *but* do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking."

-Ruth 3:2, 3

Ruth went "down" to the threshing floor and Boaz now goes "up" to the gate. But elevation isn't always a consideration when going up or going down in the Bible. Rather, the importance of an area often indicates a higher position, regardless of elevation.

In the Bible, when one is going toward the land of Canaan, they are always said to go "up" regardless of elevation or direction on the compass. When one goes towards Jerusalem, they are always said to go "up" in the same way. The same is true when leaving either area. The Bible will then say the person is going down.

In Genesis 46, Joseph left the place where he was to go "up" to, Goshen, and then when he left Goshen to go back and speak to Pharaoh, he went "up" in the opposite direction. The first was "up" in direction towards Canaan because Goshen was on the way there. The second was up in legal elevation, toward the royal throne. And so, it is going "up" in a courtly sense.

This might sound unimportant, but the words are intended to get us to think things through, not haphazardly skip over. Boaz went "up" to the gate because the gate is the place of judgment. Whether the threshing floor was actually lower than the gate isn't as important as that the gate is where the matter decided upon at the threshing floor would be adjudicated.

<sup>1</sup> (con't) **and sat down there;**

The gate and walls of ancient Middle Eastern cities were usually built out of stone and the gate normally had an arched entrance with deep recesses on each side. In these recesses, they built seating where people could relax, conduct business, guard if necessary, judge cases, and so on.

These recesses would be in the shade and catch any breezes coming through as well. On many other occasions throughout the Old Testament, the gates are noted as the place of judgment, commerce, and activity. The judges of the cities would spend their time there at the city gates.

Boaz set out to get to the gate early in order to make sure that he would be there before the person he intended to see would pass through on his way to work, probably in his own harvest field. If he missed him, then it might not be until the end of the day that he would have a chance to see him again as he passed through the gate to go home for the evening.

There in the city gate, the place of judgment, Boaz waited for the case to be presented and decided.

<sup>1</sup> (con't) **and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by.**

And behold! In Hebrew, *v'hinne*. The thought is prefixed to this section of the verse to show that, sure enough, the man Boaz had hoped to see had come. The hand of God was ensuring that Boaz was up and at the gate early enough to be there when this most important moment would come to pass.

The "close relative" or *goel*, meaning the one who had the first right of redemption came by as anticipated. The matter would be settled today, just as Boaz had promised Ruth in the dark hours of the previous night at the threshing floor.

<sup>1</sup> (con't) **So Boaz said, "Come aside, friend, sit down here."**

The very fact that Boaz was sitting at the gate was a plain enough declaration that he sought out the settlement of a judicial matter. The language used here was a form of judicial summons. The words are "Come aside, friend; sit down here."

In Hebrew, the word translated as "friend" is *peloni almoni*. They are words that have no true equivalent value in English, but they are a way of addressing a definite person without stating his name. The Greek translation of this verse calls him "hidden one."

The words come from two other Hebrew words. The first is *palah* which means to identify, distinguish, or specify. The second is *alam*, which means to bind, or to be silent, or speechless. This then gives the twofold sense of *identifying* a person while *concealing* him at the same time.

The only other two times this phrase is used are in 1 Samuel 21:3 and 2 Kings 6:8. Both of those times it is referring to a known place which is not named. A good way of understanding this phrase would be to think of a mountain range full of caves. In one of the caves there is gold.

If someone wanted me and only me to know where the gold was, he'd take me and show me. If someone else asked me where I was working when I brought in a bag of gold, I would say, "in such and such a cave in the mountains." I have revealed, but I have also concealed. I'm working at the mountains and in a cave, but I ain't telling which or where...

In this statement, Boaz has revealed to the man that he has identified him, but concealed who he is in relation to the circumstances which he intends to relay. Hence, the man knows this is a judicial-type of summons.

Throughout the meeting, his name won't be given at all. As we will see, he will be concerned about preserving his own inheritance which includes his own name, and yet his name is lost to history, buried in the grave of unending oblivion. The irony is palpable.



However, at the same time as showing a mark of contempt for him, it is also somewhat a mark of grace. Because he will not fulfill the duty of the kinsman, according to the law he should rightfully be openly and publicly disgraced. However, by concealing his name, the shame of the situation is in part hidden from us as well.

<sup>1</sup> (con't) **So he came aside and sat down.**

Knowing that he has been summoned for a legal matter, the *goel*, or the kinsman redeemer, came to his place at the court of adjudication and took his seat. Whatever the matter is, he shows no sense of fear by claiming urgent business elsewhere or by putting the matter off. He is, at this time, unaware of what will transpire.

<sup>2</sup> **And he took ten men of the elders of the city,**

There is nothing in the law to require this action here. The law merely states, even in the most severe matters, that two or three witnesses are all that is necessary to testify to a matter. As Paul states concerning such things even in the New Testament -

"By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established."

-2 Corinthians 13:1

This builds on Jesus' words of Matthew 18:16 which repeats the same thought. The elders of the city were authorized to handle matters such as this one. Deuteronomy 25 deals specifically with this issue, but no set number of elders is given.

Because two or three witnesses is the only expected standard required for establishing a matter under the law, then there must be a reason why the Bible records Boaz' action of specifically calling *ten men* of the city to be witnesses.

In the first chapter, it said that Naomi and her family dwelt ten years in Moab. At that time, we looked at what the number ten signifies. Now we need to do so again. According to EW Bullinger in his book *Number in Scripture*, he shows that the number ten -

"...signifies *the perfection of Divine order*. It implies that nothing is wanting; that the number and order are perfect; that the whole cycle is complete."

The Bible is asking us to reflect on *what* is complete. What is the perfection of divine order that this account is picturing? What are these ten men picturing who are asked to

sit and witness for or against the unnamed and yet known *goel*, the nearer kinsman? These are the questions that the Bible is asking us to consider.

<sup>2</sup> (con't) **and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down.**

In agreement to the call of Boaz, these witnesses will be at hand during the presentation of the matter. In essence, they will testify to what occurs, witnessing for or against the interested parties as the matter is resolved. How will it be resolved is what is now to be determined.

*My inheritance O God is only You  
Nothing more will my heart ever seek  
For only You are faithful and true  
You care for the lowly, the humble, and the meek*

*I know that my Redeemer lives!  
And I know that in Him my hope is found  
I trust the surety that His redemption gives  
No other place of refuge can ever be found*

*In Christ alone will I hope and trust  
To Him alone will I set my gaze  
It is Jesus my Lord who is faithful and just  
He is my sure hope now and for all my days*

## **II. I Will Redeem (verses 3 & 4)**

<sup>3</sup> **Then he said to the close relative,**

It is Boaz who has called, and it is Boaz who speaks first to present the matter at hand. If, as we have seen, Boaz pictures Christ, then who is this nearer relative, this one who has the first right of redemption? He is nearer to Naomi than Boaz, and so Boaz must defer to him first in order to ensure a proper legal position is maintained.

In God, there is no unrighteousness. In God, there must be a proper satisfaction of the law. There can be no skirting around an issue. Justice must be served because God is perfectly pure, holy, and righteous. Christ is our Redeemer, but there must be an order and a propriety to how He redeems. This is evidenced by Boaz' proper handling of the matter which must be decided.

3 (con't) **"Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab,**

It is a legal matter, it involves the *goel*, and it is now known to involve Naomi. Naomi has only been back in the land for a short time, a few months at most. She is a widow who has been gone for an extended period of time to a foreign country.

These are the facts presented to the unnamed individual thus far.

3 (con't) **sold the piece of land which *belonged* to our brother Elimelech.**

In these words, the tense is perfect. In other words, whether she has actually sold it, or whether she intends to sell it, in her mind it is as if already sold. This has occurred because she cannot maintain it herself. She is destitute and needs the money from the sale of the land in order to support herself.

The land is then noted to be that which "belonged to our brother Elimelech." If you remember what his name means, you might be able to see what is happening here. His name means either "God is King" or "God is My King." Either way, he is an Israelite and God is his king. He lived during the time of Israel's theocracy.

Boaz calls him "our brother" indicating that they are closely related to him and in a position to rectify whatever the situation required of them according to the law. In this, he never mentions Ruth even though Ruth is a participant in what is occurring as well.

Because Ruth married Naomi's son, she is entitled to take part in what has occurred, but because she is a gentile and this would involve a marriage to her, she is not named in the proceedings at this point. The matter at hand will first deal with Naomi and her inheritance which came from Elimelech to her. Once that proposition is settled, then the second matter could be addressed.

Some scholars, such as in the Cambridge Bible commentary, incorrectly argue that Naomi had no right to sell the property. Their words are that "this was not in accordance with Pentateuchal law, which says nothing about the inheritance of widows." In other words, the law of Moses gave Naomi no such right.

In Numbers 27, this, however, is written concerning such an inheritance -

"And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a man dies and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter. <sup>9</sup> If he has no

daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. <sup>10</sup> If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers. <sup>11</sup> And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the relative closest to him in his family, and he shall possess it.'" Numbers 27:8-11

These instructions were given to ensure that the property of the family remained within the family. Naomi *is* the closest relative, and the inheritance is hers as long as she is alive. The issue of the *family name* is separate from the issue of the land although they are closely tied together as well. This will be seen as we continue.

**<sup>4</sup> And I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy *it* back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people.**

The words, "I thought to inform you" are literally translated "I will uncover your ear." It is a way of saying that there is something previously unknown to his ear which he will now reveal. The metaphor conveys the idea that he would move the hair of his head out of the way so that he would hear. In essence, "Hey, I have something to tell you that you probably didn't know."

What he will tell him is noted as "in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people." This might lead to the idea that there were a large gathering of the elders and the people at the gate, but the intent of the words is that the ten elders are representative of the people of the city, including all the elders and the inhabitants.

What is being done is to be open knowledge to all. There is nothing concealed in the matter and anyone who happens to be listening is representative of all who will come to know what has transpired. It is in essence, a matter which will be published for all to know about. There certainly may have been others assembled there, but his words go beyond them to all who lived in the town.

In his talk with Ruth of the previous night there on the threshing floor, Boaz' words to her were, "...in the morning it shall be *that* if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you—good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, *as* the LORD lives!"

However, instead of mentioning Ruth, he has only brought up the matter of the land. He is acting on behalf of the name of Elimelech first without apparent regard for the women. It is the piece of land which belonged to Elimelech which must first be addressed.

This doesn't mean that the other matters aren't just as important, but that each has its place. The nearer relative, the *goel*, should be aware of the law, but if he's not, all aspects of it will still be brought out in due time.

The individual laws within the Law of Moses were given to ensure the proper working of the society. They were there to safeguard property, family names, and to make sure things were handled fairly. Adherence to the law was of paramount importance, just as it once was in America.

Without adhering to laws, there is only chaos and disorder. And so, every detail of the law was carefully adhered to for the good of the people, all the people. In Leviticus 25, this is recorded -

"If one of your brethren becomes poor, and has sold *some* of his possession, and if his redeeming relative comes to redeem it, then he may redeem what his brother sold. <sup>26</sup> Or if the man has no one to redeem it, but he himself becomes able to redeem it, <sup>27</sup> then let him count the years since its sale, and restore the remainder to the man to whom he sold it, that he may return to his possession. <sup>28</sup> But if he is not able to have *it* restored to himself, then what was sold shall remain in the hand of him who bought it until the Year of Jubilee; and in the Jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his possession."

-Leviticus 25:25-28

This is exactly what has come to pass in Naomi's case. She became poor and was determined to sell her property in order to live. If a close relative came to redeem it, they could do so. If Naomi later became wealthy and able to redeem it, she could do so.

If there was no redemption of it, then in the Year of Jubilee, which occurred every 50th year in Israel, it would be returned to the one who originally owned it, regardless of redemption. Naomi was poor, she possessed land which bore the name of Elimelech, and therefore, the law expected its redemption.

This expectation was now being directed to the unnamed *goel* whom Boaz was addressing. It is a piece of property from the widow of Elimelech. It must have looked like a good deal for him to increase his wealth in a rather simple way. And so Boaz continues with his words...

<sup>4</sup> (con't) **If you will redeem *it*, redeem *it*;**

The fact that Naomi's land can be redeemed proves that it is her right as the widow to possess and/or sell the land. Although she is childless and possibly too old to have more children, she carries within herself the embryonic or emergent right of the heir.

This is presupposed in Boaz' words, and within the law itself. The opportunity to redeem it is available and it has been presented to the nearest *goel*. The question is basically, "Are you willing to redeem the land of Naomi in this way. What do you say?"

<sup>4 (con't)</sup> **but if you will not redeem *it*, *then* tell me, that I may know;**

The Hebrew actually says, "but if **he** will not redeem it." Nobody translates it this way, but there is nothing to assume that this isn't the intended meaning. He is addressing not only the *goel*, but the elders. It is not only looking for *his* acceptance of the offer, but of *their* acknowledgment that his acceptance is either valid or invalid. In what this pictures, the term "**he**" perfectly fits what is occurring.

In essence, Boaz has insisted to know whether the one who is expected to meet the demands of the law will, in fact, meet those demands. He has a right to know, and he wishes to know. The law must be adhered to, and the demands of the law must be settled.

The expectation is the same as in any properly functioning society. There is one standard, and all are obligated to work within that one standard. To not do so will inevitably lead to anarchy, chaos, and societal breakdown. The law must be met. Boaz will now let him know why he is advising him about the land...

<sup>4 (con't)</sup> **for *there is no one but you to redeem it*, and I *am* next after you."**

"Dear brother. You are closer to Elimelech than I and the law affords you this marvelous opportunity to meet the demands of the law if you can and if you will. I am, in the integrity of my words, and in accordance with that great, honorable, and noble law which has been given to us by God through the hand of Moses, giving you the opportunity to step forward and redeem. However, if you are unwilling or unable to do so, I have your back, dear brother. I am next after you."

<sup>4 (con't)</sup> **And he said, "I will redeem *it*."**

"The matter is settled! It is good, dear brother, that you were willing to take action and redeem the inheritance of our departed brother Elimelech. What a fine example of

Israelite values and integrity you are; that you have stepped forward and placed your foot on that wonderful inheritance. Claiming it as your own shows the caliber of man you are! And what nice sandals adorn your feet. Good job dear brother!"

*Redeem me from the oppression of man  
That I may keep Your precepts, O God  
I will follow You always and as best as I can  
I will remember You with each step that I trod*

*Make Your face upon Your servant shine  
And teach me Your statutes, this to You I pray  
Then endless joy will certainly be mine  
And eternally I will walk in Your light-filled way*

*Rivers of water run down from my eyes  
Because men do not keep Your law  
Instead they are filled with deceit and lies  
When I looked around, this is what I saw*

### **III. I Cannot Redeem (verses 5 & 6)**

**<sup>5</sup> Then Boaz said,**

Boaz responds... "There is more. A wee bit more. It's just a small thing really. But it is the law, and the law is the law. So good of you to be willing to fulfill every jot and tittle of the law. Let me tell you what the law also requires..."

**<sup>5 (con't)</sup> "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy *it* from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead,**

Within the law is the concept of *entailment*. The Essential Law Dictionary defines entailment as "A restriction of the way a property will be inherited that is different from what the ordinary rules of inheritance would dictate."

The ordinary rules would apply if Elimelech's sons had lived. They would be the heirs. However, both died. Likewise, if neither daughter-in-law came from Moab, Naomi would be the sole owner. As she was probably beyond child-bearing years, the land would be sold to the nearest kinsman free from any other encumbrances.

But... Ruth. came. with. her. She attached herself and her future to Israel and the God of Israel in her remarkable words of chapter 1 -

"Entreat me not to leave you,  
Or to turn back from following after you;  
For wherever you go, I will go;  
And wherever you lodge, I will lodge;  
Your people *shall be* my people,  
And your God, my God." Ruth 1:16

She therefore possessed all the rights of an Israelite and was thus the rightful heiress of her dead husband, Mahlon. Anyone who would redeem her inheritance would thus need to provide for the continuance of his name as prescribed by the law as Boaz continued to explain to the nearer *goel*...

5 (con't) **to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance."**

This is what Ruth had desired, and this is what Boaz promised to her. The issue of the land, though separate from the family name, is inextricably tied to the name because of her standing within the law itself. Because Orpah didn't come with her, the land which belonged to Elimelech, and which partly was to belong to Chilion was transferred to the estate of Mahlon.

This is what entailment dictates, and it is what the law mandates. The law was meticulously given to cover all possible contingencies that could arise. Ruth and her sad state, because of the death of Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon, was such a contingency which the law provided for.

The land belonged to Naomi but only Ruth was able to raise up the name of the dead through the bearing of a child. If the nearer *goel* determined to not marry Ruth in order to raise up a child in the name of dead, which is a requirement of the sale, then he would give up the other rights of the *goel* as well.

Because of Ruth, the two issues of land and name were indissolubly intertwined. The gracious nature of the law was intended to care for the name of the dead while also protecting the rights of the living. And believe it or not, all of these details form a greater picture which is found in redemptive history.



**<sup>6</sup> And the close relative said, "I cannot redeem *it* for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance.**

With only a few exceptions, scholars are in agreement that the *goel* claimed he could not redeem the land because it would involve increasing his expenses during his life to care for Ruth and probably Naomi. This then would involve unnecessarily dividing his inheritance with Ruth's firstborn who would bear the name of Malon's family line.

In essence, as Ellicott explains it, "It would, therefore, be like mortgaging one's own estate, and that for the benefit of another." However, this is not the case. It is an incorrect analysis of the situation. In Deuteronomy 25, the perpetuation of the name has nothing to do with the inheritance of land in the one raised up.

All it says is that... "...it shall be *that* the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel" (verse 6). Nothing within the law required him to "ruin" his land or monetary inheritance. It merely required that he perform this one duty of having a child through the widow so that the name of his dead brother would live.

Rather than this faulty assumption, it is her *state as a Moabitess* which he is concerned about. This is why Boaz specifically brought up her nationality in the previous verse. Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion all died in Moab, and he is concerned about the same happening to himself and his family.

It is a repetition of what occurred many generations earlier when Judah perceived exactly the same thing in his daughter Tamar -

"Then Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name *was* Tamar. <sup>7</sup> But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD killed him. <sup>8</sup> And Judah said to Onan, 'Go in to your brother's wife and marry her, and raise up an heir to your brother.' <sup>9</sup> But Onan knew that the heir would not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in to his brother's wife, that he emitted on the ground, lest he should give an heir to his brother. <sup>10</sup> And the thing which he did displeased the LORD; therefore He killed him also. <sup>11</sup> Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, 'Remain a widow in your father's house till my son Shelah is grown.' For he said, 'Lest he also die like his brothers.' And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house." Genesis 38:6-11

This is the "ruin" he was concerned about. Instead of the grace found in the law, which included even this gentile convert, he was overwhelmed with superstition of what acquiring Ruth might mean. However, Boaz was not. He understood that the law included the gentiles in the rejoicing of God's gracious provision.

As it says in the law itself in the Song of Moses, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, *with* His people." Paul uses that very verse and ascribes it to the work of Christ in Romans 15:10. And this leads to one of the reasons why Judah and Tamar are mentioned later in this chapter in a positive light.

<sup>6 (con't)</sup> **You redeem my right of redemption for yourself,**

Boaz is granted the right of redemption and all that accompanies it. And thus, he is also granted Ruth the Moabitess as wife. The heavy, difficult beatings of his heart over the anxiety of the moment surely turned to heavy beatings of his heart over the joy and anticipation of securing the desire *of* that excited heart.

To him would come this beautiful friend, this lovely gentile, and this woman of virtue who had stolen his heart from the moment he saw her gleaning in the fields. Boaz has prevailed.

<sup>6 (fin)</sup> **for I cannot redeem *it*."**

Unfortunately, our verses today end not on a completely joyous note, but rather on a lie which is in itself a violation of the very law that the *goel* has so meticulously been presented. He had scrupulously followed the minute details of the law in order to shirk his responsibility to Ruth.

And yet he violated the law in the very process of clinging to its provisions. When he uttered the words *ki lo ikal ligol* - "for I am not able to redeem" he wasn't truthful. Rather, he could redeem, but he simply refused to do so. In his lie, he disqualified himself from the right of redemption. Obedience to the law is more than mechanical, but it involves a higher law, that of love.

And thus, it is with each of us in most areas of life. We can; we simply don't. Those things that we should do and know are right to do, but which we don't do become a stumbling block to us. Sins of omission are no less grievous than sins of commission.

And of all of the sins of omission that we could ever face, the greatest is to not receive God's gracious offer of Jesus. Often, it is a passive action, not an active one. We may not hate the thought of Jesus; we simply ignore what His life means to us. We love the world, we treat it as our inheritance, and we lose out on what is true life. As Matthew Henry states about this situation -

"...many are shy of the great redemption; they are not willing to espouse religion; they have heard well of it, and have nothing to say against it; they will give it their good word, but they are willing to part with it, and cannot be bound to it, for fear of marring their own inheritance in this world." (Matthew Henry)

What a terrible thought that is! We would give up the pleasures and the treasures of heaven for a short span of life pursuing *the wind*. Jesus asked what profit it is to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?

The answer is "none." And yet it is the path that most take. Please, don't be found on that path, but instead take the path that leads to life, eternal life, in a restored relationship with God. If you've never made a commitment to Jesus Christ, it is the most important decision that you could ever make.

Without Him, there are only the prospects of eternal separation from God. With Him, there is life, eternal *life*.

**Closing Verse:** *Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—<sup>12</sup> that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Ephesians 2:11-14*

**Next Week:** Ruth 4:7-12 (I Eschew This Shoe) (11th Ruth Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. He knows your trials, troubles, and woes and He is there with you through them. So, cling to Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

**To Perpetuate the Name of Elimelech**

Now Boaz up to the gate went

And there he sat down  
And behold, the close relative, the gent  
Of whom Boaz had spoken came by the gate of Bethlehem town

So Boaz said, "Come aside, friend, sit down here."  
So he came aside and sat down kind of near  
And he took ten men there  
Of the elders of the town  
And said, "Sit down here."  
And so they also sat down

Then he said to the close relative, there at hand  
"Naomi, who has come back to Israel  
From the country of Moab, sold the piece of land  
Which belonged to our brother Elimelech who in death fell

And I thought to inform you, saying  
'Buy it back, for such is your right  
In the presence of the inhabitants, I am praying  
And the elders of my people, yes in their sight

If you will redeem it, redeem it  
But if you will not redeem it, then tell me  
That I may know, for I admit  
There is no one but you to redeem it, as you can see

And I am next after you  
And he said, "I will redeem it  
This I will do

Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field  
From the hand of Naomi, as you have said  
You must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess  
Yes, from the wife of the dead

That the name of the dead through his inheritance will be perpetuated  
This is what the law requires, just as I have stated

And the close relative said  
"I cannot for myself it redeem  
Lest I ruin my own inheritance  
This won't work out, it would seem

You redeem for yourself my right of redemption  
For I cannot redeem it, I appeal to the law's exemption  
In the requirements of the law there is no hope  
No man can meet its demands perfectly  
It reflects God's standards, far beyond the scope  
Of our hopeless state, beyond all our ability

And yet for God all things are possible, we know  
And so He stepped out of heaven's glory  
And united with human flesh in order to bestow  
The good news found in the gospel story  
Yes, Christ took on the likeness of a man  
And in this appearance to the cross He went  
Being obedient to the law to fulfill the plan  
From heaven to earth on this mission He was sent

He alone can redeem man who fell so long ago  
In His grace and mercy, He came to dwell among us  
Fulfilling the plan when to the cross He did go  
All hail the Lamb of God, our precious Lord, Jesus

*Hallelujah and Amen...*

## RUTH 4:7-12 (I ESCHEW THIS SHOE)

**Introduction:** On the internet, there is a site called Reverend Fun. It's linked to Bible Gateway and the site itself is run by a guy who makes cartoons out of Bible passages. From time to time, I'll send him an idea for a cartoon, and he may or may not accept it, but on several occasions, he's used one of them.

Back in 2004, just a couple years after I met the Lord, I submitted an idea to him for a cartoon based on one of the verses in today's sermon. He accepted it and published it on November 3rd of that year. Unless you've read the verse and knew what it's referring to, you'd never get the punchline, but after today's sermon, you should be all up-to-speed on my type of humor, at least as far as the book of Ruth is concerned.

Things that are referred to in the Bible have importance. How often do we read over a passage and not think about the individual words that make up the whole. But Jesus said that even the letters, even the smallest letter, and even the little markings on the letters make a big difference. They all have meaning, and they all are used to tell us something.

Some of the Hebrew letters look so similar to one another that a mere brushstroke will change the word because the letter is different. The Hebrew D looks like the Hebrew R. The Hebrew B looks like the Hebrew K. Others are very close as well. Just the smallest marking can change the entire word.

If these little marks are important, how much more the words which they comprise! If all of the information that God deems necessary for us to know about Him, about His plans for us, and about Jesus are contained in a mere 1189 chapters of the 66 books of the Bible, then how important is every single word contained there?

Any moderately large dictionary or encyclopedia will have more words in them than the Bible. And yet they relay information which is of far less weight than the Bible. Surely then each word of Scripture is immensely important.

Here's a question? How many times are shoes mentioned in the Bible? Who cares, right! But in actuality, shoes have great importance in what God is conveying to us. And from the biblical concepts concerning shoes, there is literally volumes of information in commentaries about them.

Societies have entire traditions concerning shoes, some of which find their origins in the Bible. The answer is that shoes, or sandals, are mentioned about 35 times. And yet the 35 times they are mentioned form a marvelous tapestry of human life and interaction - both between man and man, and man and God. All that from just a few dozen references...

**Text Verse:** *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." Matthew 3:11*

The details are where the excitement is. When you go home after a sermon, you will remember between 2 and 4 things that you heard. That's it. In all honestly, I'm sure God is much more pleased if you remember 2 or 3 things about the precious details of His word than He is that you would remember 2 or 3 things about irrelevant stuff that is added to sermons to make your church time more enjoyable.

If you like the details of God's word, then you are showing Him the respect He deserves. So, we should dig into that same precious word. What a gift and what a treasure it is. After all, it is His superior word. So, let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. The Transfer is Made (verses 7 & 8)**

**<sup>7</sup> Now this *was the custom* in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging,**

The verses we looked at last week showed us how Ruth's closest *goel*, or kinsman redeemer, was afraid of ruining his inheritance if he acquired Ruth and so he claimed that he could not exercise his right of redemption. But this wasn't correct, he could have, he simply refused to do so because Ruth was from Moab.

Because of his failure to act, an ancient rite would now take place. The words "was the custom" are inserted by translators because this rite isn't specifically addressed in the law in the manner it's used here. The rite as stated in the law only covers one aspect of what transpires and so the custom is more inclusive, and probably older, than the provision detailed in the law.

To understand this, an example might be to think about the use of lights on a car. Car headlights go back before any laws concerning how and when to use the lights. People turned them on when they needed them. But eventually, the law chose certain times when they would be mandatory.

Motorcycles have to use them all the time. In a car, we have to turn them on at a given time of day and they need to be used until a given time of the next day. During certain weather conditions, we may be required to use them.

But we also turn them on when they aren't required by the law, such as when we're in a funeral procession. And so, what the law requires is only a portion of the customs of the use of lights. The same is true with what will now transpire. One aspect of it is noted in the law, but other aspects are based on custom within the society, or maybe because of tradition or some other reason.

<sup>7</sup> (con't) **to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave *it* to the other,**

In America, when a legal matter is confirmed, it is usually signed and then notarized or stamped with some other official seal. This is our legal way of confirming matters, whether they refer to marriage, the sale of real estate, the making of wills, and so on.

In ancient Israel, witnesses were called at the gate of the city, the place where legal matters were resolved. The matter would be discussed, the decision would be made, and in order to confirm the matter, a sandal was transferred from one person to another.

In Deuteronomy 25, such a transfer was mandated for a person who failed to perform the duty of raising up the name of a dead brother through the widow. This partially applies to the matter of Ruth. There in Deuteronomy, it says -

"If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be *married* to a stranger outside *the family*; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. <sup>6</sup> And it shall be *that* the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. <sup>7</sup> But if the man does not want to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate to the elders, and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to raise up a name to his brother in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother.' <sup>8</sup> Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to



him. But *if* he stands firm and says, 'I do not want to take her,' <sup>9</sup> then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother's house.' <sup>10</sup> And his name shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal removed.'" Deuteronomy 25:5-10

What is shameful in this transfer in Deuteronomy is twofold. The woman was shamed by the man because he failed to do what he was instructed to do by the law. And the man was shamed because he had to submit to allowing a woman to assume the requirements of the law in his place.

The law gave the man the preeminent position in almost all matters, and some leaned almost to an incredible level in favor of the man, such as the rite of jealousy when a man thought his wife had been unfaithful to her. Read the account in Numbers 5 sometime and you'll see what I mean.

Another example was that a woman was to have her hand cut off if she, in hopes of protecting her own husband, were to have grabbed at the private parts of another man. That is found in this same chapter of Deuteronomy -

"If *two* men fight together, and the wife of one draws near to rescue her husband from the hand of the one attacking him, and puts out her hand and seizes him by the genitals, <sup>12</sup> then you shall cut off her hand; your eye shall not pity *her*."

-Deuteronomy 25:11, 12

This may seem harsh... she was only protecting her husband, right? But the significance of the spot, especially among the covenant people, was what mattered. Her actions could not be excused.

In the case of raising up a name for a dead husband, when a man failed to perform his duty to the woman in the way he should, he was as much harming the name of her dead husband as shaming the woman. It was a direct attack against that very same spot on the dead husband, the point of procreation.

And so, the law provided for the woman to respond by actively taking the very symbol of his rights over her, the sandal. After that, she was allowed to further degrade him by spitting in his face. This act was considered immensely degrading, just as it is today. Do a quick study on spitting in the Bible and you'll see that instantly.

As a final disgrace, the law said that "his name shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal removed.'" It was to be a permanent reminder to all people of his failure to meet the requirements of the law and that he had born this disgrace which was granted to a mere woman to perform. He was thrice and permanently shamed for his failure.

In the law, the sandal went from the one who possessed the right to the one who should have received it. Knowing this, we know that it was the unnamed relative of Boaz who took off his shoe and gave it to Boaz. This was the formal transfer of his right of redemption.

In this, a form of grace has been granted because the man wasn't forced to bear the disgrace of his refusal to act. The reason why is because Boaz pre-empted the man by saying in verse 4 that, "*there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am next after you.*"

Boaz graciously preempted any possible shame on the man by stating in advance that he was next in line, thus implying that he was willing to perform the duty. Instead of the name of the dead dying out and also shaming the woman, the name would continue on, and the woman wouldn't be shamed. Therefore, there was no need to call this portion of the law out before the witnesses.

Knowing all this so far doesn't explain why the shoe is the means of transfer for legal matters. It would be a shame to not know some of what it symbolizes, so let's take a quick look. Throughout history and in many cultures, the shoe carries much of the same connotation. There are positives and negatives, but they all tie into the same symbolism.

Because we are mobile creatures, the shoe symbolizes several things. It symbolizes motion to where we are going and the footprints behind us which bear the shoe marks are a reminder of where we have been. When our feet stop, that is our time of rest in our place of rest, and thus our place of possession. Our shoes silently wait for us at the door.

When Moses and Joshua came into the presence of the Lord, they were told to take off their shoes because another, greater One possessed the authority over the land. Unlike the prints of the soles of their shoes, their footprints were created by God, implying His mastery over them. When David claimed he would be victorious over the land of Edom, he wrote these words in the 60th Psalm -

"Moab *is* My washpot;  
Over Edom I will cast My shoe;  
Philistia, shout in triumph because of Me." Psalm 60:8

Today in the Middle East, it still has this connotation. When Saddam Hussein was overthrown, the people of Iraq removed their shoes and threw them at statues of him, signifying their renunciation of his rule.

Just a few years later a man named Muntadhar al-Zaidi shouted, "This is a farewell kiss from the Iraqi people, you dog," and threw his shoe at President Bush during a press conference. Bush moved quicker than a bunny rabbit and the shoe missed him. Shoes are also indicative of readiness to comply. When Moses was given the instructions for the Passover, he was told this -

"You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire. <sup>11</sup> And thus you shall eat it: *with* a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It *is* the LORD's Passover." Exodus 12:10, 11

It was a time of motion and preparedness. It showed that where they were was no longer their home. However, from that time, all the way through 40 years in the wilderness, Deuteronomy 29:5 tells us that their shoes **never wore out**. They were made to always be ready for the walk before them so they could comply with the Lord's movements until they came to the spot chosen for them.

In America, when we want to evaluate someone's character, we say "walk a mile in his shoes." Only then can we know if we measure up to his standards or if we can assume the duties he was able to perform. Finally, the idea of the "dead man's shoes" being those at a funeral demonstrate that another had to fulfill what the departed one could not.

In all, shoes represent the totality of the individual in many ways, both actual and potential. In this exchange then, the implication is that the right of walking on the land which was to be redeemed has been resigned and that the authority now belongs to Boaz. Because Naomi and Ruth are tied into the exchange, then the brother has given up all rights to them and their possessions as well.

He has no authority to place his foot in their doors from this point on. Finally, the handing over of the shoe demonstrates his inability or refusal to meet the requirements of the law. All of this is implied in the simple act of handing over his sandal to Boaz.

<sup>7</sup> (con't) **and this *was* a confirmation in Israel.**

These words lack the force of the original. The Hebrew says *ha'teudah* - "the confirmation," not "a confirmation." The handing over of the shoe was *the* testimony because of the significance of the shoe. The transfer of the shoe was sufficient evidence in all ways and for all such cases. (KJV also wrong)

<sup>8</sup> **Therefore the close relative said to Boaz, "Buy *it* for yourself."**

Knowing already that Boaz is *willing* to redeem and that he *can* redeem, the man states out loud in the presence of the witnesses, *qeneh lakh* - "Buy for yourself."

<sup>8</sup> (con't) **So he took off his sandal.**

His integrity is maintained because of Boaz. Ruth could have first gone to him and insisted on her right of redemption and then the law would have applied if he refused to fulfill the obligation. But because of Boaz and the tactful way that he handled the matter, there was no loss of **face**, only the imparting of **grace**. He took off his own sandal and he willingly and legally made the transfer.

*Who is qualified to fill this shoe?  
I wore it in the past but can wear it no more  
There was something that I needed to do  
But I could not. Someone take it, I implore*

*I could not meet the law's requirements  
And so the right to the land is no longer mine  
I must now step back from the inheritance  
And cede it to another; I must decline*

*Surely there is one noble Man who will  
Take this shoe from me and accept the right  
To fulfill the necessary redemption and this shoe fill  
One who is worthy in these people's sight*

*I know that there is One who by all means will  
This right of redemption gladly fulfill*

## **II. The Purchase is Finalized (verses 9 & 10)**

**<sup>9</sup> And Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You *are* witnesses this day**

Again, as was noted in verse 4 last week, the ten witnesses that Boaz called together are representatives for all the people. Regardless of how many other people were actually present - ten or fifty, these ten testify to and for all. To them he acknowledges that he is both qualified to redeem and willing to redeem.

**<sup>9 (con't)</sup> that I have bought all**

The word for "I have bought" is the word *qaniti* which is from the word *qanah*. It means to buy or to acquire. This form of the word, *qaniti*, is used 5 times in the Bible. Two of them are in this account today. And two of the others actually tie in directly with what this account pictures.

The first is when Eve had her first child. She said, *qaniti ish eth Yehovah* - "I have acquired a man from the LORD." Because of this, she named her son "Cain" which is a play on the word *qanah*, "to acquire."

Another time that this word is used was when Joseph said to the people of Egypt, "Indeed **I have bought** you and your land this day for Pharaoh. Look, *here is* seed for you, and you shall sow the land." (Genesis 47:23) If you go back and watch both of those sermons, you may be able to figure out some of what the book of Ruth is picturing in advance of our last sermon.

**<sup>9 (con't)</sup> that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, from the hand of Naomi.**

Everything that belonged to Elimelech and also his sons Chilion and Mahlon have been purchased. The order of the names of the sons are reversed from chapter one. There it listed them as Malon and Chilion. But now Chilion is named first.

Boaz, knowing the family, has named Chilion first showing that he was the firstborn. Regardless of the order of birth though, because of the death of all three of them, the

entire scope of the inheritance belonged to Naomi. It is from her that the purchase is made.

**<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife,**

The "moreover" must have been hard for Boaz to even utter. His heart was probably beating so hard that speaking was difficult. The first time his eyes glanced upon her in the field, it was apparent that he was attracted to her. Now he has the joy and pleasure of announcing that she would be his wife.

Interestingly, he calls her "Ruth" but he again says, "the Moabitess." The Bible is asking us to not forget that she is a gentile. This isn't a mistake or an unnecessary addition, but a reminder. After this, he notes that she is "the widow of Mahlon."

**<sup>10</sup> (con't) to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance,**

Though a gentile, she was the wife of Mahlon and so through her, the name of the dead will be perpetuated "through his inheritance." This ties the name to that which the name is entitled under the law. The word "dead" here is singular, not plural. However, in verse 1:8, it was plural.

There it said, "Go, return each to her mother's house. The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with **the dead** (plural) and with me." Now however, all three, Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon are combined into one singular, rather than individually.

All three of the names will be linked through Ruth in a distinguished and loving manner for the future generations to remember. These hints are not unimportant, but all reflect a greater plan of redemption which is prefigured by this wondrous story of life and love in Bethlehem.

**<sup>10</sup> (con't) that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren**

Boaz again mentions "the name of the dead" but this time it is tied to his brethren. Not only will the name be raised up for the entitled inheritance, but it will also be raised up "among his brethren." This means that the Israelite heritage is also preserved, and yet it is through a Gentile! Think of the irony! Now, think of the church.

10 (con't) **and from his position at the gate.**

And finally, in addition to the inheritance and the heritage, his name is being raised up for "his position at the gate." Literally it says, "the gate of his standing." The rights and benefits of all that the gate implies will remain secure. The legal aspects of the name of the dead remain secure... through a gentile.

10 (con't) **You are witnesses this day."**

The transaction has taken place, the formal announcement of a marriage has been proclaimed, and it has been witnessed not by 2 or 3 witnesses, but by 10 and by any others who had come in and out at that time and stopped to uncover their ear. The matter has been published. Boaz has met the requirements of the law and has carried through with the accomplishment of His promise.

In chapter 1 Naomi, during her time of great distress and anguish, had bid farewell to her daughters. At that time, she pronounced a blessing upon them when she said, "The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband."

The blessing has come true for Ruth. She has found rest under the wing of Boaz and together they have their rest under the wings of the Lord God of Israel. Orpah was not excluded from what has happened because she was inherently unworthy, but because she willingly chose the path she took.

*I have purchased it all in one fell swoop  
Everything is included in the deal  
This will be published as the greatest scoop  
The sandal in My hand is the needed proof and seal*

*The right of redemption was passed to Me  
And I accepted the right and also prevailed  
It has been witnessed by all ten, you see  
I have qualified in what the law detailed*

*And so to Me goes the title and the deed  
To Me goes the inheritance and the bride  
Yes, I am the holy and chosen Seed  
The narrow Path that leads to Heaven's pastures wide*

### **III. May You Prosper in Ephrathah and be Famous in Bethlehem (verses 11 & 12)**

**<sup>11</sup> And all the people who *were* at the gate, and the elders, said, “*We are* witnesses.**

With their approval, the matter is now established. None have challenged the proceedings and rather, all who had gathered, both elders and any others, were in agreement. And so, in agreement, a blessing upon them is pronounced...

**<sup>11 (con't)</sup> The LORD make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah,**

The name of Jehovah is pronounced once again over Ruth. Naomi blessed her in the first chapter, Boaz in the second. In the third, Boaz noted that she was blessed of the Lord. And now again, all those present heap a blessing in the name of the Lord upon her.

Specifically, they tie her to Rachel and Leah, noting Rachel first. There are several reasons for putting her before Leah, even though the people of Bethlehem were descendants of Leah, Rachel was the beloved of Jacob and his first desire for a wife. She also died and was buried not far from Ephrathah where they lived.

And finally, who Rachel pictures in the story of redemptive history explains why she would be named first in the Bible. To understand that completely, one would need to watch all of the sermons which encompass her lifetime. She pictured New Testament grace instead of Leah who pictured the Old Testament law.

To Boaz, these two women of note are being introduced as a hopeful comparison to Ruth - a wife for his house and a mother to his household as we see next...

**<sup>11 (con't)</sup> the two who built the house of Israel;**

These two women are credited with the building of the house of Israel, meaning the nation itself. This word translated as "build" is *banah*, the same word used to describe the "building" of Eve from Adam's rib. So, there is a hidden play on intent here.

From this word, *banah*, are derived the Hebrew words for "son" and "daughter." And so it indicates the building of the house through children. It is spelled with three Hebrew letters, Beth, Nun, and Hey.

Beth means "house," Nun reflects continuance, or an "heir," and thus subsequent generations, and Hey conveys the meaning of "behold" as when something great is



revealed. It also signifies "breath" such as when you breathe out when you behold something wonderful. And it could even refer to the breath of life.

Their blessing is that Ruth will continue to "build" the great name of the House of Israel through subsequent heirs just as Rachel and Leah did when they "built" the house of Israel. This blessing then is literally fulfilled in her great-grandson David and her greatest descendant, Jesus. It is reflected in the word of the Lord to David in 2 Samuel 7 -

"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

<sup>13</sup> He shall **build** a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> I will be his Father, and he shall be My son." 2 Samuel 7:12-14

And one final note of curiosity is that the word "two" when speaking of Rachel and Leah is masculine, not feminine even though it is speaking of the two women. In chapter 1, there were 9 instances of such gender-discord. There was one in chapter 3 also. This is the final such instance in the book of Ruth.

**11 (con't) and may you prosper in Ephrathah**

The words here are actually not as clear as we have them in English and so it isn't known for certain whether this is still speaking about Ruth - may "she" prosper, or Boaz - may "you" prosper. It simply says, "and make." *va'aseh khayil be'ephrata* - "and make prosper in Ephrathah."

Either way, this uses the same word, *khayil*, which was already used to describe both Boaz, in verse 2:1 and Ruth in verse 3:11. It indicates virtue and wealth. And not just material wealth, but wealth in all aspects of life. And so here is found another play on words. The name Ephrathah means "fruitfulness." Therefore, it is a blessing for great prosperity in the place of fruitfulness.

**11 (con't) and be famous in Bethlehem.**

This verse finishes with the blessing that they will be famous in Bethlehem. The Hebrew is *uqera shem b'bethlehem* - "and proclaim name in Bethlehem." In this, it means that when people speak about the famous folks of Bethlehem, they will be included in the list. Surely this has been literally fulfilled in the mouths of God's people for thousands of years.

**<sup>12</sup> May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah,**

These words go directly back to Genesis 38 which is one of the most remarkable passages in Genesis as to what it pictures. Ruth, like Tamar, was denied her rightful justice until she personally came forward to claim it, just as Tamar did.

Where Judah failed toward Tamar and was forced to state, "She is more righteous than I," Boaz proved his righteousness in doing what another would not do and fulfilled his obligation as the next closest relative to Ruth.

Perez was born to Tamar by Judah, and he was used by God as a picture of Christ to come. But he is also, literally Boaz' ancestor as well. The blessing upon these two by the people of the town is an acknowledgement that despite Judah's superstition concerning Tamar being a bad luck omen, she turned out to be a blessing and the mother of a noble house.

Likewise, the closer relative to Ruth is being given an implicit rebuke. He was superstitious that the marriage to Ruth was the cause of the death of her husband and so he backed out of redeeming the land lest he would marry her and die.

The townspeople then are blessing Boaz at the same time as rebuking the *goel*. Their blessing is that the same prosperous name which Tamar had been granted would be granted to Ruth also. In this union we see a continuation of the subtle bed-tricks which are detailed in the Bible which have led to great things.

The first was when Lot's two daughters got him drunk and slept with him. The second was when Laban switched daughters on Jacob and gave him Leah instead of Rachel. The third was when Tamar posed as a prostitute and seduced her father-in-law Judah. And the fourth was when Ruth silently crept into the threshing floor of Boaz in order to request redemption.

All four of these are found tied together in this one story. Lot's bed-tricking older daughter bore a son named Moab who was an ancestor of Ruth. Jacob's bed-tricking wife Leah, bore Judah who is an ancestor of Boaz. Tamar's bed-tricking of Judah likewise led to Boaz. And Ruth's bed-tricking of Boaz has resulted in her marriage.

This son who will be born to them will have four unique events which led to him and he in turn, meaning all the names involved in the bed-tricks, will lead to King David and

then to Jesus. What seems like somewhat scandalous or possibly even immoral occurrences to most people, have all been used for a good purpose and end.

The stories have been misunderstood and unfairly maligned over the centuries when in fact they have been told for a much more important reason than merely teaching against perceived immorality.

<sup>12 (fin)</sup> **because of the offspring which the LORD will give you from this young woman."**

The blessing is pronounced, and it finishes with these happy words for Boaz. He is an elderly man who will have a young and beautiful bride. He has proven himself faithful to both the letter and the spirit of the law and he has been blessed by his people in the name of the Lord.

We're closing in on the final details of the book of Ruth and in the near future, we'll look at how all of them picture other things, great things, in the history of redemption. The marvel of the Bible is that it contains everything necessary to have a personal relationship with God. This is lacking in nature and can only be revealed by Him personally through special means.

Those special means have come to pass, and they have been compiled into the Bible. This book shows us the great love of God for us and what He did to bring us back to Himself and to a place of idyllic perfection.

**Closing Verse:** *"But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me." John 5:36*

**Next Week:** Ruth 4:13-17 (A Restorer of Life) (12th Ruth Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. He knows your trials, troubles, and woes and He is there with you through them. So cling to Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

## **I Eschew This Shoe**

Now this was the custom in former times  
In Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging  
To confirm anything in those climes

Including even a marriage arranging  
One man took off his sandal  
And gave it to the other  
And this was a confirmation in Israel  
Of a matter between one another

Therefore the close relative to Boaz said  
“Buy it for yourself.”  
So he took off his sandal and gave it to Boaz instead  
And Boaz said to the elders and all the people  
“You are witnesses that I have bought this day  
All that was Elimelech’s, and all that was Chilion’s and Mahlon’s From the hand of  
Naomi it has now come my way

Moreover, Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon  
As my wife, I have acquired  
To perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance  
Today this has transpired

That the name of the dead may not be cut off  
From among his brethren in any such way  
And from his position at the gate  
You are witnesses this day  
And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said  
“We are witnesses here in Bethlehem, the House of Bread  
The Lord make the woman who is coming to your house  
Like Rachel and Leah, the two of them  
Who built the house of Israel  
And may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem

May your house be like the house of Perez  
Whom Tamar bore to Judah in days gone by  
Because of the offspring which the Lord will give you  
From this young woman, now apple of your eye

There in that same town of Bethlehem as we know  
Came the Savior of the world, our Lord Jesus  
He came without pomp or a flashy show  
Instead He came and looked like any of us

The stories that we see in the Bible's pages  
Are given to show us hints of Him  
God has marked out His plan for the ages  
And done it in places like the town of Bethlehem

In these stories we can relate so well  
Because they can fit the lives of any of us  
Such is the masterful way the Bible does tell  
Of the marvelous workings of God in Jesus

And so we thank You O God as we live out our days  
Reading Your word and giving You all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

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Some similar looking letters in Hebrew -

ב כ Beth and Kaph

ר ך Resh and Dalet

ח ה Heth and Hey

מ ס Mem-sofit and Samekh



## **RUTH 4:13-17**

### **(A RESTORER OF LIFE)**

**Introduction:** Other than just a short genealogy which comprises five verses of names, we will finish the story of Ruth today. Next week, we'll look into the details and try to piece together what God is showing us in this wonderful story.

For today though, we will see the birth of a son to Boaz and Ruth and how, curiously, it is said to be Naomi's son. But everything in God's word has meaning and even those things which seem rather curious have reasonable explanations. This is certainly true with the words about the son who was placed in the lap of Naomi.

**Text Verse:** *"Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,  
The fruit of the womb is a reward." Psalm 127:3*

In a newborn child, there is an infinite amount of possibility. What will the child do? How long will he live? What will he look like, act like, enjoy doing...? The path which a newborn baby will follow is completely unknown to us. But there are so many hopes tied up in the child as well.

The son born in today's story is given a name based on expectations of what he will do as he grows up. This child and the record of his birth in no small way prefigures the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

It is one of the marvels of God's word that two people, in the same story, can both picture Him in differing ways. This is one of the great joys of the Bible. All we have to do is read and think, "How does this point to Jesus?" Once we do that, the story makes so much more sense. And so it is with father Boaz and little baby Obed... both are types of Christ.

As always, these treasures are right there in front of our eyes in God's superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

#### **I. Boaz and Ruth, and a Son for Naomi (verses 13-15)**

<sup>13</sup> **So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife;**

With the agreement settled at the town's gate because Boaz was willing and able to fulfill the requirements of the law, Ruth, according to that law, became his legal wife. In chapter one, I noted that some scholars speculate that Mahlon died *because* he married a Moabite woman.

In essence, it was judgment on his disobedience. Likewise, it was also speculated that no children were born to him during their marriage as punishment as well. However, I argued numerous reasons why these were incorrect assumptions. First, when God judges this way, the Bible will state it.

Secondly, Naomi's words to her daughters later in that chapter to "return to their gods" implied that they had married into a family who had been following the Lord. Thirdly, Ruth has now married Boaz. If God were to have killed the sons for disobedience by marrying Moabite women, then the same disobedience would be seen in Boaz for him doing so.

Fourth, just because Ruth and Orpah had not borne children cannot be seen as any type of punishment. God withheld children from Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Tamar, among many others, in order to meet His goals. As this verse will show, the Lord will intervene and grant a child to Ruth.

For these and several other reasons I cited, what we read was not punishment on Naomi's sons, but God working out His plans in redemptive history just as He determines to meet His perfect end for the plan He has established.

**13 (con't) and when he went in to her,**

Without being disobedient to either the Law or to the culture of the society, but rather being obedient in all ways, Boaz was granted his wife, and because of this, it says "he went in to her." It is one of the Bible's ways of saying they came together in the bed. The beautiful friend became his beautiful wife and companion as well.

**13 (con't) the LORD gave her conception,**

There is a stress in verse 13 which is lacking in most translations. It repeats the word "and" five times. Young's Literal Translation shows the sequence of the thought that we should pay attention to -

And Boaz taketh Ruth, and she becometh his wife, and he goeth in unto her, and Jehovah giveth to her conception, and she beareth a son.

And Boaz took Ruth - according to the Law of Moses, given by the Lord.

And she became his wife - according to the Law of Moses, given by the Lord.

And he went into her - according to the Law of Moses, given by the Lord.

And the Lord (meaning Jehovah) gave to her conception.

And she bore a son - thus a male-child who can fulfill the portion of the law of the Lord concerning raising up a son in the name of the dead, according to the Law of Moses, given by the Lord.

It is a logical sequence of events which shows perfect obedience to the law, acting upon that law, and the Lord ensuring that the allowance of the law will be fulfilled, and this, because a child was conceived, and the child was born which turned out to be a son. Every detail shows the hand of the Lord all over the verse.

Despite Boaz having gone into his wife, it is still God who controls the womb. But even then, there is a difference in the workings of God for different individuals. In this verse, it is the Lord, Jehovah, who gave Ruth conception.

This isn't always the case in Scripture. In Genesis 29, it says that the Lord, meaning Jehovah, opened Leah's womb to have children. This is the case until the birth of her fourth son Judah. After that, it is God, or *elohim*, that gave her the final two children. Why would that be?

Likewise, in Genesis 30:22, it says this, "Then **God** remembered Rachel, and **God** listened to her and opened her womb." Instead of Jehovah, it says *elohim*, or "God," for the birth of Rachel's child, just like Leah's last two. There is a difference to be noted.

The Lord, or Jehovah, is the one who monitors the covenant and directs events especially related to the fulfillment of that covenant and the coming of Christ. This is the same reason why in Genesis 38, when Judah's sons were deemed unacceptable to carry on the covenant line it said that the *Jehovah*, not *elohim*, killed them.

It's a notable pattern found throughout Scripture. If one had never read the Bible, but was given these insights before reading it, they would be able to more clearly guess what was going to happen in advance of it happening. In the case of the child born to Boaz and Ruth now, it is the Lord, Jehovah, who is noted as giving her conception and so the guess might be that this child would lead to Jesus, and he does.



13 (con't) **and she bore a son.**

It is through a son that the name of the dead is to be raised up. Whether they had daughters or not isn't recorded because this is dealing with redemption and inheritance and therefore the male-child to be born to the union is what the Bible is focused on.

Ruth had desired a son to raise up the name of her dead husband and a male-child is granted. However, as we saw in the previous sermon, Boaz noted this at the gates of the city -

"You *are* witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that *was* Chilion's and Mahlon's, from the hand of Naomi. <sup>10</sup> Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate." Ruth 4:9, 10

The word "dead" is singular. Though all that was Elimelech's, Chilion's, and Mahlon's was bought from Naomi, the name of all of them are united in Ruth's dead husband Mahlon. This child is to be the heir of all three estates. This son will lead to David and then to Jesus.

Matthew Henry shows that because of this, something more wonderful can be proclaimed about the birth of the child -

"Ruth bore a son, through whom thousands and myriads were born to God; and in being the lineal ancestor of Christ, she was instrumental in the happiness of all that shall be saved by him; even of us Gentiles, as well as those of Jewish descent. She was a witness for God to the Gentile world, that he had not utterly forsaken them, but that in due time they should become one with his chosen people, and partake of his salvation." Matthew Henry

This 13th verse of chapter 4 is the realization of the blessing that was bestowed upon Ruth and Orpah back in Chapter 1. There in the 9th verse, during a time of great grief and sadness, Naomi said this to them -

"The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband."

Ruth has been granted the fulfillment of the petition by Naomi and has indeed found the rest that she sought in the house of her husband. As Lange says about this, "Sorrow in Moab has been changed into happiness in Israel."

*Sing praise to the Lord, you saints of His  
And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name  
For His anger may last a moment, but I will tell you this  
His favor is for life - honor and blessing; never shame*

*Weeping may endure for a night  
But joy comes in the morning time  
When the day turns from darkness to light  
God will raise You up in delight sublime*

*Remember Joseph who suffered many a trial  
And also remember Naomi and Ruth  
The troubles that came ended after a while  
Because they clung to the Lord, the God of truth*

**<sup>14</sup> Then the women said to Naomi,**

Who these women are isn't stated. It could be the midwives at the birth of the child or the collective group of women from Bethlehem. Whichever it is, the last time the women of Bethlehem were mentioned in connection with Naomi was in chapter 1. There this we read this -

"Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem. And it happened, when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was excited because of them; and the women said, 'Is this Naomi?'"

<sup>20</sup> "But she said to them, 'Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. <sup>21</sup> I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?'" Ruth 1:19-21

Though she said to them "call me Mara," there is no longer the need for this name. She is no longer Bitter and lacking the Lord's grace, but she is rather Naomi - the Pleasantness of the Lord. She had left Israel full and returned empty. She was now full again.

She had left Israel in hopes of finding sustenance and instead she found death. Now she has been granted both new and restored life. She had left with a family and a name, and had come back with a daughter-in-law with no male child to bear the family name. Now she had a family and a name once again.

Throughout all of the time since their return, nothing was heard of the women of Bethlehem in relation to her. She and Ruth alone were noted, indicating their solitary state. Now the women are there at the birth of Naomi's redeemer, ready to praise the Lord because of her newly found hope and to heap a blessing upon her.

What was lost is regained and the life that seemed futile is now filled with hope and expectation. LIFE APP - The Valley and the mountain top.

<sup>14</sup> (con't) **"Blessed *be* the LORD, who has not left you this day without a close relative;**

A shout of praise is given to the Lord for the great thing which he has done for Naomi! She who had nothing but a daughter in law and an inheritance she couldn't maintain has now been granted more than she could have imagined. Blessed be the Lord for what He has done! Credit is given where credit is due.

And it was because he has not left her without a close-relative, a *goel* - a kinsman redeemer. However, there is a giant disagreement among scholars concerning this. It is a divide which separates into one of two factions. The question is, "Who is the *goel*?"

The scholars at Cambridge say this - "...throughout the story the near kinsman is Boaz. He has done all, and more than all, that could be expected of a *go'el*; he has redeemed the property, and now (this day) he has secured an heir for Naomi's family."

This view is held by many great and studious scholars. But there is another view. John Gill, among other notable names, rightly states that it is the child who is Naomi's *goel*, not Boaz. Gill says, "the text speaks of what was done that day, and what is after said in the next verse all relates to the child born."

This is the answer, and it is what will be seen in the fulfillment of the pictures given here. The wording is specific that the women say "this day" when the child is born. Just because Boaz was the *goel* throughout the story doesn't mean that he continues to be the *goel* here.

The Hebrew reads literally, "Blessed be the Lord who has not caused to fail to you a kinsman." Going back to the previous verse, it said, "And Boaz taketh Ruth, and she becometh his wife, and he goeth in unto her, and **Jehovah** giveth to her conception, and she beareth a son."

The text of the Bible gives the credit not to Boaz, but to Jehovah through Boaz. And only when the child is born does the verse say, "Blessed be the Lord who has not caused to fail to you a kinsman." Were Boaz the kinsman, they could have said this long before the birth of the child.

It is singular that Ruth is mentioned for the last time in verse 13, our first verse of the day. However, Naomi is mentioned explicitly three more times after that - in verses 14, 16, and 17, and she is mentioned implicitly by the word "you" in all of the verses 14-17.

Ruth is also mentioned implicitly in these verses, but only in relation to Naomi, not as to her alone. The peculiar and beautiful words, being devoted to Naomi and not to Ruth, are meant to tell us something about redemptive history that is both exciting and wonderful. It is something that is yet future to us now in the stream of time.

It was Naomi whose life was used as such a positive example for Ruth that she literally clung to her rather than returning to her own family. It was Naomi who had suffered the majority of the pains. She lost her life in Israel, she lost her husband, and she lost her two sons. After that, she even lost her beloved daughter in law Orpah.

She was a widow with no seed to continue the family name. She was in such dire straits that she asked the women of Bethlehem to call her Mara instead of Naomi. And yet, Ruth continued with her, determined to reside as a foreigner in a new homeland.

The bond between the two went beyond the bond of most natural lines of descent. No mother could hope for a more faithful, obedient, hardworking, and dedicated daughter than Ruth was to her. Despite her foreign-born status, she never gave up on her devotion and love for her mother-in-law, her blessed Naomi. What do you suppose that is picturing?

And then, almost at the closing of the story, it is the near blood-relative, Boaz, who has a son by Ruth, but it is the mother-in-law who is congratulated for having a son! This child who came, not from the nearest close-relative who remains unnamed in the story, is called the *goel* of Naomi by the women.

And legally, this is correct. It is he who will inherit the estate of Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon because his mother, Ruth, was Mahlon's wife. Boaz redeemed the inheritance from Naomi and Ruth was a part of the redemption in order to raise up a son in his name. That son then *is* the legal redeemer of Naomi.

Her house isn't built up *by* Boaz, her house is built up by this child, *for whom* Boaz redeemed it. That's why last week in verse 11, it said this, "The LORD make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel." The house is built up *through* the woman by the sons born *to* the woman.

As Lange says about this - "He is the grandson of her family, though not of her blood. Ruth's goel was Boaz, but Naomi's the son of Ruth; for Ruth lives in the house of Boaz, but Naomi in that of the child, which belongs to him by virtue of his birth from Ruth."

It may seem confusing, but it pictures redemptive history which has proven to be even more confusing to many as well. Only when this story is properly understood, does the greater story of redemption come into correct focus.

<sup>14</sup> (con't) **and may his name be famous in Israel!**

Well, whose name? Is it the Lord who was mentioned in the beginning of the verse? Is it Boaz, who some say is the *goel*? Or is it the child? The answer is the child. Boaz is not the *goel* of Naomi and the child is the nearest antecedent in the verse.

The women exclaim concerning this child-redeemer, "May his name be famous in Israel!" And they exclaim more...

<sup>15</sup> **And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age;**

With all certainty, the *goel* of Naomi is the child. These words show us that with clarity. "And may he be to you a restorer of life." In this is the thought of bringing happiness, joy, and enjoyment. It is *this child* that is born that will bring these things to her.

She was Bitter and dead; he will make her joyful and vibrant. She was without hope; he will bring her a newfound sense of purpose. It is the child in her lap, not Boaz, who will bring these things to her. And in addition to that, he will be a nourisher of her old age.

This is not something given to Boaz to do because he is old himself. Rather it is something which will come from the child who is young and will be able to care for her

and tend to her in her own old age. This is what the blessing of the women indicates. A *future hope* in the child, not a *present hope* in the husband of Ruth.

**15 (con't) for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him."**

This again shows us that Naomi's goel is the child. The women refer to Ruth as the mother of the child. Ruth isn't of Israel but is married into Israel. And it is Ruth who is said to love her. In the Hebrew, the tense of the verb is perfect. In essence, "your daughter-in-law, who has completely loved you."

It is she who is "better than seven sons" to Naomi. What seven sons could not have done, she was able to do. Only through a woman can a child be born. If she had seven sons but none of them were married, they could never have given her what she has obtained.

In the Bible, the number seven indicates spiritual perfection. The women of the town knew that the value of Ruth and her love for Naomi was transcendent and that it had been through this love that a new hope was transcendentally granted.

Because the son was born to Ruth, though he was not of direct blood, he was to be considered the most cherished of all sons. It is an indication that the legal parameters of Israel through physical descent could not compare to the wholly devoted and self-sacrificing foreign-born daughter.

It is the connection which is based on love which has brought Naomi to the point that she has come. The in-grafting of the child into her heart and family line was because of the love of the daughter-in-law which in turn makes the child of more heartfelt love than would have been possible through natural means.

Benson gives us wonderful words to express this state that Naomi has found herself in - "See how God sometimes makes up the want of those relations from whom we expected most comfort, in those from whom we expected least!"

*Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, indeed  
When the plowman shall overtake the one who reaps  
And the treader of grapes him who sows seed  
For this my soul rejoices and my heart leaps*

*The mountains shall drip with sweet wine  
And all the hills shall with it flow  
It will fill the tables with joy at mealtime  
And bring to the peoples a contented and radiant glow*

*The Redeemer will come and restore all once lost  
And He will do it for His people without charge or cost*

## **II. His Name is Obed (verses 16 & 17)**

**<sup>16</sup> Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom,**

This is a symbolic act of adoption as her own. In Genesis 30, when Rachel was unable to bear her own children, she gave her maidservant to Jacob to have one for her. When she did this, she did it with this thought in mind -

“Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear *a child* on my knees, that I also may have children by her.” Genesis 30:3

By having the child born in her lap, it signified that the child belonged to her. This verse about Naomi is similar. Obviously, she would hold the baby and play with it often, but the purpose of specifically saying this in the Bible was to tell us the significance of the act. The record of the words shows the intent of the passage. And the next words continue to confirm this...

**<sup>16</sup> (con't) and became a nurse to him.**

This is not the usual term for "nurse" where a woman would suckle a child. That word is *yanaq*. Rather this is the word *aman*. It means to confirm or to support. It is the same word that is used to describe Mordecai, the uncle of Esther, where it says -

"And *Mordecai* had brought up Hadassah, that *is*, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman *was* lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter."

-Esther 2:7

It is also used in the following passage from Isaiah, which is speaking of the men, not the women, who would tend to Israel in the future -

"Kings shall be your **foster fathers**,  
And their queens your nursing mothers;  
They shall bow down to you with *their* faces to the earth,  
And lick up the dust of your feet.  
Then you will know that I *am* the LORD,  
For they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me." Isaiah 49:23

That passage from Isaiah 49 is actually showing us a portion of the fulfillment of the pictures we're seeing in the book of Ruth right now. Go take a gander there after the sermon today and you can be a leg up on the final sermon we have in Ruth next week.

Naomi, as the *aman*, or nurse, then is the one to raise the child in the law and culture of Israel. She will be the one who willingly bears the responsibility noted in Deuteronomy 6

-

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. <sup>8</sup> You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup> You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Deuteronomy 6:6-9

This is the implication of the words that have been given in this verse. Were it not so, then the Bible would have skipped over it because these are the things any normal mother or grandmother would do. There would be *no need* to mention them otherwise, but because it does, we're asked to consider the words with the additional weight that these things apply to Naomi specifically.

**<sup>17</sup> Also the neighbor women gave him a name,**

Surprisingly, commentators deny this as if it doesn't say what it says. They say that they merely "recommended a name" to Ruth. But it says *they* gave him the name. Literally, they "called out a name." This is the name they called him.

Whether it became a nickname that stuck, or whether it was a name that they called him and so Ruth decided to run with it, we don't know. Either way it was the neighbor women who named him. And we're given a reason why they named him as the verse continues...



17 (con't) **saying, "There is a son born to Naomi."**

He is given a name because he is a son born to Naomi. This is *why* they named him. It doesn't say that they "recommended" he be given a name, but that they called out a name because Naomi has a child. The name is being tied to the fact that he is Naomi's son. And the name that he is given is tied to the fact that he *is a son*. And so, we continue...

17 (con't) **And they called his name Obed.**

The name they called out for this wonderful child is Obed. It is being tied to the fact that he is Naomi's son and to the fact that he is, in fact, a son. And so, they call him Obed, which means "servant." What does his being Naomi's son have to do with him being a servant?

This is what confounds people, but the answer comes from the account itself. Just three verses ago, as soon as it was said that Ruth was given conception and bore a son, the women said, "Blessed *be* the LORD, who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel!"

In the very next verse, it says, "may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age." The son *is* the close relative, the *goel*, who is Naomi's redeemer. He *is* the one who will be the restorer of life and the nourisher of her. He will be a servant to her and so they call him Obed.

As would be expected of the ladies of Bethlehem, they would see him as able to serve her as she grew older and became less and less able to care for herself. There was a point where it would fall to him, as her *goel*, to care for her, to restore her, and to nourish her.

Despite the troubles of old age to come, the Pulpit commentary says that "...now a sealed fountain of reviving waters had been opened in the wilderness."

17 (fin) **He *is* the father of Jesse, the father of David.**

The narrative portion of the book of Ruth ends with a note of resounding greatness. In the previous chapter, Boaz had hinted that a blessing was upon Ruth because of her noble character. He exclaimed in the dark of night at the threshing floor, "Blessed *are* you of the LORD, my daughter!"

In an utterance of prophecy as much as a blessing, he spoke words which he actually became a participant in. Because of his attentive care for her, and because of her true and noble character, the two of them became ancestors of David, the great king of Israel, Israel's sweet psalmist, and a prophet of God.

And in turn, each of them became ancestors of the greatest King of all, and in Whom all of the Messianic prophecies are ultimately directed and fulfilled. Boaz then shows us that there is more than just adherence to the law to bring about what is good and right.

The unnamed closer-relative adhered to the law, but by him Ruth and Naomi remained unredeemed. Following the letter of the law only shows that the law cannot prevent misery. Instead, it only increases it. It only shows us that something more than the law is needed: grace.

Paul tells us this in an exacting way in the New Testament. First he asks if the law, which is good, brings about death. His answer is that no, it is sin which brings about death. Here are his words from Romans 7 -

"Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. <sup>14</sup> For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. <sup>15</sup> For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do." Romans 7:13-15

Later, in the book of Galatians, he shows us then what the law's purpose was -

"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. <sup>22</sup> But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. <sup>23</sup> But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."

-Galatians 3:21-25

Where the closer relative relied solely on the law, only misery for Naomi and Ruth would remain. But Boaz, using the law and adding in grace and love, prevailed over the law. He followed the spirit and intent of the law, not the mere letters which comprise it.

He too could have declined to redeem Ruth, but through granting of grace, a bond of love was formed which prevailed over the law. There was no removal of *his* sandal, there was no spitting in *his* face for not fulfilling his duties. Instead, there was the ability to redeem and there was a desire to redeem. And so, he redeemed.

In this story of redemption, there is found the truth that no law exists which is as strong and as capable as the law of love. Paul tells us this in Romans 13 -

"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup> For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if *there is* any other commandment, are *all* summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>10</sup> Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love *is* the fulfillment of the law." Romans 13:8-10

The closer relative sought to not help his distressed relative by using the provisions of law for his own benefit. In the process, he harmed her. Boaz sought to use the law to help her, and he did it also through an exercise of love. Thus, he not only followed the provisions of the law, he fulfilled the law. Indeed, love is the fulfillment of the law. (Romans 13:10)

In our fallen state, we cannot love perfectly and so we can never perfectly fulfill the law. The law only shows us our desperate need for God's mercy. But God cannot show mercy to the point of violating His own righteousness. Sin must be judged. And so, God sent His Son into the world.

The Bible says, God is love. As this is so, His Son is love and thus He can love perfectly and thus perfectly fulfill the law. This He did and then in the most amazing display of love ever, He willingly gave His own life up in exchange for our sins.

The Bible tells us that if we call out to receive this gift of love and receive Jesus Christ as Lord, we will be saved from God's wrath. I would pray that if you have never asked God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ, that you would do so today. If you do, you will be counted among the redeemed of the Lord. What an offer! Don't wait another day.

**Closing Verse:** *"And now the LORD says,  
Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant,  
To bring Jacob back to Him,  
So that Israel is gathered to Him*

*(For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD,  
And My God shall be My strength)" Isaiah 49:5*

**Next Week:** Ruth 4:18-22 (Perez to David - From the Breaker to the Beloved) (13th Ruth Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. He knows your trials, troubles, and woes and He is there with you through them. So cling to Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **And They Called His Name Obed**

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife  
And when in to her he went  
The LORD gave her conception, a new life  
And she bore a son when her months were spent  
Then the women said to Naomi  
"Blessed *be* the LORD, who has not this day left you  
Without a close relative  
And may in Israel his name be famous too

And may he be to you of life a restorer  
And of your old age a nourisher

For your daughter-in-law, who loves you  
Who has borne him, she is better than seven sons, it's true

Then Naomi took the child  
Who seemed the lifting of her curse  
And laid him on her bosom in a manner mild  
And to him she became a nurse

Also the neighbor women to him a name they gave  
Saying, "There is born to Naomi a son  
And they called his name Obed, meaning a servant or a slave  
He *is* the father of Jesse, the father of David  
In Israel, he became a very great one

From sadness and heartache too great to be measured

Came joy and blessing more than could be thought  
In Naomi's lap was placed a son that she treasured  
A son through whom her redemption was bought  
In the marvelous way God directs our lives' events  
Even the worst of times will be forgotten memories  
Some day the difficulties that we face will all make sense  
We'll understand why we faced such great adversities

Until then we need to trust God, giving to Him our cares  
And hold fast to the promises of His word  
In that treasure to us He gladly shares  
The story of redemption centered on our Lord

Yes, it is all about our Lord Jesus  
He who has done all things wondrously  
And has promised to always care for us

*Hallelujah and Amen...*

## RUTH 4:18-22

### (PEREZ TO DAVID, FROM THE BREAKER TO THE BELOVED)

**Introduction:** At 2:24 on the morning of the 10th of September, I was lying in bed, pondering the enormity of what the book of Ruth pictures. I was so overwhelmed with the all that this story details that I actually covered my face and said, "O God, I am so unworthy before you."

Many views concerning what the book of Ruth is showing us in redemptive history have been given in the past, but none that I know of take into consideration who Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion actually picture. Thus, they miss the actual overall significance of what we're being shown. I will give my thoughts on them, and I believe they are correct, but you must decide for yourself after considering the whole.

The story of Ruth is one of five megillah scrolls read each year by observant Jews. It is read at Pentecost. Thus, it is particularly intended to picture that time in redemptive history which is known as the church age. It is given to show how *Gentiles* were brought under the wings of the Lord and how the *church* will be used to bring the Jewish people back to the Lord.

**Text Verse:** *"God has given them a spirit of stupor,  
Eyes that they should not see  
And ears that they should not hear,  
To this very day." Romans 11:8*

Here He is, tending to an entire panorama of history which is pictured in a short little book, tucked away in a seemingly remote corner of His word, and yet He has also tended to the individuals in the story as well. In other words, just as they are a part of the story, we are too because we're in the greater picture being presented.

And so the minute care of the individuals, and the minute care of the greater story, must equate to the same minute care that He dotes on each of us. Ruth and Naomi had to wait until the end to see the results of their story, but we get to see in advance the results of the pictures they've made. Things that haven't happened yet are still known to us.

And so we can trust that because we are a part of that same larger picture, the end will work out just fine for us. I know that if someone were there ready to take my head off

for my faith, that this thought would be a huge comfort to me at that time. "He has it all under control and this is just a step I was ordained to take."

Israel has probably felt like the punching bag of the world for eons, but they won't always feel that way. Although they don't know it and haven't seen the truth of what Ruth pictures, they will someday and then they, like Naomi, will sit contentedly in the presence of their Redeemer, just as she did.

This is a truth that the Bible presents to us, and it presents it in types and pictures that have to be drawn out in order to understand their meaning. But the meaning is there, and it is to be found in His superior word. And so, let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. The Generations of Perez (verses 18-22)**

**<sup>18</sup> Now this *is* the genealogy of Perez:**

The term "genealogy" is the Hebrew word *toledot*. It is the same word used for the first time in Genesis 2:4, which said, "These are the **generations** of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens," (KJV)

This is the 30th time that a set of genealogies or "generations" has been listed in the Bible. Each comprises either a narration or a list of genealogies which point to God's work in redemptive history. This word translates over into the Greek word *genesis* which is used five times in the New Testament, but only once in the same sense from the Old. That time is Matthew 1:1 -

"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham."

Each generation so far has built upon God's redemptive plans, showing us the main line leading to Christ, such as Noah, Abraham, etc., and those that branch off of that main line, such as Ishmael, Esau, and so on.

This 30th genealogy in the Bible is that of Perez, the son born to Judah and Tamar. From him, a list of 10 names are given. This is a common form of such generational genealogies. From Adam to Noah, 10 generations are listed. From Shem to Terah who is

Abraham's father, there were 10 generations. Here, from Perez the son of Judah, 10 generations will be listed until King David.

<sup>18</sup> (con't) **Perez begot Hezron;**

Perez means to Break through, break out, or break open. He is "The Breaker." Hezron means "Enclosure," such as being enclosed or surrounded by a wall; like a Village.

<sup>19</sup> **Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab;**

Ram means "High," or "Exalted." Amminadab means "My Kinsman Is Noble" or "People of the Prince."

<sup>20</sup> **Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon;**

Nahshon means "Enchanter" or a "Serpent-person," in essence one who foretells. According to Jewish tradition, he was the first man who entered the Red Sea during the Exodus. Therefore, "Nahshon" is used as an appellation of a brave person who goes first in spite of any danger. Salmon means "Garment" or "Clothed."

<sup>21</sup> **Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed;**

Boaz means "In Strength" or "In Him is Strength," meaning "in the Lord is Strength." Obed means "Servant" or "Serving."

<sup>22</sup> **Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.**

Jesse means "My Husband," as well as "Jehovah Exists." As such the name Jesse contains the most profound notion that human marriage reflects divine revelation. That alone should tell us that this story of marriage in the book of Ruth is there to reveal to us a portion of God's divine revelation. David means "Beloved."

Although the dating of this list for Perez cannot be determined precisely, it can come close. William Ussher in his book, *The Annals of the World*, dates the time of Perez to 2236AM and he says that David was born in 2919AM. And so, this chronology here spans about 680 years.



*Give the king Your judgments, O God  
And Your righteousness to the king's Son  
He will judge Your people with righteousness  
And Your poor with justice, so it shall be done*

*The mountains will bring peace under each church steeple  
And the little hills, by righteousness  
He will bring justice to the poor of the people  
The children of the needy He will save and bless*

*And He will break in pieces the oppressor  
They shall indeed always fear You  
As long as the sun and moon endure  
Throughout all the generations through*

## **II. Wonderful Pictures**

The book of Ruth isn't just a love story, or a story of the redemption of one family in Israel. God doesn't waste words; nothing is superfluous. Also, nothing that is needed is left out. Every story is given to show us pictures of other things. Ruth is just a bit longer than many such pictures.

In the first chapter, six people were named. Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon, Chilion, Orpah, and Ruth. The names of two specific locations were given as well. Bethlehem in Judah and Moab. The family was identified further as being in Ephrathah Bethlehem. Each name's meaning was explained.

The story began with the words, "Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled." This then is the time of Israel's pure theocracy. Eventually, this was replaced by the times of the kings. The people got tired of the way things were and asked for a king. At that time, the Lord said this to Samuel -

"And the LORD said to Samuel, 'Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.'" 1 Samuel 8:7

This first period is represented by Elimelech, whose name means "God is King" or "My God is King." Either way, he represents the time from the giving of the Law of Moses, through the time of the judges until the time of the kings. His wife Naomi represents the

Israelite people. Her name means "Pleasantness of the Lord, a perfect name for the people He called as His own.

The two sons then represent the two kingdoms. The first is that of the northern kingdom known as Israel, represented by Chilion. His name means "Wasting Away" and it perfectly describes what happened to these people. They were exiled by Sennacharib, King of Assyria in 722BC and simply wasted away as a kingdom.

Malon, whose name means "Man of Weakness" or "Great Weakness," represents the southern kingdom known as Judah. They were the bearers of the law, something actually termed as *weak* by Paul in Romans 8:3. And again in Hebrews 7:18, it says this about the law -

"For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness..." Hebrew 7:18

This then is a story of the people of Israel throughout their history, represented by Naomi who is the only character consistently noted from the beginning to the end of the book. Even though I showed that the movement of Elimelech and his family from Israel couldn't be considered disobedience, the *picture it makes* is just the opposite. It reflects the continuous disobedience of the people of Israel.

Throughout their history, the biblical record shows that they incessantly disobeyed God's commandments and also joined themselves to foreigners in their rebellion against Him. Thus, they suffered exile. In their exiles the theocracy and the kingdoms died.

First, Chilion, representing the northern tribes, married off to the world and died as a kingdom. The people turned away, just as did Orpah, whose name means "Back of the Neck." They turned away from their religion and their homeland. They were married off to foreigners and the kingdom ended.

I explained that Chilion was the elder of the two, but that doesn't seem to make sense. Didn't the southern kingdom come first? The answer is "no." There is a king who is overlooked by almost everyone, and yet he is identified as a king at the same time as King David. Going to 2 Samuel 2, we read this -

"Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. Only the house of Judah followed David. <sup>11</sup> And the

time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months." 2 Samuel 2:10, 11

The kingdom of Judah came after Saul and during the time of Ishbosheth. This is important later in the story of Ruth. Mahlon, the younger son picturing the younger southern kingdom of Judah, returned after their exile, but only through the Gentiles pictured by Ruth. They were subject to Gentile rule from this point on.

They were no longer a kingdom and thus Malon died. The kingdom ended. However, Gentiles clung to them, just as Ruth clung to Naomi. The Edomites, for example, were assimilated into the Jewish people in 129 BC under the rule of John Hyrcanus. Even the New Testament notes such Gentiles, particularly Roman centurions, but others as well who clung to Israel.

The order is exact. First Elimelech died. He departed while the sons remained. Then the two sons died, but Naomi lived on. Naomi, whom it is agreed reflects the people of Israel, and Ruth whom it is agreed reflects the Gentiles, were being prepared for redemption and it would occur in the land of Israel.

The time that Naomi was said to be in Moab while everything happened was "about 10 years." This number 10, according to EW Bullinger "...signifies *the perfection of Divine order*. ... It implies that nothing is wanting; that the number and order are perfect; that the whole cycle is complete." The cycle was complete and it was time for a new direction.

When Naomi was about to return to Israel, she said to her daughters in law "Go, return each to her mother's house. The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me." (1:8) When she said that, the word for "dead" was *hammetim*. It was plural, not singular. All three entities were dead.

God was about to do a new thing. The time of the weak kingdoms, which were ineffective, had ended. But the line had been preserved, even though the kingship was dead. In Jeremiah 22:24, this is recorded, thus ending Judah's kingship - "As I live," says the LORD, 'though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off.'"

It was this king who was carried away exile to Babylon, thus the kingly line was cut off. In his place, a puppet king, Zedekiah, was installed and he too was eventually removed, the temple was destroyed, and Judah went into exile.

It seemed as if that was the end of the story and that the promise of an everlasting kingship to David had failed, but later in Haggai 2:23, God made a promise to Zerubbabel that someday the kingly line would be restored through him. It would be someone who would come, destroy the Gentile nations, and reestablish Israel's kingship under a true theocracy once again. Here is that verse -

"'In that day,' says the LORD of hosts, 'I will take you, Zerubbabel My servant, the son of Shealtiel,' says the LORD, 'and will make you like a signet *ring*; for I have chosen you,' says the LORD of hosts.'" Haggai 2:23

The signet was promised to be reestablished through him. His name means, "Seed of Babylon." He is the link between the genealogies listed in Matthew and Luke. Those records went in different directions at David, one through his son Solomon and one through his son Nathan, but they reunited in Zerubbabel. The line would continue until the fullness of time would come and Christ would be born.

It is at this time that the story says that Ruth heard that "the LORD had visited His people by giving them bread." The word for "visited" indicates a divine superintendence over the affairs that were occurring. Bread has come to Bethlehem. Jesus, the Bread of Life has arrived.

Upon their return, Naomi said that she wished to be called Mara, not Naomi. She is Bitterness from the Almighty, not Pleasantness of the Lord. Though the name isn't used again, indicating that she is still Pleasantness of the Lord *to the Lord*, this state of bitterness remained for her until the final part of the drama was realized.

At this time, Boaz enters the picture, which was at the beginning of Chapter 2. His name means "In Him is strength." Where Malon, picturing the law, was weak, He pictures Christ who comes in the strength of the Lord. It is His genealogies which are reunited in Zerubbabel. He is the one who will bring back a theocratic kingdom. He is introduced "at the time of the barley harvest."

Barley, as I explained, is the crop of hairy ears. It signifies awareness. In this case, the time of spiritual awareness has arrived.

This is at the time of the Passover and the Feast of Firstfruits, both fulfilled in the work of Christ. He is our Passover Lamb and He is the Firstborn from the dead.

Ruth is an insert story. A story which really occurred in redemptive history at the time of the judges, but it pictures much of redemptive history. Ruth 2 & 3 are an insert into the insert story. What does that mean? To answer, one needs to remember that Boaz showed up at the time of the Barley harvest.

However, it says at the end of chapter 2 that, "Ruth stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest **and** wheat harvest." First there is the barley harvest, Christ. Then there is the wheat harvest which pictures the church age. This is symbolized by Pentecost, which is 50 days after the Feast of Firstfruits. It is when the Holy Spirit came to dwell among men.

Because it says that Ruth remained in Boaz' fields through both the barley and wheat harvests, it is speaking of the entire church age. But, the events of chapter 2, pictured Christ's passion. We saw this in the meal with the bread, the sour wine, and the parched grain.

Again, in chapter 3, it said "Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, *is he* not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor." This then isn't chronological. The wheat harvest comes after the Barley harvest even though the end of chapter 2 mentioned that Ruth remained in Boaz' fields throughout both harvests, barley and wheat.

In other words, the events of chapter 2, chapter 3, and even a portion of chapter 4 are all an insert, leading to the final events of chapter 4. Christ suffered his passion in chapter 2 and the Gentiles joined him in this, receiving His work and asking to be brought under His redemptive care in chapter 3.

Before that happened, Ruth had attempted to step back from the picture and let Naomi be the one to unite with Boaz. However, this was not the plan. The redemption had to come through Ruth. This is why the Author identified Ruth as a Moabitess four separate times in Chapter 2, but never once in chapter 3.

The plan of redemption means that our foreign status is never considered. With Christ's work finished, we are no longer strangers. Only in chapter 4 is Ruth again tied to Moab. This is done three times to show that it is through the Christ of the church that God would actually redeem Naomi; the people of Israel.

And that then brings us to the symbolism of Chapter 4 after that insert. Ruth had asked to come under the wings of Boaz in chapter 3. However, Boaz let her know that there

was a closer redeemer. And so Boaz had to go to the gates of the city, the place where legal matters are settled to first to straighten out that matter.

This pictures a most unusual encounter which is found in the book of John. There in John 12, it says this -

"Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. <sup>21</sup> Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

<sup>22</sup> Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

<sup>23</sup> But Jesus answered them, saying, 'The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.'"

-John 12:20-24

Before He could be our Redeemer, He had to prove He was qualified where no one else could qualify. He had to die in fulfillment of the law in order for the Gentiles to come under His wings. Everything had to be fulfilled in a particular order, one thing leading to another.

And so, as Boaz went to the gate of Bethlehem, Christ went to the cross. The word for gate is *shaar*. It is the same word used for example in Genesis 28:17 when speaking of the Gate of heaven when Jacob said this -

And he was afraid and said, "How awesome *is* this place! This *is* none other than the house of God, and this *is* the gate of heaven!"

In that Genesis sermon, we saw that the gate pictured the work of Christ. The same is true here. The place of heaven's judgment is being pictured. There at the gate Boaz awaits the closer *goel*. When he shows up, he isn't identified by name. Instead, a term is used which conceals who he is while revealing his nature.

When called, ten witnesses are brought in. Who are these ten witnesses? They are the Ten Commandments, the representatives of the entire Law of Moses. They are what witness to the standards of God.

The nearer *goel* is given the details concerning "Naomi who has come back from the country of Moab." In other words, the people of Israel. They have an inheritance that is

in need of redemption. They have no theocracy and no kingdom. To this unnamed goel, the right to redeem is offered. Who is he? He is *man under law*.

He is *any man* who is under the Law. In other words, any Israelite male living under the law. Why is he a closer relative to Naomi? Because he is born of a father and a mother of Israel and thus a complete blood relative. Christ is also a near kinsman, but he is only related through the mother. Therefore, any man under law who can meet the demands of the law, has the right to redeem.

Boaz explains his right to him, and he agrees to redeem. However, Boaz then throws in the fact that Ruth is a Gentile wife of Mahlon, and he must marry her to raise up a son for the name of the dead. With this the redeemer resigns his rights. Why?

The answer is that even if he thought he could keep the law perfectly, as the young man who came to Jesus did, there was more involved than he realized. Jesus highlighted this to him. He is noted in all three of the synoptic gospels. Luke records it this way –

"And he said, 'All these things I have kept from my youth.'

<sup>22</sup> So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, 'You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.'

<sup>23</sup> But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich."

-Luke 18:21-23

Truly, no one can meet the full measure of God's law. Thus, Israel was given grace once a year on the Day of Atonement. Where they failed under the law, if they confessed, they were forgiven. Thus, the law was fulfilled on an individual basis through the death of a substitute.

All failed and all either confessed or they were not forgiven. They were considered free from guilt because of this wonderful provision of grace which came year by year. In the case of the man at the gates with Boaz, he was told that he would have to acquire Ruth. She is a Gentile. And the law anticipated that Gentiles would be brought into the commonwealth of Israel.

This is noted throughout the entire Old Testament, and even in the law itself. First, in Isaiah 49:6 it says this -

"Indeed He says,  
'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant  
To raise up the tribes of Jacob,  
And to restore the preserved ones of Israel;  
I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles,  
That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.'" Isaiah 49:6

In Romans 15, Paul cites the law in Deuteronomy to also show that this is true. There in Deuteronomy 32:43, it says -

"Rejoice, O Gentiles, *with* His people;  
For He will avenge the blood of His servants,  
And render vengeance to His adversaries;  
He will provide atonement for His land *and* His people."

Man under law, the nearer *goel*, had the grace of God extended to him on the Day of Atonement, but that went no further. He could not redeem the Gentiles. The ten witnesses, the Ten Commandments - representing the law, testified against him.

Only one who had perfectly fulfilled the law could redeem the land, qualify to marry Ruth, and raise up a son in the name of the dead husband, representing the dead kingship of Judah. And only this person could also redeem the Gentiles. Only Jesus qualifies. Only He was born under the law, but without Adam's inherited sin.

Only He is known to be in the kingly line which descends from both Nathan and Solomon as testified through His genealogies which meet at Zerubbabel. Only He fulfilled the law as testified by the gospel records. Only He gave His life in fulfillment of that same law. And therefore, only He is able to redeem. No other person could in the past, and no other person will ever be able to. Only Jesus Christ is qualified.

The nearer *goel*, Man under Law, realized this and thus he plucked off his sandal and handed it Boaz, to Him in Whom is Strength, and in picture - to Christ. In that act, he gave up any future claim to redeem and faded out of history.

We need to remember here what Naomi said to Ruth after the night at the threshing floor. In 3:18 she said, "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day."



While visiting the church during that Genesis 3 sermon, my friend Sergio was checking the Hebrew and Greek of each passage. At the end of that sermon, he came to me and noted that the word Naomi used for "finish" is the Hebrew word *kalah*. It is the same word used in Genesis 2:1, 2 which says -

"Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were **finished**.<sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God **ended** His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done."

This same word used by Naomi is translated in the Greek Old Testament as *teleo*, which not coincidentally, is the last word Jesus uttered on the cross as is recorded in John 19:30 -

"So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, **"It is finished!"** And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit." (Tetelestai/Teleo) John 19:30

The rest which Ruth looked for, the rest that Naomi looked for, and the rest which man has looked for since his fall, it is the same rest which became available to man at the death of Christ on the cross. The Lord finished His work and offered that rest to man.

Man lost that offer at the fall and has sought it out ever since. Christ, through His satisfaction of the law, has restored that opportunity to enter God's rest once again. In Him, it is finished -once and forever.

Not too long ago, I went to a synagogue to observe their Shabbat service in respect to a friend that was killed. After leaving, the Jewish man that drove me back home told me, "The rabbi of the synagogue perfectly fulfills the 613 laws of the Torah."

How sad it is that they believe this. There is no man other than Christ who ever did or who ever could. There is no longer a Day of Atonement either. That was fulfilled in Christ. If this is not true, then no person is saved or ever will be saved.

He is our Atonement and apart from Him there is only separation from God. We all must take off our sandal and acknowledge that we have no right to step into His place. The ground where He stands truly is holy. Thus, after ceding his right to redeem, the unknown *goel* is dropped from history, never to be mentioned again. The law is fulfilled and annulled. It is finished.

It is obsolete; it has expired. The law can no longer provide the grace it once did on the Day of Atonement. It is a heresy to claim that the Day of Atonement is yet to be fulfilled. It is finished. And so, Boaz makes the statement -

"You *are* witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that *was* Chilion's and Mahlon's, from the hand of Naomi. <sup>10</sup> Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate. You *are* witnesses this day." Ruth 4:9, 10

The word for "dead" here is not plural though like it was in verse 1:8 when Naomi spoke to her daughters in law. It is singular. All are one and all have been acquired in one great act by Christ. Elimelech, the theocracy; Chilion, the older brother and the first kingdom; Mahlon, the younger brother and the second kingdom; and Ruth, the Gentile people - are all His.

What this means is that even the Orpah's of the world can be redeemed through Christ. He, in one act, redeemed all people for Himself and all rights to the kingdoms of both Israel and Judah, along with the theocratic rule of Elimelech. In other words, Christ is Lord. He is Jehovah incarnate.

Ruth, the Gentile who has come under His wings will be His wife to raise up the name of the dead - all of the dead mentioned. But this leaves the seemingly odd point from the previous sermon about the child born to them, Obed, being *Naomi's* redeemer.

Obed the Servant is introduced, and Boaz just as suddenly leaves the picture. Obed is Christ, the Servant. Just as numerous children were born and who pictured Christ at their birth - Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Benjamin, Perez, and others, Obed now fills this role. He is the Servant that Isaiah speaks of many times and the one Paul tells us about in Romans 15:8, 9 -

"Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* to the fathers, <sup>9</sup> and that the Gentiles might glorify God for *His* mercy, as it is written:  
'For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles,  
And sing to Your name.'" Romans 15:8, 9

This is the reason why Obed was named by the women of Israel and why they exclaimed, "... may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him."

After the church age, Israel will be restored to life. This is depicted in placing Obed in Naomi's bosom. After all the years of separation and bitterness, Naomi will be redeemed through the child, and Israel will be redeemed through the Servant. Thus, it is an implicit reference to the fact that the law is fulfilled and that this child, Christ, is the embodiment of the law.

This is actually seen in the book of Revelation. During the coming tribulation period, Israel will call on Christ and will be saved in and through this time of trial. There in Revelation, it says this -

"But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent." Revelation 12:14

Just as the women prophesied over Naomi that the child would be a nourisher of Naomi's old age, so Christ will nourish the redeemed of Israel through the tribulation period and into the kingdom age to come. The pattern is exact, and we have been shown in advance of its coming.

And this truth was anticipated in the six measures of barley that passed from Ruth to Naomi, from a Gentile to a Jew in chapter 3. It came from Boaz, picturing Christ, it went through Ruth, picturing the Gentiles, and it was received by Naomi, picturing the bitter Jewish people, awaiting their redemption.

As we saw and as the Bible shows us, despite his intentions to be betrothed to the church, Christ has still maintained compassion for, and a desire to support, Israel until they receive Him as their rightful Redeemer and their King.

It is through the same grace which saved and established the church that the remnant of Israel will be saved, not through the law. Paul explains this in Romans 10:4, where he says, "For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

We see in this picture that the church was redeemed first through Christ and only afterward will national Israel be redeemed. This is the order which Paul meticulously

explains in Romans 9-11 and which also was pictured in the stories of Joseph's life back in Genesis. It is also mentioned by the prophet Micah -

"Therefore He shall give them up,  
Until the time *that* she who is in labor has given birth;  
Then the remnant of His brethren  
Shall return to the children of Israel.

<sup>4</sup> And He shall stand and feed *His flock*  
In the strength of the LORD,  
In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God;  
And they shall abide,  
For now He shall be great  
To the ends of the earth;

<sup>5</sup> And this *One* shall be peace." Micah 5:3-5

This prophecy from Micah is speaking not of just the time after the Babylonian exile, but of the time after the Roman exile. We know this because only after Ruth becomes Boaz' wife and after the time of the entire harvest season does Messiah, the greater David rule.

Christ came the first time to serve and to suffer. He will come again to rule and reign. And this is why the narrative closes out with the name of David followed immediately by his genealogy. First, it says, "'There is a son born to Naomi.' And they called his name Obed. He *is* the father of Jesse, the father of David."

This is given to show the record leading up to David, who is the next major figure to picture Christ in the Bible. His life will anticipate the great coming King who will unite Israel under one eternal kingdom, who will shepherd His people, who will root out every form of wickedness, and whose throne will be established in righteousness.

David is noted here at the end of Ruth because of God's promises to him which are recorded in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 -

"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

<sup>13</sup> He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. <sup>15</sup> But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I

removed from before you. <sup>16</sup> And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.'""

Christ is at this time the Lord of the Gentile church, but he is not yet reigning on His throne from Jerusalem and amidst His people Israel. However, from the look of things, it seems like that is coming soon.

Finally, the book of Ruth closes out with the ten generations from Perez to David. It almost seems like an afterthought and most scholars say it was added later and has no bearing on the narrative. But this is the furthest thing from the truth. If your commentary says that, put a big fat "X" through it... make it a red one for emphasis. This genealogy is an integral part of the book of Ruth and is given for several important reasons.

The first is that there is a requirement under the law which says,

"One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his *descendants* shall enter the assembly of the LORD."  
-Deuteronomy 23:2

One of illegitimate birth is excluded until the tenth generation. Again, the law says,

"None of you shall approach anyone who is near of kin to him, to uncover his nakedness: I *am* the LORD. <sup>7</sup> The nakedness of your father or the nakedness of your mother you shall not uncover." Leviticus 18:6, 7

Even though Perez was born before the law, his birth was still considered illegitimate *under the law*. And so David's right to rule could be considered invalid. Therefore, the genealogy is given to show that he is in fact the 10th generation *from* that illegitimate union between Judah and Tamar recorded Genesis 38. Thus, David is made known to be qualified to enter the assembly.

Likewise, the law says this in Leviticus 18:11 - "The nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, begotten by your father—she *is* your sister—you shall not uncover her nakedness." Abraham was married to his sister, Sarah, the daughter of his father. Boaz is recorded as the tenth generation *from* Abraham and therefore David is qualified in this regard as well.

Thirdly, this genealogy bears an unusual stamp that has been missing since before the

fall of man. As I said earlier, the word for "genealogy" or "generations" is *toledot*. The first time the word was used was in Genesis 2:4 - "These are the **generations** of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,..." (KJV)

The word *toledot* in Genesis 2:4 was *prior* to the fall of man. Its spelling was *tav, vav dalet, lamed, vav, tav*. In other words, there are 2 vavs in the spelling. The next time the word was used was in Genesis 5:1, *after* the fall of man, and was spelled with one *vav*. The second *vav* fell out of the word just as man fell in the garden.

*Vav* is the sixth letter of the Hebrew aleph-bet and it is pictured by a tent peg. The number 6 in the Bible represents "man" such as man being created on the 6<sup>th</sup> day. So you see "fallen man" is what's being relayed. The second *vav* fell out of the word, just as the man fell from grace.

The word *toledot* is used 39 times throughout the Old Testament in various places when referring to different groups of people, but it is never spelled with two *vavs* again until this genealogy at the end of Ruth. In every occurrence between Genesis and Ruth, and those after Ruth, one or both of the *vavs* is missing.

But in this genealogy, the lineage of King David is given and the second *vav* is restored. Up until then, God was working through various people and various covenants. These were to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses. The final covenant is to David.

As I said at the beginning of this sermon, this is the 30th time that the word "toledot" is used in the Bible. As always, when considering a number, I go to Bullinger's work to see what he says about that number. He says that 30 "...being 3 x 10, denotes in a higher degree the perfection of Divine order, as marking the right moment."

And doesn't that fit perfectly? The 30th instance of the word is the right moment for the *vav* to be reinstated into the line leading to Christ. David is the final peg in the line of covenants prior to Christ's coming. At this time, the second *vav* is reintroduced to the word *toledot* to indicate that the restoration of fallen man would come through the line of David.

In all, these are the only two times in the whole Bible that the word *toledot* is spelled with two *vav*'s. Thus, they should form both a contrast and a confirmation. In contrast, one was before the fall of man, the other was after it.

In one, man had no knowledge of good and evil; after it, he possessed it. In one, there was no need of a Redeemer; in the other there was such a need. In the first, man was destined to live forever; in the second man was destined to die.

In other words, everything that was possessed before the fall is in contrast to that after the fall. However, in confirmation of the two, they show that God has a plan and that it is being worked out. What was lost will be restored.

The Lord that was seen in the Garden is anticipated in the restored earth. Man was whole and man will be made whole again. It is all seen in this obscure word hidden in this genealogy of Perez through David.

The 39 *toledots* in the Bible correspond to the 39 books of the Old Testament. It is as if they are anticipating the coming Christ and His work. The fortieth such generation is the one in Matthew. To understand the significance of the number 40 we go again to Bullinger –

He says that 40 is associated "with a period of *probation, trial, and chastisement*. It is the product of 5 and 8, and points to the action of *grace* (5), leading to and ending in *revival and renewal* (8)."

In Christ, the time of trial and chastisement has ended. In Christ there is grace, revival, and renewal. If you are born again through Him, you are no longer fallen, but complete and alive forevermore. The likeness of God that was given at the creation was lost, but that likeness is restored in us when we call on Jesus as our Savior.

That's what these little hidden things in the Bible are telling us. Paul explains this mystery in 1 Corinthians 15:48, 49 –

As *was* the *man* of dust (that's Adam - the fallen man, the man without the *tav*), so also *are* those *who are made* of dust (there is something missing); and as *is* the heavenly *Man* (full and complete), so also *are* those *who are* heavenly. <sup>49</sup> And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust (fallen and earthly), we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man* (restored and complete).

-1 Corinthians 15:48, 49 (Charlie Garrett's parenthetical inserts.)

Forth, the ten names of this genealogy, make a picture of the work of Christ to come. They are Perez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, and

David. Translated, they say, "Break Through, Enclosure, Exalted, My Kinsman is Nobel, Enchanter, Clothed, In Him is Strength, Servant, My Husband, Beloved"

Obviously, we have to insert our connectors to these names, and without trying to stretch it too far, it would then say, "The One who broke through death is exalted, He is my noble Kinsman, the foreseer, clothed in the strength of the Lord, a Servant is my husband, beloved." It is a picture of the work of the Lord Jesus.

And a fifth reason for this genealogy goes back to the story of Judah and Tamar. In that story, Tamar received the pledge of Judah which consisted of his signet, cord, and staff. The Hebrew term was *eravon*, a guarantee or a deposit. That deposit belonged to Tamar until it was returned to Judah.

That pictured the church age as we saw then. This genealogy and the story of Ruth takes us from the church age through to the return of the people of Israel and the time of the Kingdom age. The placing of Obed in Naomi's lap pictures the redemption of Israel of the future, after the church age. This then is looking forward to the tribulation and then the millennial reign of Christ.

And so the genealogy is taking us from Perez, the Breaker of death, all the way through to David, the Beloved King on His throne - each picturing Christ - from advent to advent. The interim period *is* the church age. There are probably other reasons for this genealogy, but those are the five points that I gleaned from it.

Thus ends the book of Ruth and the beautiful story of redemption of both Jew and Gentile by the work of Christ. Unfortunately, in order to keep this to a manageable length, a lot of details were skipped over, but there is one that I'd like to share before we close.

In the first Ruth sermon, I mentioned a series of gender discords in the book. In the first chapter, there were nine of them. Seven were spoken by Naomi and two by the Author of the book. Then there is another in relation to Boaz where a word was used to describe him in the masculine once and in the feminine once.

Finally, there is one in chapter 4. Nobody has ever been sure of why they are there and many speculations have been given. However, after much thought and loss of sleep, I believe there may be an answer. These are the discords that are recorded:



In 1:8-13 the two daughters-in-law are referred to by Naomi in the masculine five times. In those same verses, Naomi refers to her sons in the feminine twice. Then in 1:19-22 the Author refers to Naomi and Ruth as they travel from Moab to Bethlehem twice in the masculine. In 4:22, Rachel and Leah, the wives of Jacob are referred to in the masculine.

The reason for these discords, I believe, can be seen when compared to *who the people picture*. The sons of Naomi picture the two kingdoms. Therefore, any future sons ostensibly born to replace them would also picture kingdoms. The word "kingdom" in the Bible is a feminine word *malakhut*, and therefore, the sons are spoken of in the feminine.

Naomi pictures the people of Israel. Ruth pictures the Gentiles uniting with the Lord God of Israel. Orpah pictures the Gentiles of the world not yet united to Christ. Leah represents the people under the law, as we saw many times during her life, and Rachel pictures those under grace, again as we saw many times.

In the Bible, people groups are always referred to in the masculine - such as *goyim* - "Gentiles," or *anashim* - "peoples." This then is why those gender discords are listed in the book of Ruth. It is referring to those bodies or groups of people *whom* they represent. This fits the picture, and it gives an explanation, a reasonable explanation, for those instances of gender discord.

The other gender discord was in the words used to describe Boaz. In 2:1 it was masculine and in 3:2 it was feminine. I explained what I believe was the reason for that gender discord in detail when we did that sermon.

In these instances of gender discord, one has to assume that the pictures I've presented are correct and that the plan of redemption shown in Ruth is as I've described. They would also have to acknowledge that the dispensational model of history is valid. I believe all of these are sound. But each of us is accountable for what we accept. To me, I firmly believe that God still has a plan for Israel.

No other view of the Bible makes sense without violating Scripture to such a point that anything can mean anything. God is ever faithful and true, even to His unfaithful people whom He has called. He loves them. And He loves us as well, even enough to allow us to make our own choices.

The greatest choice of all, and the choice that will mark our eternal destiny, is what we will do about Jesus Christ. In the end, this wonderful book He has given us is all about Him.

**Closing Verse:** *And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:*

*“The Deliverer will come out of Zion,*

*And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;*

*<sup>27</sup> For this is My covenant with them,*

*When I take away their sins. Romans 11:26, 27*

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. He knows your trials, troubles, and woes and He is there with you through them. So cling to Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **The Generations of Perez**

Now this is the genealogy of Perez:

It is listed as follows, just as the Bible sez

Perez begot Hezron; Hezron begot Ram next  
And Ram begot Amminadab, so says the text

After that Amminadab begot Nahshon, as the Bible so relates  
And Nahshon begot Salmon, telling us names but no dates

Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed  
Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David

These are the generations which are found in Ruth  
And they are carefully placed here for us to learn  
They show us glorious things and reveal deep truth  
And knowing their meaning should make our hearts yearn

Some glorious day, we will be raptured out of here  
We will be in the presence of our wondrous Lord  
And shortly afterward purified Israel will shout and cheer  
When Christ returns to them, so says the Word

And we have it all laid out before us  
Here in detail in the Bible's pages  
All of it pointing to our Lord Jesus  
The plan of redemption for all peoples and all ages  
Hallelujah to our great Lord and our King!  
Hallelujah, let us rejoice and to Him make noise and sing!

*Hallelujah and Amen...*