

GOD IS JUST
1 John 1:9

GOD IS LOVE
1 John 4:8

BELIEVER'S
BIBLE
LESSONS

BOAZ and RUTH

AUGUST VAN RYN

Boaz and Ruth

— OR —

Redemption

Rest . . .

Riches

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AUGUST VAN RYN

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P r e f a c e

THIS lovely tale, so charming in its simplicity, amazes the student of Scripture with its tremendous comprehensive scope. It does not merely tell the story how a poor girl, through a chain of fortuitous circumstances, met a rich young man, fell in love with him and he with her; eventually married him and lived happily ever after (which in itself is very interesting and absorbing); but it unfolds the supreme story of divine redemption. It brings out, in intricate perfection and in full consistency with Scripture everywhere else, the ever stirring truth of how our God brings sinful man to Himself—from ruin to redemption, to rest and to riches. How man, once an outcast and a stranger to God, is saved, enriched and united to Christ forever, to share His love and His glory as eternal ages roll.

In fact, we trust we shall see that this intriguing little book of Ruth covers, in its unfolding of love's romance, the whole truth of God from the beginning of the Bible to the end. That it tells, in its dispensational scope, not only the whole tale of man's sin and God's grace, but includes as well the history of the Jew, the Gentile and the Church of God, though in some case, the references may be very brief.

I have found the most thrilling joy in studying afresh this truly rich portion of God's word, and again and again I was led to exclaim to myself: "Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" May the Lord thrill your heart, too, as you read this volume, as I can sincerely say He has done mine.

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CHAPTER 1

Location of Ruth in Canon of Scripture

THE location of Ruth in the canon of Scripture is in itself instructive. It falls between the book of Judges and the books of Samuel. The books of Samuel introduce the “King” after God’s own heart—David—who is a fruitful type of Christ as God’s king over Israel in a day yet future. On the other hand, the book of Judges twice significantly makes the statement that, “in those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6 and 21:25). In fact, it is that very sentiment which concludes the sad account of Israel’s sin and departure from God, as recorded in Judges.

As the books of Samuel therefore look forward to Israel’s future under God’s King David—Israel’s Messiah and Lord—so the book of Judges looks back to her dark past—her apostasy from God, which is now the cause of her being driven out of the land of Canaan where, according to Hosea 3:4, Israel truly has no king, but is walking in selfwill and sin. In between these two is the book of Ruth, covering the interval between Israel’s past and her future; or, in other words, the present day of grace. Therefore we are quite justified in applying the precious truth unfolded in Ruth to ourselves today, for all Scripture is given for our learning and our profit. Directly, in its interpretation, the book of Ruth unfolds the history of Israel, as we want to show in the closing chapters of this volume.

It can easily be ascertained that the time in which this incident in connection with Boaz and

Ruth actually occurred was in the early days of the period covered by the book of Judges. For we are definitely told in Matthew 1:5 that Boaz was the son of Rahab, who in his turn married Ruth. Since Rahab appears in Scripture at the time Joshua captured Jericho, which must have been perhaps 50 years or more before the book of Judges begins, and inasmuch as Boaz was Rahab's son, it is evident that the story of Boaz and Ruth happened very early after Israel's possession of the land of Canaan.

In this connection, it is worthwhile noticing that in the genealogy at the close of Ruth, which is also found exactly alike in Matt. 1:4-6, many generations are left out. For Ruth 4:20-22 gives only five generations, and yet these cover a period of more than 450 years, as we learn from Acts 13:20. This proves that a number of generations are omitted. I mention this to show that God is not interested in His Word in giving us every detail, but rather in bringing before us the spiritual truths He desires to convey. The names that *are* mentioned are so given to emphasize the silver thread of redemption which runs throughout this little book.

CHAPTER 2

Departure from God

Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.

And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth; and they dwelled there about ten years.

And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband" (Ruth 1:1-5).

There are many lessons which serve for our moral and spiritual profit suggested in this book of Ruth. May the Lord anoint our eyes to see them, and give us hearts to value them! Here is a story of sin and failure on man's part, but of rich grace on God's part.

"There was a famine in the land." A famine in Bethlehem, the meaning of which is "the house of bread." That surely is strange. How could there

be a famine in the house of bread? I believe, beloved, that the famine is often in *our* souls, for there never is any lack with God. Elimelech left the place where God was known and honored for a land of idolatry and empty religious profession. Yet had not God said to His people, "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed?" (Psalm 37:3).

A backslider slides back, not because there is something wrong with God's ways, but because there is with his. Elimelech's forefather Abraham also left the land at one time because of famine (Gen. 12:10) and, like Elimelech, to his great loss. There he neglected his tent and his altar—he lost his touch with God and lost his pilgrim character of separation to God. It is so with us when we turn away from God and from His Word. Elimelech left the land of the covenant and died an exile in the land of condemnation.

What if there were a famine in the land? We may apply this famine to the troubrous circumstances, to the trials of life through which God often leads His people (for in our Christian life we often are in heaviness through manifold temptations). God allows and ordains these afflictions to test us. We are not to run away from them but ever to remember that the trial of our faith, when patiently endured, is much more precious than that of gold which perisheth, and shall be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Later on Naomi confessed that they had gone out "full" (chap. 1:21). Yes, when the believer is restored to God he will ever take the blame upon himself and own that God is good; that His mercy endureth forever.

They went to sojourn in Moab. Moab was the land of "ease," according to Jeremiah 48:11. It also stands in Scripture for mere empty profession, as seen in Judges chapter 3, where the king of Moab and all his men are said to be fat men. Fatness is usually the result of a lack of activity—of taking in food and not working it off in exercise, thus picturing spiritually mere profession without a corresponding life of devotion and service. The believer, as pictured in Elimelech, when he drifts away from God, drifts into an empty profession, seeking his ease in this world, instead of being awake and afire for God.

Elimelech only intended to sojourn for a while, but he continued there and finally they dwelled there. They settled down, apparently satisfied to be out of touch with God, in disobedience to His revealed will. And some of them never returned as many a backslider never gets back to God. Elimelech's experience is true of so many of God's dear saints. There may even be a measure of apparent zeal, yet the heart be out of touch with Him. How much profession there often is; how little real confession! The three men never got back. Even so many a Christian's light goes out in obscure darkness.

One gets the impression that Elimelech's defection was of long standing because he named his sons Mahlon and Chilion, names given as meaning "sick" and "pining." Away back at their birth there seems to have been in their father's soul that hopeless, defeatist attitude of the wanderer. His heart was away from God long before his feet followed. It is so with every backslider. A Christian never falls or fails suddenly; such a thing is practically always

the out-come of a course of action. Hence it is so necessary to "watch and pray," lest we are overcome by temptation.

Instead of finding relief and plenty in Moab, it became a graveyard for that family. Truly this world is little more than a cemetery, not only for the body, but also for the soul of the saint that gets away from the Lord. Many a bright witness for Christ, many a once happy believer has been buried under the rubbish of sin, or the shallow religion of this world.

All they found in Moab was want, woe and widowhood.

The family of Elimelech was blotted out. Only God could build it again. Only God can bring life out of death. Only He can save a dead sinner; only He can revive and restore to vigorous spiritual life a backslidden believer.

CHAPTER 3

The Tale of the Three Widows

Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab; for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread.

Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, go, return each to her mother's house; the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.

The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voice and wept.

And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters; why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have a husband also tonight, and should bear sons;

Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it GRIEVETH ME much for your

sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.

And they lifted up their voice, and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth CLAVE unto her.

And she said, — Behold, thy sister-in-law IS GONE BACK unto her people, and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law.

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

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

When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her” (Ruth 1:6-18).

Here is the grieving widow (v. 13), Said Naomi, “it grieveth me much.”

Here is the leaving widow (v. 15), Orpah went back to her gods.

Here is the cleaving widow (v. 14), Ruth clave unto her.

Naomi arose, for she had heard that there was bread in Bethlehem, in her old home. Even so did the prodigal return, when he remembered that in the Father’s house there was bread enough and to spare. Neither the prodigal, nor Naomi, returned

at first because they realized their sin, but rather because their need drew them. It was not the strokes of chastisement in Moab, but the good news from Bethlehem—good news from a far country—that moved Naomi's heart and then her feet. Even so it is the story of God's love in Christ, as He provides for men the bread of life, that draws souls to God.

So they start out, but all of them do not get there. They went on their way to the land of Judah, but one of the three turned back. All mankind is divided into the three classes represented by these three widows. Some are backsliders, who once knew God; others are unbelievers, perhaps moved by the gospel, but not enough to take the decisive step; and Ruth, of course, pictures the true believer who turns in faith to God and is gloriously saved and blessed.

Naomi is the backslider. She once was named Naomi—pleasant—but she tells us that the name Mara—bitter—suits her better. She is still away from God in heart, and does her level best to drive her daughters-in-law away from Him too. She bewails the fact that she has no more sons to provide husbands for them, nor any hope of ever being able to do so. She talks of things connected with *this* life only, which is surely typical of her low spiritual state. As though husbands and children are the only matters that count in the life of a believer. How much Christians, too, are often concerned about the things of this world—their jobs, their business, their families. Is that not a sign of a backslidden spiritual condition? Did not our Lord say, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you?"

Orpah went back. Some give the meaning of her name as "the back of the neck," and she certainly turned that to God, for she turned away to go to her own land and her gods, as Naomi urged her to do. Orpah went back when pled with. Alas, today millions refuse to come to Christ when pled with to do so. How much greater shall their condemnation be!

It is true Orpah wept as she departed; but still, she departed. The feelings may be touched, the emotions stirred, yet the heart refuse to respond to the grace of God.

Orpah left, but Ruth clung. With decision came division between the two sisters-in-law. It is ever so. There is still a division because of Him. To cling to Christ, to trust Him as Savior and Lord, often means separation from those dear by the ties of nature. But, "if any man does not leave father and mother, wife or children, for My sake, says our Lord, he is not worthy of Me."

Imagine Naomi urging Orpah to return to idolatry. It only shows how far a believer can get away from the Lord. May we take warning from this, and seek to keep close to His side!

CHAPTER 4

Ruth's Amazing Confession of Faith

These wonderful words uttered by Ruth are so precious—there is nothing like them anywhere in literature—I would like to record them once more:

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

Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me” (Ruth 1:16-17).

Ruth is the cleaving widow.

She clings to the God she barely knows as yet. She is not thinking of husbands, as Naomi is. Somehow her heart had been attracted to the true God, even as now the Spirit draws precious souls to Christ. Ruth determines to make this God her God; to know Him better and to follow in His way. She did this in spite of all dissuasion and discouragement to the contrary. And her great confession shows she knew what many believers today seem to realize or consider so little, namely, that following Him involves not merely a share in the blessings He bestows, but also will mean self-denial and sacrifice. She seemed to sense that a believer should be a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, as well as of its benefits. (II Tim. 1:8).

In her famous decision there was involved a

number of vital considerations, even as there is today in the case of every true confessor of Christ.

1. There was *renunciation*, for, like Abraham, Ruth too was leaving her country, her kindred and her father's house. (Gen. 12:1). It costs something to follow Christ.

2. It meant *association* with the people of God, which is no slight thing in itself. It entails fellowship and joy, but it also calls forth every fiber of moral stamina and Christian love and forbearance, for saints can be terribly trying oftentimes, without half trying. Moses decided to suffer affliction with the people of God, but the record shows he got most of it *from* the people of God. Yet God in His wisdom and love brings us into fellowship with other believers that we may learn to consider one another, and to exercise patience, yieldedness and gentleness. Contact with God's people knocks off the corners, and greatly aids in the process of making us Christ-like.

3. Ruth's confession involved *separation*, for she turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God and (in our case) to wait for His Son from heaven. (I Thess. 1:9-10).

4. Her choice meant *appropriation*, for in her faith she laid hold on the blessing and favor of God, which proved to be far more wonderful than she could ever have dreamed at the moment she made her memorable decision. We too know so little, even yet, of all the joy and glory that shall be our portion eternally as the result of our choice of Christ as our Savior.

5. And, of course, it meant her *salvation*. Salvation from sin and idolatry; salvation all along the way as God graciously led her; and final union with her Lover, even as our salvation shall be complete when we are united to Christ, on the great wedding day in glory.

6. *Consecration* also stands out in this maiden's avowal of trust. Whatever might lie ahead, she was ready to face it; she intended to pay the price. For it costs to follow Him. It costs nothing to become a Christian, but it costs everything to be one.

7. Finally, her choice led to *expectation*. She was ready to follow even unto death. In her day, of course, that was the final goal. Praise God, we today are not looking for death but for the coming of our blessed Lord. And so we serve and follow, while waiting for His coming to take us Home.

Ruth was ready to go wherever Naomi led, as we should be wherever He may lead us, by His Spirit. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Ruth was ready to lodge wherever Naomi lodged. Even so should we desire to be where our Leader dwells. Ruth's words remind me of the disciples' question in John 1, as they asked Jesus: "Master, where dwellest Thou?" His answer was: "Come and see." And so they abode with Him that day. We too want to abide with Him, in the enjoyment of His presence and His love. As Simon Peter so well said when challenged as to whether he and the other disciples would leave Jesus too: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Ruth was ready to make Naomi's God her God, and Naomi's people her people. With a fuller understanding of God's truth today, we too should delight in owning our Savior's God our God; and, **praise His name**, (that which Ruth did not know) His Father as our Father. Doing so makes us one of His family, and unites us with all of God's redeemed people. It brings us into the most glorious society—the fellowship of saints—which is nothing like it on earth, in spite of all their foibles and fancies. May we value this fellowship more and not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as, alas, the manner of some is! “By this shall all men know ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

Ruth was ready to die and be buried with Naomi. Praise God, today we are not looking forward to death, but to the coming again of our Lord to take us Home without dying. Not waiting, as has often been observed, for the undertaker but for the Upper-taker.

Speaking from a spiritual angle, it thrills us to realize that, while Ruth spoke of death parting her and Naomi, through our Savior's blest sacrifice death actually unites us. Instead of looking forward to death, in a very real sense we look back at it. We know that in Christ “death and judgment are behind us, and grace and glory lie before.” Our path, as Ruth's did in an earthly way, leads to Christ in glory, where we shall live in the full joy of life eternal.

Ruth chose for her life:

A Path—“whither thou goest I will go.”

A Place—“where thou lodgest I will lodge.”

A People—“thy people shall be my people.”

A Plan—“to live and die by faith.”

CHAPTER 5

Coming Home

"So they two went until they came to Bethlehem.

And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?

And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty; why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law with her, which returned out of the country of Moab; and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest" (Ruth 1:19-22).

All the city was moved when these two arrived. Some perhaps were moved with contempt, because Naomi and her husband had been shirkers who could not face things. Some perhaps were moved with gladness, happy to see her back. Others perhaps with grief, because Naomi only returned, having left her husband and her sons behind in Moabite graves. It is still with mixed emotions that friends and neighbors see the wanderer return to God. However, whatever it may be that moves others is not as important as that the sinner himself, or herself, be moved to repentance, and make a move to come back to God.

Naomi was moved by a sense of her sin and failure. She confesses that God was not to blame, for she owns up that she had gone out "full." Yet she says the Almighty had afflicted her, and had dealt very bitterly with her.

Yes, God does afflict His own when they wander from Him, and while that affliction may be bitter to the taste, for chastening for the present is not joyous but grievous, yet afterward it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby. Naomi was yet to prove that God was leading her in the right way; that all His ways are perfectness and all His paths are peace. That it is true that, "all things work together for good to them that love the Lord."

She speaks of God by that distant title of the "Almighty." She thinks of Him as yet only as the One Who wields all power and does what He will, but ere long she will learn that He combined infinite love with wisdom and power. She says the Lord brought her "home." Before many weeks shall have passed, she will truly find a home; an abode of peace and joy. How often our gracious God must lead us by paths of bitterness and pain, because we do not seem to be able to learn any other way. As we must, so Naomi too would learn that all the sorrow was due to her own waywardness and sin; all the blessing to His grace.

She returned in harvest time. It is always harvest when a sinner comes home; another sheaf gathered in. Barley harvest was in the spring of the year. Lev. 23 shows that the beginning of that harvest took place at passover time, for then the first fruits were offered up to God. Those "first fruits,"

according to I Cor. 15:23, picture our Lord Jesus Christ in His resurrection. The very idea of first-fruits shows there is more to follow. Thus, this barley harvest, spiritually interpreted, reminds us of the blessing that flows from the death and the consequent resurrection of Christ. Much joy lay in store for these two souls as they came home; even so, the death and resurrection of our Lord are the promise and basis of eternal blessing and eternal glory for the soul that comes Home to God. The "harvest" of the Cross is the harbinger of an eternal harvest of blessing, when millions of souls shall be gathered Home.

CHAPTER 6

Introducing Boaz—the Prospective Bridegroom

“And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband’s, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech, and his name was Boaz” (Ruth 2:1).

The whole of this second chapter of Ruth unfolds the divine process of spiritual growth and enlightenment. The path of the believer begins, as did Ruth’s, with faith in God. Then to that faith are added various Christian graces and attainments, as for instance those in II Peter 1:5-7: “Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge selfcontrol to selfcontrol patience, to patience godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”

Ruth had confessed her faith in a God she knew so little as yet, even as the newborn soul is saved through faith in Christ, whom he then goes on to know better. Ruth is now introduced to Boaz, who is in this story a beautiful figure of Christ our Savior. So the believer, having been saved by grace divine, comes to know *Him*; from the blessing he is led to know and love the *Blesser*.

This second chapter of Ruth opens with a lovely pen picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. Like Boaz He is our Kinsman. He became Man, became of our family so to speak, in order that He might be our Redeemer. He is truly the Mighty Man of Wealth, for His riches are unsearchable. And He is truly our Boaz with its meaning of “In Him is strength,” for all power is His in heaven and on

earth. He is both able, as well as willing, to save.

Boaz is presented in four distinct ways in this little book, even as the gospels unfold the perfection of our Lord from a fourfold aspect. He is, as verse 1 states, the "Mighty Man," and is so portrayed in Matthew's gospel, where He is the King and where all power is said to be His. He is the Man who will not rest till the work of redemption is finished at Calvary, which is the manner in which Mark presents our Lord—as the tireless Worker—the Servant. He is our "Kinsman," the eternal God Who took upon Himself manhood that He, as Man, might be able to die for men; Luke so portrays Him, a Man walking among men. And Boaz, in this romance of Ruth, is the One Who *loved* Ruth and married her, so John sets our Savior forth as the Lover, and Lord of His own.

CHAPTER 7

Ruth Gleaning

And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi,—
Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her,—Go, my daughter.

And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech" (Ruth 2:2-3).

We may learn here how a believer is to get in intimate touch with Christ. While Naomi was related to Boaz, she uses no "pull" to curry his favor. She leaves all to the guidance of the Lord. There are certain principles that govern Christian living. No one believer has any advantage over another. One cannot play politics with God. Ruth went to work—she went to glean—and it was thus she "happened" to meet Boaz and to experience all the wondrous blessing that ensued.

Ruth's gleanings, of course, illustrates how a believer goes to God's Word to gather there the precious truths scattered so lavishly on every page. As one gleans, he comes into contact with Christ (as Ruth did with Boaz) for Christ is the theme of all Scripture. We learn here then that Christian growth and blessing are the direct result, not of inspiration, but of perspiration. Ruth went to work and thus she met Boaz. Thus this lovely romance started and developed, and the poor Cinderella became the happy bride of the wealthy and handsome Boaz. That

story is more than duplicated in the experience of every believer who follows on to know the Lord.

Ruth, this young believer, realized it requires food to sustain life, and she went to work to procure it. Though related to this wealthy man, she is content to take the place of the "poor" (Lev. 23:22). We Christians must glean from God's precious Word if we are to grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord. Do not forget our Savior's words that man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Ruth had consulted Naomi, who had had years of experience, as to what to do. This is indeed a wise procedure on the part of any young Christian. God bids us to remember our guides, and to profit by their counsel. Sometimes young people think they know it all, when they could be spared many mistakes and sorrows by profiting from the mature and ripe experience of older brethren or sisters.

Her "hap" was to light on a part of the field belonging to Boaz. However, we know that there is no "chance" with God. As the wise man says: "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. 16:33). How good for us to know this! He leads us; He guides our every step, if we will only walk in dependence upon Him. All our life is divinely planned for His glory and our good.

Ruth gleaned; thus she met Boaz. Dear young Christian, glean daily from the Word. As you study and meditate upon it, you will meet the Lord. You will learn to know Him; to love Him more; to serve Him better.

CHAPTER 8

Ruth Introduced to the Assembly

And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers,—The Lord be with you. And they answered him,—The Lord bless thee.

Then said Boaz unto the servant that was set over the reapers,—Whose damsel is this?

And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said,—It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab;

And she said,—I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves; so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house.

Then said Boaz unto Ruth,—Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens;

Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them; have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn” (Ruth 2:4-9).

The days of the Judges were wicked days, as are our days today. But still there were some people who knew and loved the Lord, as we clearly see in Boaz' greeting to his servants. So today God has His Church upon the earth, composed of all who are saved by divine grace; those who know and love the

Lord. Ruth, in picture, is now introduced to the "Assembly"—the Church—illustrated in the above verses. They present a true view of assembly composition and testimony.

First,—there is the Lord Himself,—in the midst, as seen in Boaz. He is the Lord of the harvest—the Master of all. Verse 4 shows that He is a gracious Master; that His service is pleasant; that His servants are happy and content. There are no strikes in His employ. Boaz' kind greeting brings a ready response from the reapers. So it is His mercy and love that constrains us, not to live to ourselves but unto Him. Boaz is named; all the others are anonymous. The Lord alone needs to be recognized; His Name is the name above every name.

Then we read of the "reapers" (v. 4). They represent God's servants who minister His Word, Who serve Him out in the field. Reapers were not gathering for themselves, but for their Master. Ruth was a gleaner; not a reaper. She gathered the grain for her own food; the reapers were gathering the grain for their master. They were carrying it to the garner, even as those who serve the Lord seek to bring souls to Christ or to minister to God's people. Ruth pictures a newly saved believer, and such need to gather for themselves first before they gather for the Master. Oftentimes young believers want to go out preaching right away, vainly imagining the Lord has "called" them, when they have never even gleaned yet; have never studied the Word for their own upbuilding in the faith. They want to feed others when they are terribly underfed themselves. Such need to glean before they reap.

Ruth gathered for herself and for her mother-in-law, as we of course should study God's Word that we might have something to share with others. There are many Christians who have very little time or ability for study, and so it is incumbent upon those who go to gather truth from the Word, not only that they might grow themselves, but also to share it with those less fortunate.

Ruth was the younger of these two women; so she did all the hard work of gleaning (stooping to pick up grain is truly hard labor). Even so believers should glean God's precious Word when still young. You will find yourself much less able to do so when you are older, and often family duties will greatly hinder you as well. Use your time now, young Christian, and spend much time over the Word of God; you will not be able to do so later in life.

Ruth worked all day, from early morning on (v. 7). But then she rested a little. Both labor and rest are needed. Hard work and study to make God's Word one's own is necessary, but it should be interspersed with periods of rest for meditation, that the Word may truly affect your own life and your ministry be the fruit of personal contact with the Lord.

There was next a "servant set over the reapers" (vs. 5-6). He is unnamed, and undoubtedly represents the Holy Spirit of God. He is the One Who divides to every man his work; Who oversees our service; and Who enables us to do our work wisely and well. When Boaz came to the field he immediately noticed the stranger. The overseer had noticed her too and could tell Boaz all about her. How sweet to know that our blessed Lord is interested in each of His own, no matter how weak or

insignificant such might be in their own sight. His eyes are upon you and me, dear fellow believer, as we glean in His field.

Finally, we have mention made of "young men" and "maidens," all of them busy in the Master's service. They would picture all the believers in general. Thus these verses give us a view of a happy assembly of saints. The Master—the Lord Jesus—is there Himself; the Spirit of God guides and directs everything; the reapers—the ministers of the Word are supplied, and there are all the saints, all happily engaged in the things of God. Altogether they present one big happy family; that's what every assembly of God's people should be. And the way to keep them happy is for everybody to have something to do, as we see here. There is no room for "drones" in God's beehive.

The servant over the reapers knew all about Ruth. He had interested himself in her. May we learn a lesson here too. So often we neglect the strangers in our midst who come into our assemblies. We should never fail to notice them, to make them welcome, put them at their ease, and warm them with our affectionate interest. Remember I Peter 5: 2: "Feed (shepherd) the flock of God, which is among you, taking the oversight thereof."

CHAPTER 9

Boaz Introduces Himself to Ruth

Then said Boaz unto Ruth, — Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens.

Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them; have not I charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him,—Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that you shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?

And Boaz answered and said unto her,—It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband; and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under Whose wings thou art come to trust.

Then she said,—Let me find favor in thy sight, my lord, for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.” (Ruth 2: 8-13).

“Hearest thou not, my daughter?” She learns she is a daughter, as we learn our blessed relation-

ship to God as our Father. Once a stranger; now no more, but a child in the family of God. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God" (I John 3:1). Ruth says that Boaz spoke "to her heart," margin of v. 13. She is humbled by such grace, asking the question that has been in my own heart thousands of times: "Why have I found grace in Thine eyes, O Lord, seeing I was a stranger to grace and to God?"

Why was I made to hear His voice
And enter while there's room;
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?

Ah yes, this is the mystery of grace divine. Like Ruth, we once were strangers, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. We were only outcasts, but are now so richly blessed. It is all of grace.

Boaz answers Ruth in verses 11-12. His answer unveils, in type, the wondrous truth that God is pleased when we trust Him; when we come to shelter under the shadow of His wings. Every bit of sacrifice for His sake He recognizes and honors. Not only does He save us when we come to Him as sinners, but someday will give a full reward for every bit of true response to His love, in the lives of His people. Yes, faith pleases God; faith that draws us to Him in the first place; and faith that energizes the believer to deny self and truly be consecrated to God.

Boaz spoke to Ruth's *heart*, but before that he had spoken a word to her *conscience* (vs. 8-9). God's

word serves for reproof and correction as well. "Go not to glean in another field" was his warning to Ruth. Pasture in other fields often looks greener to a believer. Many a young Christian has turned from God's things to the empty vaporizing of men, or to the attractions and distractions of this world. And ere long such an one will find himself where Christ is scorned or ignored.

"Abide by my maidens." Maidens stand for submission, weakness, purity, etc. Abide with those who walk in dependence upon the Lord and in obedience to God and His Word. God brings the believer into fellowship with saints; be sure to meet with them and glean God's precious things in association with those who know and love the Lord.

"Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap." Keep your eyes fixed on the things of God; not on the things of the world. The lust of the eyes is all too real.

"Fix your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face."

Abide by my maidens; go after them, and then "the young men shall not touch thee." How many a dear young lady has suffered from young men when she wandered from the Lord into forbidden fields! How many have been seduced from the path of virtue to a life of shame! The assembly of God's people is meant to be a safeguard; to keep the feet of saints in the path where God is known and Christ exalted.

"When thou art athirst, drink of that which the young men have drawn." There is true refreshment

among the people of God. Capable men have drawn refreshing things from the deep wells of salvation. Only Christ can satisfy. Only the things of God can truly meet the deepest longings of the soul. Dear young believer, keep close to the Lord; and a great help in doing so is to keep close to His people.

CHAPTER 10

Feasting with Boaz

“And Boaz said unto her: At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers; and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed and left.

And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying,—Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not.

And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.

So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out that she had gleaned; and it was about an ephah of barley” (Ruth 2:14-17).

From the field of activity we come to the restful quiet and shelter from the noontide heat, to mealtime in the presence of the blessed Lord Himself.

At mealtime, said Boaz, come hither and eat. She sat beside the reapers, and he reached her parched corn. Notice the progress: from the gleaners, to the reapers, to Him. As we gather first of all from the Word for ourselves, as gleaners; next as we profit from the ministry of the reapers, representing as they do, the ministers of Christ and the Word, we find ourselves finally in His very presence. Now Boaz personally handed her food. So Christ Himself feeds our souls as we follow in His way.

He does not give her barley now, but parched corn. In Scripture typically the parched corn speaks

of the very best. Israel ate manna in the wilderness, but in the land they feasted on the parched corn (Joshua 5:11), never to eat manna again. The "land" speaks in type of our heavenly inheritance, and its corn speaks of the heavenly food for the believer; in other words, of Christ as the glorified One at God's right hand. As the manna, typifying Christ in lowliness and humiliation was the food of the wilderness, so the corn eaten in the land speaks of our blessed Lord in exaltation—Christ glorified. The parched corn tells the story of all Christ has done, and is *now*, to His people, as represented in the wondrous unfolding of truth in the New Testament epistles. Ruth feasted on that in Boaz' presence, even as the believer, in conscious fellowship with the Lord Jesus, is led by the Spirit to feast on the deeper, fuller truths of God's holy Word.

Ruth ate, sufficed and *left*. That is, she could not eat all he gave her; there was some left over. We can never take in all the marvelous wonders of God's grace. The prodigal expressed the same truth when he said that in the Father's house there was *bread*; *enough* (sufficient to meet the believer's need); and to *spare* (plenty left, to meet the need of others besides ourselves).

After this sweet hour of fellowship is over, Ruth goes back to work—back to the backbreaking task of stooping to gather the grain. But now she finds grace upon grace. Handfuls of purpose are dropped for her special benefit. Her humbleness, her eagerness to work, her desire to be with those who know (with the reapers), has led her to intimate fellowship with the Master Himself; He has recognized her love and zeal, and richly rewards her now. It

all leads to still increasing riches for her. It is so with us. This is the process whereby a soul grows in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The servants dropped the handfuls on purpose. All the Lord's servants should know how to do this. There should be a purpose in our ministry; we should seek to know the special needs of our hearers, and be able to drop food "on purpose." We should also practice dropping precious truths for even the lowliest believer to pick up, instead of talking over people's heads, as is so often the case.

Boaz' kindness led to a richer harvest for Ruth. So our fruitfulness depends on His blessing upon us. Not merely on our labor, though that is of prime importance, but with Paul we should be able to say: "His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (I Cor. 15:10).

Ruth gathered that day an ephah of barley; ten times as much as the children of Israel gathered manna for each day. (Exo. 16:16, 36). She truly had been richly blessed and rewarded. But she worked all day, and worked hard. Gleaning means stooping, a humbling and tiring job. So Christian growth and usefulness comes only through hard work. Sometimes folks tell me, after a certain message, how much they enjoyed it. And I tell them occasionally: "You ought to; it took me forty years of study and meditation to get it together."

CHAPTER 11

Beating Out the Grain

So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned; and it was about an ephah of barley.

And she took it up, and went into the city; and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned; and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed” (Ruth 2:17-18).

Ruth threshed the barley she had collected. Some more hard work. There are many things that cannot be purchased with money; no one else can do or make them for you. A millionaire, should he want to play the piano, has to practice for years, the same as a pauper. This is true in spiritual life. Do you want to know more of God's Word; do you want to know Christ better? Then you must work at it. First there is the laborious gleaning; then the no less strenuous beating out what you have gleaned. No one else can do it for you; you must sweat at it yourself.

Ruth beat out the grain. She did not lug all that straw home, but reduced her load to a compass where she could carry it conveniently. Alas, many believers carry the straw home as well; in fact, many carry home nothing else *but the straw*. The only thing they remember of a message is something they did not agree with or did not like. I think brother Spurgeon said that some believers have less sense than a chicken. A hen will pick over a whole bushel of chaff to find one grain of wheat, while those

critics will pick over a bushel of wheat to find a little bit of chaff. Or they are like the gentleman invited out to a luscious turkey dinner, with all the trimmings, finishing off with pie, nuts and coffee. When asked how he enjoyed the banquet, all he said was that he did not care for those stewed tomatoes. I have been grieved with that type of senseless criticism many times. Listen, my brother, don't bother about the chaff; look for the real food and enjoy it. Take it home, as Ruth did.

Beat out the grain. Don't take home everything you hear or read. The Bereans searched the Scriptures daily, to see whether the things Paul preached were so. They kept the good and threw away the chaff. We must make the truth our own, be able to discern between the precious and the vile, and put what we gather in usable form. One may hear much, both from listening to preaching or from reading books, that is largely useless, even if true. We must reduce the bulk to the small amount of the real thing. Only when the grain is threshed can we eat it, or show it, or share it.

Scripture speaks of many things that were beaten. The manna was beaten, so was the olive oil, the holy ointment, the incense and the candlestick. All these set forth the fragrance and virtues of Christ. The beating is reminiscent of the suffering of the Cross, as well as what our blessed Lord endured during His life down here. Only through suffering and sacrifice are the real things of God known or made known. The idea of suffering was further stressed as the beaten barley was ground, kneaded into dough, and passed through the fire in baking it into bread. The whole story is one of suffering and pain. Only

by the path of suffering is fragrance produced; only thus are eternal things really made ours. It costs much to truly know and show forth Christ.

Ruth gave to Naomi of the parched corn she had left from lunch; what she had over after she herself had eaten. So should we minister to others that upon which we have fed for ourselves. We should never repeat truth like a parrot does—as something we have learned by heart.

Ruth took the parched corn, which then was a real delicacy, home to Naomi. Barley was the poor people's food; corn was a luxury. Ordinarily we feed, spiritually speaking, on barley—common food—nothing fancy. Only occasionally do we have a banquet. Preachers usually, on their short visits, try to serve the parched corn. But if they were with us long enough, they would soon be dishing up barley, the same as the local preacher. They are just putting on a splurge. That is the reason why you should always attend special meetings, for then you often get some very sweet things. It is also the reason you should be thankful you do not have special meetings all the time, for staple food is much better for *spiritual* health (the same as for *physical*) than dainties.

Banquets and rich desserts are nice, but they make you fat and lazy. If you went to a banquet every night it would soon cease to be a banquet. So Christians, when listening for months to excellent ministry of the Word, often become mere sermon-tasters; mere spiritual dyspeptics. They are always looking for something new; always wanting a feast; but doing nothing to work off the excess fat.

CHAPTER 12

Ruth Dwelt With Her Mother-in-law

“And her mother-in-law said unto her, — Where hast thou gleaned today? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said,—The man’s name with whom I wrought today is Boaz.

And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law,—Blessed be he of the Lord, Who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her,—The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.

And Ruth the Moabitess said,—He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest.

And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law,—It is good, my daughter; that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field.

So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law” (Ruth 2:19-23).

Ruth must have been a lovely character. It is not every young woman that can live peaceably with her mother-in-law not only, but work hard every day to support her and do it cheerfully. Boaz appreciated it very much, as he told her: “It hath fully been showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband”

(Chap. 2: 11). Our Boaz, the Lord Jesus Christ, equally appreciates kindness shown to the proverbially obnoxious mother-in-law. It is an example worth imitating.

Naomi noticed the unusual amount of grain Ruth brought home and she blessed him that had taken knowledge of her. We too must gather so much from the Word that folks will take knowledge of us, even as men did of the disciples of old, saying: "they have been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). As a result Naomi blessed Boaz too, even as others will learn to praise our Lord as they see how much He means to us. So it is that Moses' shining face revealed to the onlookers that he had been in the presence of God. "Draw me, says the bride, in Songs 1: 4, and we will run after thee."

"Where hast thou gleaned today?" inquired Naomi. Notice that, "today." Where have you gleaned today, dear brother and sister? Have you gotten something from God's Word to feed your soul, to share with others? Or have you neglected it? Do you esteem His Word more necessary than your daily food, as Job did, or do you not?

Nami blessed Boaz for his kindness to the living and the dead—in the past and in the present. How great is God's kindness to us. In the past our blessed Lord died for us; now He lives for us. He proved His love to us yesterday; He is still the same today. He will not leave off His kindness, as Naomi said of Boaz. His mercy endureth forever.

This Boaz is one of our next kinsmen, says Naomi (v. 20). The margin renders this as, "one who has the right to redeem." Boaz was yet to prove that he

was not one of the redeemers, but the "only" redeemer; even as our Lord Jesus. Man in his sin, spiritual poverty, and bondage sorely needs a Redeemer.

Two features stand out in Scripture in connection with the subject of redemption,—man's poverty and his slavery. Both are beautifully set forth in the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus. Sin has beggared the whole human race, and hence the gospel is preached to the poor, as Luke 4:18 states. Man also is a slave of sin, for he that commits sin is the slave of sin (John 8:34); and as such he needs to be set free, redeemed.

Both these conditions are pictured in Lev. 25, as illustrated in the experience of the Jew in that age. The poor Jew, or the Jewish slave, was permitted to redeem himself if he were able (Lev. 25:49). But from a spiritual point of view man is unable to deliver himself from sin's poverty or sin's slavery. A relative was permitted to do so, if the unfortunate victim himself was unable to do so (Lev. 25:48-49), but spiritually this, too, is impossible as Psalm 49:7 so succinctly declares: "None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him."

There is only one Redeemer, but praise God, there is One. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, of Whom Boaz is a lovely type. However, according to the law, only a "kinsman" could redeem. So, if God was to redeem guilty, helpless man, He must needs take upon Himself his humanity and in grace become his "kinsman." And that is what He did. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, come of a woman, come under the law, to redeem" (Gal. 4:4-5). "Forasmuch as the

children are partakers of flesh and blood He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15). Jesus the Son of God became our Kinsman, in matchless condescending grace. He Who was rich became poor; He Who is Mighty took His place in abject weakness on Calvary's Cross; He Who is God became Man, that He might redeem us from sin and all its wretched consequences, and redeem us to God. In Him truly is strength to do so. He is our Boaz.

He paid redemption's price with His own blood. He is worthy, for He has redeemed us to God by His blood out of every kindred, and tongue and people and nation. (Rev. 5:9).

As Boaz bought not only the land but Ruth as well, so our Lord at Calvary bought the world, as Matthew 13:44 shows; and He also purchased the Church as His Bride—He gave Himself for her. We have become His purchased possession (Eph. 1:14). We are now to remember that we are not our own, but that we have been bought with a price; henceforth to glorify God in our body, which is His (I Cor. 6:20).

Naomi urged Ruth to continue with Boaz and to glean in his fields. I do not blame her. Ruth's lot had fallen in pleasant places. So has the believer's. Keep close to Christ, dear fellow believer. Gather food for your soul in His fields; there is nothing like it upon this earth. Keep fast to Christ!

CHAPTER 13

Winnowing, Wooing, Wedding

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her,—
My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee,
that it may be well with thee?

And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshing floor.

Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor; but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking.

And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie and thou shalt go in and uncover his feet and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.

And she said unto her,—All that thou sayest unto me I will do.

And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her.

And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn; and she came softly and uncovered his feet, and laid her down” (Ruth 3:1-7).

In Chapter two Boaz approached Ruth; here Ruth seeks Boaz. The one foreshadows Christ seeking the sinner; the other the believer's response as he is attracted to Christ, and by faith seeks to have more of Him—to lay hold on the highest spiritual blessings found in Him.

We leave the field now for the threshing floor. There was food for the soul in the field; next fellowship in the assembly (Chap. 2:4-9); then feasting in His presence (Chap. 2:14), and now Ruth seeks

the boon of intimate union with Boaz, as the believer seeks the joy of entering into all it means to be His Beloved. In chapter 2 Ruth found shelter under the wings of God; here she bids Boaz (Christ in type) shelter her with *His wing* (the word "skirt" in v. 9 is "wing," which is a much more intimate thought. God was far away, but Boaz was near and his protection and the warmth afforded by the shelter of his wings was very real. Even so our Lord has come near to us and in the knowledge of His love and His care the believer finds true rest for the soul. Ruth's act here shows that the believer in Jesus finds full and complete rest in the enjoyment of perfect union with Christ.

Naomi instructs Ruth to put in her claim on Boaz, for she had a rightful claim. So do we on Christ. All sinners may come to Christ for redemption, and may lay claim to His everlasting love. And they are very welcome indeed, for see (in v. 10) how our Boaz appreciates our love. Naomi (in chap. 1:9) had urged her daughter-in-law to *find rest* in the house of her husband; now Ruth is about to find this rest in the love of Boaz, who was soon to be her husband. It is thus Naomi sought *rest* for Ruth (chap. 3:1). The believer thus finds perfect rest in Christ. A husband cares for, provides, protects his wife, giving her rest from all fear, worry and danger. Christ does all that for the Christian; and this is realized by him when he abides in His presence.

Boaz was winnowing barley, removing the chaff. The threshing floors in Scripture are significant. There God's judgment was stayed in David's day, at the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. On that very site Abraham had offered up Isaac; on that very site Solomon later built the temple. That threshing-floor answers to Calvary. Gideon's fleece was wet

with the dew of heaven on the threshingfloor, speaking in type of the descent of the Holy Spirit; here the barley is threshed, answerable to the removal of the flesh in the life of the believer, so needed as the Lord said to Simon Peter: "Satan has desired to have you, to sift you as wheat." In each of these three threshingfloors the chaff was removed. For at Calvary the flesh was judged; through the indwelling Holy Spirit the flesh is judged in the believer, as he walks in the Spirit; and in our union with Christ (the subject of our present meditation), the flesh will be taken away altogether, for at His coming we shall be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; we shall be fully conformed to His image.

As we apply this figure of winnowing to today, our Boaz is sifting the firstfruits, pictured in the barley. We believers now are the firstfruits of the Spirit, and we need this winnowing process. Using another figure with the same meaning, Eph. 5:26, this speaks of the daily need of the washing of water by the Word. Hebrews 12 calls this same process chastening, while John 13 speaks of it as feetwashing. All these illustrations present the same truth—that of the judgment of the flesh in the Christian—the removal of the chaff.

Our Boaz winnows barley today. How tender and gracious He is. How careful of every grain! How He delights to see the pile grow; all the vile removed, and only that which delights His heart remaining. His heart shall be merry indeed—as Boaz' was—when the harvest is complete—when He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. He shall be merry then, for it was for the joy set before Him that He endured the Cross and despised the shame. He ate and drank and then he

slept. So our Lord finished the work at Calvary, and then He rested. All this shall be fully realized when the Church is complete; it was all anticipated at the Cross.

Ruth was not to speak till Boaz had done eating and drinking. Then he slept, as Jesus did at Calvary. And while He slept, a woman came softly and lay at His feet. So, after the work of redemption on the Cross was done, now during the night of our Lord's absence, the Church gathers and lies at His feet, claiming His love.

"Mark the place where he shall lie," said Naomi, "and lay thee down there." So should we mark where our Savior lay. In deepest agony in Gethsemane; bearing our sins on Calvary; in the tomb burying them forever. Lie down there too, dear believer. Identify yourself with Him in those places. For His sufferings are now yours; His death is your death; His burial is the burial of all your sins, all your past; and you are now risen with Him.

"Get thee down (v. 3); lay thee down (v. 4); she went down (v. 6); she laid her down (v. 7). First He lay down; then she lay down. That's God's way of blessing. He, though equal with God, yet came down even to the death of the Cross, setting us the example that blessing is found in the low place, "he that humbles himself shall be exalted." Blessing is found at His feet. There Ruth finds the highest bliss —marriage with Boaz; there the believer bows low, waiting for His coming again when He shall consummate His great love by uniting us to Himself forever at the marriage of the Lamb. In the meantime we would find ourselves at His feet here learning of Him and pouring out our ointment of worship and adoration upon Him.

CHAPTER 14

The Bride Dresses for the Wedding

“Wash thyself therefore and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee and get thee down to the floor; but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking” (Ruth 3: 3).

Immediately there comes to mind that passage in Revelation 19. There the wife of the Lamb made herself ready, as Ruth does here. Ruth dresses suitable for the occasion, for the Bride must be lovely in His sight. Christ’s Bride dresses herself in beautiful garments of righteousness, garments fit for the Bride of the King of kings.

“Wash thyself, anoint thee, put thy raiment upon thee.” These three things God does for every sinner that comes to Christ. Such an one is washed from all his sins; anointed with the Holy Spirit and clothed in the garment of salvation, accepted in the Beloved. Now what God does for every Christian the moment of his conversion, he is to do for himself in practical conformity with the grace bestowed upon him.

The believer, who in that glorious future day is to be united to Christ, is to wash himself daily with the cleansing power of the Word; daily the sweet fragrance of Christ must be upon him, as he walks in the power of the ungrieved Spirit of God. Songs 4: 10 describes the believer’s proper spiritual condition: “How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse; how much better is thy love than wine, and the

smell of thine ointments then all spices." Mary's anointing of our Lord tells us how this spiritual sweetness may be attained. Kneeling at His feet in adoration she poured the grateful perfume of her soul on His feet, and carried it away on her own head, as she wiped His feet with her hair. As often as we are at His feet, we shall waft abroad something of the sweetness of Christ.

As Ruth put off her widow's weeds, so does the believer. The joy of the Lord should mark us. The Christian is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ—to put on bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, meekness, etc. To be all dressed up in Jesus, as it were. It is so that Ruth went forth to meet her husband-to-be; it is so we must walk here below, as we are on our way to meet Him. Some day we shall be united to Him in glory.

Also note that Ruth dressed up to please Boaz. It is him she wanted to impress; His love she craved. So must we live our lives, not to please others anymore than please ourselves, but to please Him. It is His love we crave; His glory we seek. Often we are concerned what people think of us. Never mind that, fellow Christian, you and I are to live *unto Him*.

CHAPTER 15

Ruth Woos Boaz

And it came to pass at midnight that the man was afraid, and turned himself; and behold, a woman lay at His feet.

And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid; spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid, for thou art a near kinsman (Ruth 3:8-9).

The Bride proposes to the Bridegroom. From our point of view this may seem rather unconventional; no doubt Ruth's action was considered proper in those days. She did it on the advice of her mother-in-law who was a mature, sensible woman, thoroughly acquainted with all the Jewish customs pertaining to such matters.

One thing is sure; as we consider the spiritual truths suggested in this tender tale, all is perfectly in order. After all that Christ has done for us, He just loves to have us claim Him fully, as Boaz so sweetly expresses it, in v. 10. He actually calls Ruth's bold faith a special kindness done to him. How this thrills our hearts when we contemplate the deeper significance. Our blessed Lord is moved and He deeply appreciates faith that dares to appropriate the most stupendous blessings; that will not be satisfied with less than the fullest, most intimate love of God in Christ. How many believers these days utterly fall short here, and are satisfied if they just know they are saved (and many do not even enjoy this elementary truth). The deeper, higher truths of the

Word have no appeal for many real Christians; such just leave them cold and unmoved. God forbid it should be so with the readers of this book. Christ not only saves, but He satisfies and glorifies.

At midnight, behold a woman lay at his feet. Is "midnight" to remind us of Calvary? Why not? Am I imagining that Boaz being afraid at that hour speaks of the awful horror and suffering our precious Savior knew in that black hour on the Cross? For it is then that the Church was born; it is when Adam slept that the bride was formed from his side. There, in that dark hour of doom dawned the bright hope of glory for the Church—the Bride of Christ. The Church, seeking perfect joy at His feet, is truly the fruit of the travail of His soul.

And now Ruth proposes. "Spread thy wing over thine handmaid." (Ezek. 16:8). She was a poor, Gentile widow, yet Boaz did not spurn her. So Christ our Lord is not ashamed to call us brethren—we, His poor human relations. That "wing" over Ruth tells us that union with Christ means the believer's protection, provision and comfort.

Ruth, in submission to Naomi's instructions, ventures her whole reputation and character on the faithfulness and love of Boaz; and she did not do so in vain. No one ever fully trusts Christ to be disappointed. Rest can be found in complete trust and absolute surrender to Him. He is fully worthy of our confidence, and such faith highly pleases Him, even as Boaz acknowledged in Ruth's case.

CHAPTER 16

Boaz Undertakes the Redeemer's Responsibility

*"A*nd he said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter, for thou hast showed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest, for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.

And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman; howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part; but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth; lie down until the morning" (Ruth 3:10-13).

Here we have in type the courtship of Christ and the Church. Just He and she together. No reapers or overseers here; no young men or maidens, just she with Him. Truly a vast difference between the busy field with its busy workers to the midnight stillness of intimacy with Him. It pictures the present day, during the night of our Lord's physical, visible absence from this world. The believer can and should enjoy true spiritual communion with the Lord. The believer should be often alone with the Lord Jesus. Busy service is fine, but not to the neg-

lect of these precious quiet times with the Lord alone.

Boaz commends Ruth for her purity of life (v. 11). During her short stay in Bethlehem all had come to mark her holy life (is this true of us, or do we give the world occasion to speak disparagingly of Him by our careless or sinful conduct) ? We, too, should be a chaste virgin, espoused to Christ. God shows kindness to sinners, no matter how vile they may be, but His love to His people is dependent on their purity and faithfulness. He cannot manifest His love to believers who live away from Him. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14: 21). Sin permitted in the life hinders true fellowship with Christ, and dishonors His name before men.

"Lie down until the morning" (v. 13). All during the night of sin the believer is to rest, as it were, at Jesus' feet. A blessed place indeed!

Ruth rose up before one could know another (v. 14). "Lie down" in v. 13; "rise up" in v. 14. Typically these two may well speak of His death and His resurrection, for He died in the dark night of judgment and rose on the bright morning of resurrection. The believer shares by faith in the blessed fruits of His death and rising again, as seen here in Ruth's lying down and rising.

Rising up before one could know another also pictures the precious truth that the Church as the Bride of Christ will rise to meet her Lord before the day of glory breaks. The coming of the Lord for His Bride is like the rising of the morning star, and the morning star rises while it is still dark (or

as it says here—before one could know another). The Church shall rise to meet Him in the air and none shall be there or see it except He and she.

So Boaz says, “let it not be known that a woman came into the floor.” Her being there and her going away were both to be a secret. It is so with the Church upon earth. Scripture calls both the Church itself and the rapture of the Church mysteries; or, as the word means—secrets. Both these are pictured here. And this is confirmed by Ruth taking off her veil. In this way Boaz saw her face before anyone else did, even as Christ will see His Bride and take her home to glory before she is revealed to this world. That revelation of the Church will not take place till our Lord comes again in power and glory. Then He shall be glorified in His saints and be admired in all them that believe” (II Thess. 1:10). Not till then shall the world see His Church.

CHAPTER 17

Boaz—the Kinsman-Redeemer

“And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid; spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid, for thou art A NEAR KINSMAN.

And now it is true that I am thy NEAR KINSMAN; howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part; but if he will not do the part of a kinsman, then will I do THE PART OF A KINSMAN TO THEE, as the Lord liveth; lie down until the morning.

Then said she,—Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall, for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day”
(Ruth 3:9, 12, 13, 18).

We have seen previously that Jewish law made provision for the redemption of a Jew in the case of poverty or slavery. There was a third provision; his property also could be redeemed. If the owner himself could not do so, then a kinsman of his could redeem it on his behalf (Lev. 25:24-26).

There is still another occasion where a kinsman came in, recorded in Deut. 25:5-10. A relative, able to redeem the property or the person of his poor relation, had a further obligation to marry the widow of such a brother, in case such existed. It is this that Naomi had in view in sending Ruth to Boaz,

and urging her to propose to him. Naomi had some property that belonged to her husband, as mentioned in chapter 4: 3: "Naomi selleth a parcel of land which was our brother Elimelech's."

At the death of a husband in Israel such property went to the elder son; hence it belonged actually to the widow of this son, which in this case is Ruth.

Because of their need they were now forced to sell this property, which was a serious thing in Israel, for the inheritance was always to remain in the particular family that owned it originally. Naomi hoped that one of her kinsmen would redeem it, and since Boaz was such and had plenty of wealth, her eyes turned toward him, with the normal woman's additional scheme of making a good match for Ruth at the same time. Thus not only not losing the land, but gaining a husband into the bargain. Naomi not only craved the securing of the family inheritance but she wanted the proprietor as well as the property. Even as the believer in Christ secures in Christ the Blesser as well as the blessing. Naomi plans this husband not for herself, but for Ruth, who was nothing more than an outcast Gentile. We may see here how the Gentiles are brought into blessing through Israel's defection and departure from God, as Romans 11 so clearly brings out. Only grace could do this, for the law shuts out the believer. Grace breaks down all barriers, as we see in the further unfolding of this story of love.

When Ruth returns Naomi tells her to "sit still," for the man will not rest till he have finished the thing. So, praise God, our Boaz, our blessed Lord Jesus, did not rest while here upon earth till the

work of redemption was finished on Calvary. And today He will not rest till all God's plans and purposes concerning the Church, Israel and the world are fulfilled; till redemption is complete, both for soul and body; for time and for eternity. He will do it all; we, as far as redemption's work is concerned, may "sit still," as Naomi advised Ruth, and rest in His love and glory in His power.

CHAPTER 18

Boaz the “Only” Redeemer

“**T**hen went Boaz up to the gate and sat him down there; and behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by, unto whom he said,—Ho, such an one, turn aside, and sit down here. And he turned aside and sat down.

And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said,—Sit ye down here. And they sat down.

And he said unto the kinsman,—Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech’s.

And I thought to advertise thee saying,—Buy it before the inhabitants and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it; but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is none to redeem it beside thee, and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it.

Then said Boaz,—What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.

And the kinsman said,—I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance; redeem thou my right to thyself, for I cannot redeem it.

Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbor; and this was a testimony in Israel.

Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz,—Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe” (Ruth 4:1-8).

From midnight to the morning. From the threshingfloor to the gate of the city. Redemption is wrought at the gate; that's where our blessed Lord laid the basis for our full redemption. For, “that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, He suffered without the gate” (Heb. 13:12). The whole transaction took place in public, as Paul said to King Agrippa: “this thing was not done in a corner” (Acts 26:26). The redemption here was witnessed by ten men, and done according to the dictates of the law, even as salvation through Christ was witnessed by the law (represented here in the “ten”) and the prophets (Rom. 3:21). Christ was publicly “set forth” to be a propitiation through faith in His blood” (Romans 3:25). Christ's Bride was purchased at the gate, even as Ruth was here.

Naomi had said that Boaz was *one* of her kinsmen (chap. 2:20); now it is to be demonstrated that he is the “only” kinsman that can qualify to redeem. There is only One Redeemer—Jesus Christ our Lord.

There is another kinsman and he is bidden to sit down, by Boaz, and is offered the right to purchase the land formerly belonging to Elimelech; now Ruth's property. “Yes, says he, I will redeem that inheritance.”

But, replies Boaz, if you buy the land, you must also marry Ruth the Moabitess, and raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. That was the law, according to Deut. 25, and the law cannot be broken. The kinsman answers that he cannot do *that*, lest he mar his own inheritance.

Now, who is this kinsman who *cannot* redeem? We already know who the Redeemer is Who *can* redeem; it is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Since Christ is the Kinsman who in wondrous grace took upon Himself flesh and blood, that other kinsman then must also be made of flesh and blood. If the one is a Man; the other must be a man too. The other kinsman therefore is man—just the natural man, who is a sinner and therefore utterly unable to redeem even himself, much less anyone else. Man is weak through the flesh. The kinsman is ready enough to buy the property, but could not raise up the name of the dead. Man cannot produce life; that God alone can do; He is the Author and Giver of life eternal.

The kinsman was ready enough to buy the land, even as man is very much interested in mere material things. But he could not redeem Ruth. Psalm 49 tells us that no one can by any means redeem his brother. Under law man was permitted and might be able to deliver his brother from physical slavery or poverty, but only God can redeem the soul from the spiritual bondage of sin, or the abject poverty of spiritual paupery and want.

The kinsman was called a *nearer* kinsman than Boaz, for in point of time, according to God's order, that which is natural comes first, and afterwards that which is spiritual (I Cor. 15: 46). After sin came in, God gave man every chance to see what he could do about redeeming himself from the curse and consequences of sin, but he totally failed. Not only is man himself lost in sin, but he has lost his property as well, for he passes out of the world absolutely penniless. Under the law for over 1,600 years, man

tried to save himself by his own works, but all in vain. Now he must get out of the way to let Christ do what he himself was unable to accomplish. The first kinsman is set aside here, and Boaz undertakes Ruth's cause. So Christ came, undertook our cause, and at Calvary did the work needed to redeem our souls and bless us richly for time and eternity.

Romans 7:4 beautifully shows that through the death of Christ the bond which bound us to the old man is broken; now we can be married to Him Who is raised from the dead, and Who alone can and does redeem us from the bondage of sin and death. Thus alone can we bring forth fruit unto God, even as Ruth produced fruit through her union with Boaz.

Boaz took up Ruth's cause. Legally he did not need to do so, for the other kinsman was there. Nor, once having taken up Ruth's case did he need to consider the other kinsman at all, for the natural has no claim whatever. But Boaz first wanted the other kinsman to express his inability, even as the sinner can never be satisfied with the work of Christ until first he has realized his own utter helplessness.

Boaz, even as Christ our Lord, took up the case, not because He *had* to, but because He *wanted* to. God did not owe us anything; He took up our hopeless case in pure grace. You see, Boaz had fallen in love with Ruth and he wanted her for his own, even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her.

The property is redeemed, not from Naomi, but from Ruth. Naomi had forfeited it through the death of her husband, even as we lost all right to anything because of sin and departure from God. Grace, free grace, alone redeems the poor, bankrupt

sinner. The natural man cannot raise up the name of the dead. The redemption of the property *and* the marriage of the widow are nowhere expressly united elsewhere in Scripture, as they are here in Ruth. They tell in type the full story of God's wondrous grace. Christ not only blessed us with all spiritual riches—our eternal inheritance—but also brings us to Himself, united to Him in the most intimate bond of love, as expressed in the union of Christ and His Church.

This double truth is seen both in the blessing of the Church and in that of Israel; one with heavenly blessings; the other with earthly ones. In the latter part of this volume we shall consider the actual dispensational aspect, applying to Israel.

Christ bought the world (Matt. 13: 44), and thus bought all who live therein, as II Peter 2:1 shows, for even unbelievers are His by purchase. Eph. 1:14 combines both thoughts of property and persons being redeemed by Christ, for *we* are there seen as His purchased possession, and our eternal inheritance also is secured for us by the selfsame redemptive sacrifice of Christ.

All the above thoughts on this highly interesting, instructive and attractive subject are illustrated in the language employed in this fourth chapter of Ruth.

The other kinsman, representing the natural man, not only is unable to redeem, but is indifferent to it, for the chapter opens by saying that he "passed by" (as the priest and the Levite did in the well known story of the good Samaritan); and only upon the solicitation of Boaz does he "turn aside." This very

expression—turn aside—indicates that he reluctantly took time out to consider this proposition. Even so the sinner is very little concerned about God's plan of redemption.

The kinsman said he would redeem the property (v. 5). But, in saying so, he took more upon himself than he was able to perform. He might *buy* the property, but redeeming it was something else again. In the real Scriptural sense of the term, God only can redeem. This world (which is the property in question) is stained with the blood of the Son of God, cursed because of sin, and only Christ could bear that curse, or lift it. Only when He comes to reign shall creation be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Only then shall it be really redeemed.

The kinsman was not the least bit interested in marrying Ruth. He gives as his excuse that he would mar his own inheritance. I should have to know more of the customs of that day to dogmatize on what he meant by this statement, but I think I do know something of its meaning in the spiritual interpretation of that thought. The kinsman could not raise up the name of the dead because Ruth was a Gentile; and self effort shuts out the Gentile from divine blessing as much as it does the Jew. For those who rely on the works of the law, there can be nothing but death and judgment—life is out of the question. The law, which the sinner tries to keep, also forbade the kinsman to marry a Gentile woman, which Ruth was. How then could Boaz, who was also a Jew, marry Ruth? The simple answer is, in my judgment, that he did it in defiance of the law;

he did it in pure grace. But, while Boaz married Ruth illegally, not so with our blessed Lord. For He bore the curse of the law first, in order to free us from its claims, something Boaz did not do, nor could have done. Christ rose from the dead, having met all the claims of the law, so that legally as well as in infinite grace, He might redeem the vilest of the vile—the outcast—and unite such to Himself as His Bride, a chaste virgin, purchased and cleansed with His precious blood. Oh, how truly wonderful is all this!

The Lord did not have to redeem the property, nor marry His bride, but He wanted to. If this first kinsman had been obliged by law to marry Ruth, she would have had to spit in his face when he refused to do so, according to Deut. 25:9. But, since there was another kinsman—Boaz—the first one was not required to marry Ruth, and so the spitting is omitted in Ruth 4. In view of this, how great is Israel's crime in spitting into the face of their Messiah, Who was not at all responsible to redeem either the property nor to redeem humanity; He had no obligation usward, but did so in unfathomable love.

As a token that Boaz is now the rightful Redeemer, the kinsman takes off his shoe and hands it to Boaz. Just one shoe is taken off. To walk with one shoe off and one on is very awkward and difficult, and would result in a decided limp. This suggests that the natural man cannot walk straight. There is only One whose walk was perfect, and it is that which entitles Him to be the Redeemer, for only a sinless Man could be the sinner's Savior.

It does not tell us how much Boaz paid for the land and the bride, but we know the fearful price

our blessed Lord paid for the redemption of this world and for the redemption of our souls. May we never forget it!

After the transaction had been completed, the elders blessed Ruth. Apart from the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, the law could only curse, which is suggested in this picture by these "ten" elders. But now grace has fulfilled the law, so to speak. So the elders bless Ruth and Boaz too, as in the glorious day to come the whole world shall praise Him as He displays His bride to wondering throngs, in that hour of His manifestation.

CHAPTER 19

They Lived Happily Ever After

Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place; ye are witnesses this day.

And all the people that were in the gate and the elders said,—We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel, and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem.

And let thy house be like the house of Pharez—whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman.

So Boaz took Ruth and she was his wife. And when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception and she bare a son" (Ruth 4:10-13).

This sweet love story closes, as should all such, by suggesting that the happy couple got married and lived happily ever after. That is how the Church's history will end. There will be the marriage supper of the Lamb and then the eternal day of unalloyed bliss following thereafter.

Boaz purchased Ruth to be his bride, as Christ purchased the Church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. He paid a tremendous price to make us His own.

That is God's way of securing a bride. In Israel in that day, and still so today in many so-called heathen lands, a bride had to be purchased. In this country of ours the father *gives away* the bride, which, in my humble opinion, is a sort of veiled insult to the bride. When our children are small we say that we would not sell one of them for a million dollars, yet when they grow up we give them away. That just does not make sense. Giving the bride away suggests she is worth so little she cannot even bring a price in the market. Nor is giving the bride away fair to the parents who have spent thousands of dollars on her education, and should have some compensation for that outlay.

If we had the practice of selling our daughters into marriage, nothing but good could come of it. Under our present system some worthless swain comes along, says he falls in love with your daughter and she believes him. Now all he needs to make her his own is about \$2.00 (the price of a dog license, I believe). You lose her, while she (infatuated with the superficial charm of perhaps some worthless bum) loses her life in a union full of unhappiness and regret. But, if the young man had to purchase his bride (perhaps pay a dowry to her father as in Bible days), he would have to have some real mettle in him. He would have to go to work for years to collect the amount sufficient for this; that would make a man out of him; would make him a worthwhile, worth-having husband. At the same time, it would give the rather unprepossessing young ladies more of a chance at marriage, for they could be offered for sale at bargain prices.

The above sentiments you may take, if you wish, for an attempt at humor, but I still believe there is

a good deal of sound sense right there. One thing is sure—our blessed Lord bought us. He paid the highest price ever paid, or that ever can be paid. Who shall ever fully know what it cost Him to redeem our souls? Silver and gold are utterly insufficient; we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. Every Lord's day morning those simple emblems on the table are there to recall Him and His matchless love, bringing them afresh to our hearts. Oh! as we gather around the bread and wine, may we enter just a little more each time into the agonies of soul and body which He endured to make us His! May we love Him more, Who loved us so!

CHAPTER 20

Bringing Forth Fruit

So Boaz took Ruth and she was his wife. And when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son.

And the women said unto Naomi,—Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.

And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age, for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.

And Naomi took the child and laid it in her bosom and became nurse unto it.

And the women, her neighbors gave it a name, saying,—There is a son born to Naomi, and they called his name Obed; he is the father of Jesse, the father of David" (Ruth 4:13-17).

Boaz married Ruth and a son is born. She bears fruit for him and through him. Even so, right now, in a deeper spiritual sense, we have been united to Christ our Husband, and through Him and for Him, we bring forth fruit unto God. That is the burden of Romans 7:4. There can be no fruit for God in a human life except through union with Christ. In spirit we are His right now, united to Him in spiritual bonds of intimacy and love. Some day in the glory, this marriage shall be publicly solemnized in fullest reality. That is our blessed Hope!

Up till now, Ruth is called the "Moabitess." A Moabite was an outcast, even as the Gentiles were

aliens and strangers, without God and without hope in the world. The law shut us out, but now grace has brought us in. Ruth is an outcast no longer, but the honored wife of an honorable man. So are we strangers no longer, but the Bride of Him Who redeemed us with His blood. And so the epithet "Moabitess" is not attached to Ruth's name anymore. All the stigma of distance and disgrace is gone when the soul is brought to Christ. The past is all blotted out.

In complete fulfilment of all God's purposes, through the birth of Ruth's son Obed, the name of the dead has been raised up, for many centuries later, through this very son, Christ the Savior of the world was born. And He is the One Who brought life from the dead, and to the dead.

The child is named "Obed," meaning either "servant" or "worshipper." Yes, worship and service are both the fruit of union with our Lord, our Savior and Redeemer.

Redemption's Story Told Out in "Names"

*"Now these are the generations of Pharez; Pharez begat Hezron.
And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab.
And Amminadab begat Nashon, and Nashon begat Salmon.
And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed.
And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David"*
(Ruth 4:18-22).

The chapter and the book closes with a list of names, in which whole generations are omitted. For instance, as we said earlier, there is an interval of over 450 years between Salmon and David, yet only

four generations are mentioned for that length of time. The purpose evidently is to present precious spiritual truths, as suggested in the names that *are* recorded; rather than present mere chronological data.

It is most precious to notice that the names of the four women found in the genealogy of our Lord as given in the first chapter of Matthew, are also suggested here; they are Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. The history of these four women (and by the way, ordinarily women's names were never included in a Jewish genealogy) present in a striking way the entire story of God's redeeming grace. The Lord, by including them in the list of His forebears after the flesh, is telling us that He is not ashamed to acknowledge such sinners as His "relatives;" even as He is not ashamed to own us as His brethren. And yet, well He might, for we were nothing more than guilty, vile sinners, shut out by law, under the curse. These four women tell the whole story of grace. They tell the story of redemption, hence it is fitting this book of Ruth should close with their inclusion, for Ruth is the romance of redemption.

Tamar was an open sinner; Rahab an harlot saved through faith; Ruth a Moabitess, shut out from contact with God's people by the law, and Bathsheba tells the story of David's sin and God's restoring grace. As brother F. W. Grant so pertinently tells us: "these four tell the whole of redemption's story. For redemption is provided for *sinners*, which Tamar truly was; it is secured by *faith*, as seen in Rahab; it redeems the believer from the curse of the *law* and unites the outcast Gentile to Christ, as Ruth's experience so beautifully portrays; and this salva-

tion is eternal, as witnessed in David and Bathsheba's case, for, though they had sinned so grievously, they were freely forgiven and restored to fellowship with God.

These four names are suggested in these closing verses of Ruth. For Genesis 38:29 tells us that Pharez was the son of Tamar; Matthew 1:5 reveals that Salmon had married Rahab, and of that union the hero of our tale, Boaz, was born. Boaz himself married Ruth, and David was the husband of Bathsheba. Grace divine brought these four women into relationship with Christ, as it does every sinner who trusts Him as Savior.

The last word in this little book is "David." Bright promise of Him Who was to bring in everlasting righteousness and everlasting peace. The book of Ruth opens with the *death* of one whose name means: "My God is King;" it closes with the mention of the *birth* of Him Who in type is God's King—Christ the King of kings and Lord of lords. Of the birth of Him of whom Boaz is only a feeble picture—the Redeemer and the Lover of our souls. To Him be all the glory, both now and forever. Amen!

S E C O N D
P A R T

The Book of Ruth

Presenting the story of the
nation of ISRAEL ruined by sin;
redeemed and restored to God and to her
land, and united in marriage to
her Redeemer-Husband.

CHAPTER 21

Introductory

This book, in its direct interpretation deals with Israel. We have enjoyed meditating on this wonderful little book of Ruth, gathering its precious lessons with their spiritual application to ourselves today, which is perfectly legitimate, for God's Word declares that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, upon whom the ends of the age are come." But the interpretation has Israel in view; both Israel's past history, her present condition and her glorious future. May the Lord guide us into the understanding of this aspect of Ruth, as we dwell on Israel's experiences so wonderfully woven into the fabric of this simple love story!

There is the story of Israel's past, of departure from God in unbelief; there is a suggestion of her present state, and then her future happy restoration

to divine blessing closes the tale. Israel shall yet be united to Christ as her Lord, when Jehovah shall marry His widow-bride, as recorded in Isaiah 54: 4-5: "Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed, neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame, for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood anymore. For thy Maker is thine Husband; the Lord of hosts is His Name, and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall He be called."

It is worthy of notice that this marriage of Christ to Israel is given in Isaiah immediately after that great 53rd chapter, which contains Israel's confession and realization that she has crucified her Lord. When Israel recognizes that, and looks upon Him Whom she pierced, the hour of her union with Christ will strike.

There are just two books in the Bible named after women—Ruth and Esther. It is interesting that in the one a Gentile maid marries a Jew; in the other a Jewish girl marries a Gentile. In Esther we see Israel outside the promised land; in Ruth Israel is presented as having returned to Canaan. Hence the book of Esther presents Israel's present condition, scattered as she is among the nations of the world because of her sin. There she has often, as Esther and Mordecai did, obtained positions of honor and trust among the Gentiles. There God has graciously preserved the nation, in spite of all the devil's opposition and persecution, as so graphically described in the book of Esther.

But in the book of Ruth we see Israel in relation to the past, first and then the future, with only hints

to their present condition. The opening feature of the book calls our attention to the past, when she departed from God of her own accord, for Elimelech was not *driven* out of the land, but in the book of Esther we find Israel carried away forcibly into exile. Elimelech had gone voluntarily, illustrating therein Israel's deliberate backsliding from Jehovah, which began long before she was finally driven out for all these centuries, but which was the direct cause of her dispersion. All these hundreds of years Israel's mind has been blinded and she suffers because of her sin, among earth's millions.

Then, in the redemption effected by Boaz, and Ruth's union with him, we have a graphic picture of Israel and her future blessing as the bride of Jehovah. As Ruth was a widow, she clearly pictures Israel, for Isa. 54:4 shows that Jehovah calls Israel just that. This proves that the interpretation of the book of Ruth is not the Church (though we may apply it thus with perfect propriety), for the Church is Christ's virgin-Bride, but it concerns Israel, here called Jehovah's *widow*.

The objection might be raised that Ruth was a Gentile and not a Jew. That's true enough, but it only serves to emphasize Israel's terrible spiritual condition, since the Word pictures Israel under the figure of a Gentile. Because of her apostasy Israel has lost her status as God's people, and has no higher rating than any other people; by her sin she has come down to the level of the Gentiles; without God and without hope in the world, and called in the Scripture of truth: "Not My people—Lo-ammi." This is shown in such Scriptures as Ezek. 16:3 where God, speaking of the apostate nation, says: "Thy

father was an Amorite and thy mother an Hittite;" or, as in Deut. 26: 5 the worshipper is taught to say: "A Syrian ready to perish was my father." Or as in Revelation 11: 8 where Jerusalem is called "Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." Or again in Isaiah 1: 10 where the Lord calls the rulers of Israel the rulers of Sodom and the nation is called the people of Gomorrah. Morally, in her departure from God, Israel is looked upon as on a level with the wicked Gentile nations; it is exactly that aspect which is presented in this wonderful little book.

Here is Israel's history of redemption; from the far country back Home to God. In every detail this truth fits to perfection and causes one to marvel at the amazing skill that can weave such tremendous truths into such an intricately perfect pattern, while all the time, on the surface, telling only a simple love story. "How unsearchable are God's judgments and His ways past finding out!" Throughout the whole narrative runs, like a silver thread, redemption's sweet story; the story of God's love through Jesus Christ our Lord. Lord, give us hearts to appreciate such love; give us minds to grasp its wisdom, wealth and wonder!

Now let us look at some of the details!

CHAPTER 22

Backsliding Israel Returns

The First Chapter of Ruth

Elimelech left the land of Canaan and died in Moab, leaving his wife a widow. This illustrates how God died, leaving Israel as a nation His widow. I can hear you say: "Do you mean to tell us that God died?" Well, that's the way the Bible puts it, in Isa. 54: 4-5. That passage states that Israel shall not remember the reproach of her *widowhood* anymore, for the Lord of hosts shall again be her Husband. The only way a woman becomes a widow is through the death of her husband. The husband in this case is God; Israel His widow. Of course, we all know that God did not actually die, nor can He, yet Scripture employs that thought here. It means of course that, when Israel sank into sin and idolatry, it *seemed* as if God had died, for He left them to the mercies of their enemies. They were cruelly persecuted and eventually, after the fearful massacre under Titus, driven out of their own land, as it were a widow as pictured in Naomi, who became a widow, lonely and forsaken in a foreign country. The book of Esther illustrates this idea, for throughout it, as has often been noticed, God is never mentioned; it just seemed as if He did not live anymore. No doubt the Spirit of God in Isaiah employs this striking imagery in order to impress upon unhappy Israel her hopeless condition. Not only had they forsaken God, but God had forsaken them.

After Elimelech's death, his sons married Moabite wives. The sons' names were Mahlon and Chilion, meaning "sick" and "pining." Bye and bye they

died also, and Naomi was left completely alone. The whole family had died out now, suggesting in type that nationally Israel had ceased to exist. It has been suggested that dispensationally Elimelech's death answers to Israel's captivity in Assyria and in Babylon. At the end of the seventy years a sickly, pining remnant returned, represented here under the names of Elimelech's two sons. Finally that remnant died also, and in the year A. D. 70 Israel became, so to speak, a widow—alone, forsaken of God, far away from her rightful home, strangers in a strange land. All the above, dispensationally, pictures Israel's past and present history.

Now we come to the tale of the three widows. Naomi, as we have just said, represents Israel today, away from her land, scattered among the nations of the earth. Thus Naomi pictures the backslidden nation of Israel.

Orpah, going back to her people and her gods, presents Israel in her apostasy in the future day. For a large portion of the nation of Israel will turn back into idolatry, worshipping Satan's Christ—the Antichrist—as her god, as our Savior said in John 5: 43: "If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." Or, as II Thess. 2: 4 shows, that sinister person "shall exalt himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (and that temple will be in Jerusalem, as was Israel's temple of old). Many apostate Jews shall worship this Antichrist as their God; this is the abomination of desolation spoken of by our Lord in Matthew 24.

Ruth, of course, presents the believing remnant of Israel that shall return to the homeland and will

there meet Christ, and eventually be united to Him in marriage, to be forever Jehovah's Bride. Paul speaks of that believing section of Israel at length in Romans 11, as well as in a number of other places in the New Testament.

Returning now to Naomi, we see her go back to the land, bitter in spirit and unbelieving in heart. It is not her faith that draws her back, but her need. Even so shall backslidden Israel return to Canaan; in fact, thousands upon thousands are returning right now; most of them ignorant of God, in unbelief. Naomi went back for bread for her body; not because she realized her need for spiritual food. So Israel, in going back to Canaan, is not returning for spiritual blessing but only for material gain or relief. Naomi actually encouraged her daughters-in-law to return to idolatry. So Israel shall return to idolatry for the most part, to the fearful climax of the worship of the Antichrist—Satan's counterfeit of the true Christ who is Israel's Messiah.

All this does not make for happiness exactly, so there are lots of tears shed, and there is a distinct note of despair in Naomi's wail. How true to fact this is! There is no hope for Israel in herself. Naomi admits there is no hope as far as she is concerned. She cannot produce any husbands for her daughters-in-law. However, if she cannot produce life, God can. And God did, and will. In Ruth's case He provided a husband, life and joy, as He will for Israel in her day of bliss yet to come. Grace and glory awaited the returning wanderers, all found for them in Boaz. So for Israel—all their future blessing must come through Christ—their Mighty Man of Wealth.

Orpah goes back; Naomi weeps and wails, but in happiest contrast to all this there falls upon our ears

the ringing testimony, the wonderful faith of Ruth. So there will be—in a day perhaps not far off—a believing remnant in Israel that will turn to God and cling to Him in spite of all the opposition and obstacles to the contrary. Even the sorrow of the great tribulation will not turn such aside. Ruth represents that future believing section of Israel, which is yet to be redeemed and brought to God when it recognizes Jesus as the Messiah whom they once pierced and crucified.

Ruth does not know much about God as yet, but she is determined to know Him. As Hosea 6:3 says: "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord." God is leading that lovely character step by step, even as He will believing Israel in the future, till the glorious climax is reached.

They came to Bethlehem, the town of hallowed memories. That is where Christ, the Hope of the world, was born; that is where hope dawned for Naomi and Ruth. They arrived in harvest time, always a time of joy. And it shall truly be a time of rejoicing when Israel returns to Jehovah and Home. Naomi came back in unbelief; Ruth with a living faith in God. So shall it be in Israel's future, so it is already in a measure, I am sure. Many Jews are returning for entirely selfish reasons, with no special thought of God; others are returning with spiritual hopes, with faith in their God.

So endeth the first chapter of Ruth. So also endeth the first chapter in the eventual restoration and re-birth of Israel as a nation. The fig tree is beginning to blossom again; there are signs of the impending spiritual regeneration of God's ancient people Israel.

CHAPTER 23

Israel Meets Her Messiah

The Second Chapter of Ruth

Little does Israel know, as she returns to her homeland, what waits her there; anymore than Naomi and Ruth did. On the bright side, Israel will there meet her Lord, to be shown the mercy of which she is so undeserving, and to be raised to the highest pinnacle of blessing upon the earth. To learn to love Him Whose love she once so sadly spurned.

The steps to her blessing are gradual, beginning with her gleanings in the fields of Boaz. As we compare Lev. 23:22 with Ruth 2:2-3 we learn that the harvest of firstfruits pictures the blessing of the Church. Israel is set aside now and the riches of God's grace go out to the Gentiles. But there is gleanings for the poor and the stranger (Israel is that in this dispensation). In Ruth going to glean in the fields of Boaz we see foreshadowed the believing remnant of Israel returning one by one seeking, however ignorantly,—the blessing of the Lord. And that will eventually bring them into contact with Christ Himself, even as with Ruth in her meeting with Boaz.

Boaz took knowledge of Ruth, as the Lord will of Israel. For she is beloved for the fathers' sake, and shall yet be blessed. Boaz blesses Ruth because she came from afar to trust under the shadow of the wings of the God of Israel (Chap. 2:12). Israel shall do just that in the future day, as so many of the Psalms declare. As in Psalm 91:4: "He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust; His truth shall be thy shield and buckler."

Naomi tells Ruth that Boaz had not left off his kindness to the living and the dead, and blesses him for it. Since Naomi pictures Israel after the flesh—backslidden from God—it is clear that she knows God's kindness to Israel in her past history. And the same God Who blessed that nation *then* has not left off His kindness to them now. For the mercies of God are infinite. God hath concluded them all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all" (Romans 11:32). Israel may well say—that it is because of His mercies that she is not consumed. The grace which Israel once scorned shall yet reach her and save her. God will show mercy to the living, as once He showed mercy to the Israel which is now dead. And that blessing will come, as Ruth's came—through Israel's Messiah and Savior—as Ruth's came through Boaz.

CHAPTER 24

Israel and the Great Tribulation

The Third Chapter of Ruth

But alas, Israel's salvation and elevation must come by way of the fearful time of her "tribulation." With her, as with the believers today, though in a different way, it is the way of the cross that leads home.

In the story of Ruth the emphasis is not placed on Israel's sufferings during the tribulation, but they are hinted at in the winnowing of the barley with which this chapter opens. There must be a winnowing ere Israel can be established as God's people in the promised land. The chaff must be separated from the grain; the judgment of God must fall upon that unhappy nation; Israel must pass through the throes of the great tribulation. And in this painful experience even the true believers in Israel shall come to know much of the awful horrors of that hour of unparalleled woe.

This word "winnowing"—this threshing—is the word "tribulum" in Latin, from which we have our word "tribulation." Israel after the flesh must be separated from Israel after the Spirit; the chaff shall be beaten from the wheat. The grain shall be gathered into the barn; the chaff shall be burned with fire unquenchable.

Here in Ruth 3 the threshing took place at night. It is in the awful darkness of the midnight hour of tribulation that Israel will, as Ruth did here, creep to the feet of her Lord and King, and crave His pro-

tection and His pity. Boaz asks Ruth: "Who art thou?" even as Christ shall challenge Israel in that day of persecution. And Israel shall then confess that she is the one who slew Him, Who pierced her Savior and her King.

But, praise God, that dark midnight hour shall be followed by the bright morning of Israel's redemption, for Boaz said to Ruth: "Lie down until the morning" (chap. 3:13). Then He would finish the thing (chap. 3:18). And that morning of redemption shall again be succeeded by Israel's eternal day of joy and glory. All Israel has to do is to sit still (chap. 3:18). Christ will do it all. It shall all be of matchless grace, carried on by almighty power. He is both willing and able to redeem Israel, and He will do it.

As Ruth goes to seek Boaz' blessing, she prepares herself as a bride for her wedding. So shall Israel in that day, as Isaiah says in Isa. 62:5: "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." Boaz expressed his appreciation of Ruth's seeking after him (chap. 3:10)—and so will Israel's Boaz be glad when that nation is re-united to Him; when in repentance and faith she finds her place at His feet.

Ruth put off the garments of her widowhood and dressed herself in wedding finery. So of Israel it shall be said: "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city . . ." Again Isaiah 52:1, 3: "For thus saith the Lord,—Ye have sold yourselves for nought, and ye shall be redeemed without money." Again: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He

will rest in His love, He will rejoice over thee with singing" (Zeph. 3:17).

Boaz gave Ruth six measures of barley, which she carried home to her mother-in-law. I would suggest these tell the story that through the Christ of God not only shall Israel be spiritually blessed and united to Him—as Ruth was—but also she shall be blessed materially, as seen in the abundance of food taken home by Ruth. All want shall be banished in that happy day; the desert shall blossom as the rose; the curse shall be lifted from all creation, and every burden and care shall be gone.

But Ruth got something infinitely greater—the love of a wealthy, gracious, loving husband. Redeemed Israel shall thrill forever in the enjoyment of His love, of Whom Boaz is but a feeble type. The love of her Savior-King shall be her everlasting portion.

CHAPTER 25

Redemption — Rest — Riches

The Fourth Chapter of Ruth

Boaz is an apt type of Christ throughout this tale. Christ is Israel's Redeemer, as well as the Redeemer of the Gentile believer. In fact, the word "Redeemer" as such is never used in the New Testament, though of course redemption is found there abundantly. The title "Redeemer" is found in the English translation of our Bible 16 times, and always in connection with the nation of Israel, as for instance in that marvelous passage—Isa. 54:4-5, which we have already quoted several times.

In these great verses the double redemption accomplished for Israel, pictured in Ruth's experience, is foreshadowed. There was first the redemption of the *land*; then the redemption of the *person*. To accomplish either of these, our Lord Jesus must needs become the "Kinsman;" must needs, since the children of men are partakers of flesh and blood, Himself take part of the same, "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

If God was to meet man's need (and there was no one else capable of doing so), then He must atone for man's guilt. And, in order that He might die for the sins of men, He must become Man; therefore the Redeemer, whether of Israel or of the Church or of the Gentile nations, must necessarily be our Kinsman. Christ was a kinsman in regard to Israel in a

more direct sense even than to us, for He became, after the flesh, a member of the Jewish race—of the seed of David. (II Tim. 2: 8).

On the Cross our Lord bought the world (Matt. 13: 44), because Israel is to live here forever. This world too has been defiled through sin, as well as those who live upon it, and so the Lord, by His precious death, can now redeem the world from its sin too; creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption—see Romans 8: 21. And bye and bye God will place in this world—then cleansed from sin and sinners by the judgment of God—His redeemed people Israel. As Boaz bought the encumbered property once belonging to Elimelech, so our Lord on Calvary bought this sin-cursed world. And then Boaz bought Ruth too, even as Christ on the Cross bought men by paying the price for their redemption. And hence Israel shall some day, redeemed by grace, be placed on this redeemed earth by God; to be His earthly people forever. Hundreds of Old Testament scriptures deal with that subject.

Many of my readers probably know that the word translated “Redeemer” is the Hebrew word “Gaal.” This same Gaal is also translated “Kinsman” and “Revenger.” Christ is all three to Israel (for right now we are considering the interpretation of the book of Ruth as relating to Israel). He is Israel’s *Kinsman*, for He is, as a Man, of the nation of Israel; He is Israel’s *Redeemer*, Who will unite her to Himself and acknowledge Himself as her Husband; and He is her *Revenger*, for when He comes to reign, He shall smite Israel’s enemies, and deliver her forever from her oppressors. Thus these three cover Israel’s past, present and future—Christ in His life on earth;

in His death upon the Cross; in His future coming again in glory. All glory to His Name!

Let's consider a few of these truths, as set forth in this fourth chapter of Ruth:

Before Christ will claim Israel as His bride, or the world as His property, every other claimant must first be set aside; must be disqualified. It must be clearly established that He is "The" Redeemer; not "a" redeemer, as Naomi had told Ruth—in chap. 2:20. There was only one other contender for the right to redeem the property—to redeem the land once belonging to Elimelech. That land, in the typology of Ruth, directly pictures the land of Canaan.

The right to the land had been forfeited, even as Israel lost its title to the promised land because of her sin, when she was driven forth into all the corners of the world. Israel rejected and crucified her King, saying: "His blood be on us and on our children." With the price of that blood they bought the "field of blood." And that's what their land has been to them since; yea, the whole world as well. It is stained with the blood of the Son of God, aptly called by the Jewish leaders the "field of blood." Alas, the most fearful deluge of blood shall yet flood that land; His blood in revenge shall surely be on their children, as those rejecters of Christ prayed. Rivers of blood streamed in the fearful massacre of A. D. 70 when more than a million Jews were slain, but this will be nothing compared with the deluge that shall flow in the awful day of the great tribulation to come. Blood shall rise, according to Revelation 14:20, to the horses' bridles.

That land of Israel is here—in type—offered for sale. The other kinsman when challenged by Boaz, claims he will redeem it. Who is this other kinsman? It is man of course; in this case, since Ruth pictures Israel's history, it is the Jew. Boaz gave him first chance to redeem, even as the law offered the Jew the opportunity to see what he could do. First came the covenant of law; then that of grace. First man gets his inning; then God will come in. Israel totally failed and lost everything because of her sin and departure from God. Yet man never seems to learn. And, though Israel lost everything in the past through her worthless self-effort, yet she is going back in unbelief to establish a home in her land, while still away from God, and trusting in her own strength.

This is set forth in the kinsman saying that he will redeem the property. Israel is now buying up the land, but there is a vast difference between buying and redeeming it. The kinsman bit off far more than he could chew when he claimed he would redeem the land. Israel may be owning the land of Canaan again, but it is unredeemed land, stained with the blood of Christ, and with the curse pronounced by themselves lying upon it.

Says Boaz (says our blessed Lord to Israel): "If you redeem the land, you must buy it not only at the hand of Naomi, but also at the hand of Ruth the Moabitess, to raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance" (v. 5).

Naomi represents the dead nation; illustrated in the death of her husband and her sons. She pictures present day spiritually dead Israel, backslidden from God. It's not enough, says Boaz, to buy the land back and leave the dead, dead; that would leave

the situation unchanged. True redemption includes life and liberty. You must buy the property off Ruth the Moabitess. She is living, and through her you must produce life—you must raise up the name of the dead (you must, as it were, bring dead, sinful Israel back to spiritual life—to life with God). None but God can do so, and so the other kinsman bows out.

You must buy it of Ruth the Moabitess. When Israel crucified the Christ, the cry was "We have no king but Caesar." Israel identified herself with the Gentiles, claiming their king as her king. They denied their relationship to God and classed themselves with the despised Gentile. That's why Ruth, in this lovely tale, is a Gentile outcast, for such Israel is at present, because of her rejection of Christ. She took that place herself, and God has accepted her estimate; He has disowned Israel as His people. By buying the land from Ruth, the kinsman would acknowledge that outcast Israel was guilty of the death of Christ (for it was then that Israel became identified with the Gentiles and ceased to be God's people); and it is only on the basis of the Cross that Israel can be redeemed; only as Israel acknowledges her guilt shall that very death of her Messiah become the foundation of all her blessing. When Israel owns her guilt she shall once more become His people.

The other kinsman, picturing Israel after the flesh, said he could not redeem the property if it involved marrying Ruth, and raising up the name of the dead. No, there's where man must stop. He could bring sin and death into the world alright, but to take it out again is outside his province. Only God can do it. Praise His Name—in marvelous grace He did come to be the Redeemer.

The kinsman said if he married Ruth he would mar his own inheritance. Perhaps he meant that in uniting himself to a Moabitess he would be sacrificing his reputation, and also would be breaking the law. But that did not deter Boaz; it did not deter our blessed Lord. He deliberately made Himself of no reputation. He did not break the law to marry outcast Israel as her Redeemer-Husband (or in making the Church His heavenly Bride), for He paid the whole penalty of the law in His sacrificial death upon the Cross. Boaz did not die to obtain Ruth, but our Savior did. His death satisfied all the demands of God's law; so now divine grace can be poured forth in rich profusion.

Boaz, in buying the land bought Ruth as well. So Christ at Calvary bought the world, and in doing so bought everything and everyone that is in it. Christ bought the world for a special purpose. He intends it as a national Home for Israel. You and I, believers in Jesus, will have *our* eternal Home in heaven, but Israel's destiny is the renewed, redeemed earth, which God had planned from all eternity as the Homeland of that now downtrodden, despised nation of Israel, but which shall some day be exalted and owned as Jehovah's Bride.

Boaz married Ruth, as Jehovah-God, Israel's Messiah, shall some day marry Israel. We have repeatedly referred to that wondrous passage—Isa. 54: 4-5—where this truth is so clearly set forth. There are other verses in the Old Testament which emphasize this truth, as Hosea 2: 16, 19-23: "And in that day, saith the Lord, it shall be that thou shalt call Me Ishi (my Husband); and shalt call Me no more Baali (my Lord) . . . and I will betroth thee unto Me

forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord.

And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens and they shall hear the earth. And the earth shall hear the corn and the wine and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And it will sow her unto Me *in the earth*; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy, and I will say to them which were not My people, thou art My people; and they shall say,—Thou art my God.”

Boaz marries Ruth, and a child is born. The neighbor women call him “Obed”—servant or worshipper. Israel, such a terrible failure in the past, now will be, as the fruit of Christ’s redemptive love, a true servant of God; a reverent worshipper of her Messiah.

The neighbors—picturing the Gentile redeemed nations of the future—give the name. For the Gentiles shall in that day rejoice with Israel. Then shall be fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 41:8-9: “But thou, Israel, art My servant Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham My friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art My servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.”

The neighbors tell Naomi that her life shall be restored through the union of Ruth with Boaz—through the birth of Obed. Even so shall Israel, once away from God, as pictured in Naomi, be brought

back to life and to full harmony with the Lord. And not only shall Israel be spiritually blessed and converted, but even materially the richest blessings shall be hers. Upon this redeemed earth, with the curse of sin completely removed, she shall eternally taste rich material benefits, as well as everlasting righteousness and bliss under the beneficent reign of Christ.

The book closes with the name "David." The spiritual reader detects in that name Israel's hope. All the blessings and joys unfolded in type in this little book of Ruth shall find their fulfilment in Christ so often called in the Old Testament, in relation to Israel, David their King.

Hosea 3:4-5 sums up the theme of Ruth, as it typifies Israel's past, present and future. "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim.

Afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God and David their King; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days."

T H E E N D .

