

RUTH

INTRODUCTION

This story is a beautiful illustration of divine providence. We see God working in human affairs to carry out His divine purpose. We see Him overruling the sorrow of former days to bring about a greater blessing. We see Him leading this daughter of a Gentile race and making her a partner in the hopes of His people. We see Him fitting the times and seasons of our lives in bringing these wanderers back to Bethlehem just at the right time, the harvest season. We see His loving care for His children expressed in the beautiful figure of Boaz—"the wings of the Almighty." The God of the widow and fatherless is not dead. Under His sheltering wings His children still lie. And through each perplexing path of life, He will guide their footsteps, providing for their need and safely leading them home. He that watched over the lone widows of Bethlehem will some day wipe our tears away and make us even thank Him for the trials that now we cannot understand.

We see too a type of redemption. In the helpless condition of Ruth, we see our lost condition. Ruth was born of a Gentile race, the Moabites, a race that was under a curse. Moab literally means "son of his father," and we know that the tribe was descended from the union of Lot and his daughter. As such, Ruth well represents the sinful state of God's redeemed people under the curse of a fallen race.

Not only was Ruth a Gentile and a stranger, but she was a widow. Her natural protector was gone, and her nearest kinsman, who had the right to redeem her, refused. How well she represents our helpless condition. Not only lost, but with none to help. And even the law, which came, as it seemed, to save, was unwilling and helpless to save the sinful soul.

But in beautiful contrast to all this, how fine the picture of redemption unfolds in this book. Under Mosaic law, there is a statute providing for what are called Levirate marriages, under which provision is made so a family name was not allowed to perish from the tribe. When a man died, his brother was to take his wife, have children by her and redeem his inheritance. Now, under this provision, Elimelech and his sons having died, it was the right and duty of the nearest kin to step in and save the inheritance and family name, and through the widow raise up seed unto the dead husband. This, of course, involved the forfeiture of the kinsman's own family name and marred his own inheritance. But it was recognized as a patriotic and social duty, overriding personal considerations.

This is what Boaz did for Ruth and what the nearer kinsman refused to do. Boaz merged his own personality and family into Ruth's family, making a real sacrifice, and thus he became her kinsman-redeemer, and then, also her husband. And this is what our Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus Christ, did for us! He sacrificed His own divine rights:

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God
something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!
(Philippians 2:6-8)

Christ gave up a place of dignity and position in heaven, where He was known as God and God alone. And now, He is forever known as man, still divine, yet not exclusively divine, but united to the person, flesh and form of a created being. His whole inheritance is merged in ours. He laid down His rights and honors and took up our wrongs and reproaches, our liabilities and disabilities, and henceforth He has nothing but His people.

He is the merchant man seeking pearls, who, having found one pearl of great price, sold all that He had and bought that pearl. The Church, His Bride, is all He owns. He has invested everything in us. The Lord's portion is His people. Therefore, let us make up to Him what He has laid down. Let us understand His sacrifice and love. And let Him find in us His sufficient and everlasting recompense.

The redeemer not only sacrificed his own inheritance, but he bought back the forfeited inheritance of the dead husband. Likewise, our Kinsman-Redeemer has brought back for us all that we lost in Adam and has added to it infinitely more—all the fullness of His grace, all the riches of His glory, all that the ages to come are yet to unfold in His mighty plan, victory over death, the restoration of the divine image, sonship with God, triumph over Satan, a world restored to more than Eden's blessedness and beauty, the crowns and thrones of the kingdom and all the exceeding riches of His grace and kindness. All this and more is the purchase of His redemption.

In whom the tribes of Adam boast
More blessings than our father lost.

But the best of all the blessings brought by our Kinsman-Redeemer is Himself. Not only does He redeem the inheritance, but He purchases the bride and He becomes her Bridegroom. When Boaz bought the inheritance of Elimelech, he took Ruth also, and she became his bride. And so our Kinsman-Redeemer is also our Husband. Not only does He come down into our nature in the incarnation, but He takes us up into His person in the relationship that is to reach its consummation in the marriage supper of the Lamb.

(A. B. Simpson, The Christ in the Bible Commentary)

Ruth 1:1-14

Back to Bethlehem

It was a mistake for Elimelech and his family to have left Bethlehem; God would have sent them bread. The path became darker and darker. Mahlon means “pining” and Chilion “consumption.” Three graves in a strange land! All the laughter and hope that had given Naomi her name of “pleasant” had turned to sadness; she longed to see the dear village of her childhood and early married life, and to drink the water of the well, 2 Sam. 23:15. It is thus that the banished soul comes back to God. Moab’s fascination palls on the taste, its cisterns are broken and will hold no water. See Psalm 63.

The two younger women climbed the road with Naomi, till they reached the point where the last glimpse could be taken of Moab. There Naomi uttered this remarkable address, urging her daughters to return. It was very thoughtful and tender, and touched chords of bitter memory and deep pathos. But the saddest undertone was not regret for the dead past; it was the feeling that the hand of the Lord had been against her. Nay, dear soul, that hand is already engaged in making all things work together for good. A few more months and your sorrow will be turned into joy, 4:16.

(Through the Bible Day by Day, F. B. Meyer)

Although there was a famine in Bethlehem why was it wrong for Elimelech and his family to leave there?

Deut. 28:1-14 Deut. 30:1-10

Was Naomi’s choice of returning to her original home of Bethlehem a wise choice?

Deut. 30:11-20

Is the bringing of Ruth into the land of her ancestors a type or foreshadow of Gentiles being brought into fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ?

Ruth 1:15-22

Love’s Steadfast Choice

This young woman was to be an ancestor of David and in the line of our Lord’s descent. Moabite though she was by birth, Ruth was designated for the high honor of introducing a new strain into the Hebrew race that was to enrich it, and through it the world. Indeed, we may almost detect in her noble and beautiful words some anticipation of the Psalms, which have gone singing down the ages. But how stern is the discipline through which those must pass who are called to the highest tasks! The death of her husband in their early married life, the anguish of Naomi, the separation from her own people, the loneliness of a foreign land—these were part of the great price that Ruth paid.

May not something also be said for the mother? It was because of her that Ruth was led to her supreme self-giving. She had never seen a suffering soul bear itself so heroically. She felt that in the Hebrew faith there was something which Chemosh had never imparted to *her* people; she craved for herself some of the holy radiance that lingered on the worn face of Naomi. More people watch our bearing than we think. Let us attract them to Jesus!

(Through the Bible Day by Day, F. B. Meyer)

Use scripture including Deuteronomy 28:15-40 to answer the following question: Were the natural disasters that happened in this book intended or initiated by God? Throughout the book of Ruth, does it fully demonstrate the sovereignty of God? Here note a quote from the introduction to Ruth in the Spirit Filled Life Bible (NKJV): “God’s sovereign grace and power are not revealed as man’s opponent, but rather as man’s deliverer. He overthrows the restrictive or damning difficulties into which we fall as a result of sin, the flesh, or the devil.”

Ruth 2:1-13

Gleaning After the Reapers

In great desolation of soul Naomi had returned. She was no longer the happy woman of earlier days. Ruth also must sometimes have experienced the depression of homesickness, which often steals over the heart of the stranger. But the two women found solace where sad hearts will always find it; first in God and then in ministry to each other (2 Cor. 1:4; 7:6). In fact, Ruth’s devotion to her mother became the common talk of the village (v. 11).

Notice the beautiful old-time salutations between the employer and his employees. The omission of these courteous greetings is one of the mistakes of our modern civilization. We live in a time when the relations between master and servant, between mistress and maid, are strangely altered, being largely financial and selfish. Each tries to get as much as possible out of the other, and thus the personal touch is absent. Is it to be wondered at that the human machine runs hard and sometimes breaks down? But Boaz was clearly a good man. He had won the respect of the whole

neighborhood, and his tender words to the young stranger, saluting her as a nestling under the wings of Jehovah, indicated that he dwelt "in the secret place of the Most High."

(Through the Bible Day by Day, F. B. Meyer)

In a great many lives today, separation and ensuing sadness occur; also overseas occupations including the call of war, add to this scene, frequently followed by lack of direction and deep loneliness. The story of Ruth has an encouraging note, however, for through Naomi's guidance, she came under the care of a truly spiritual man. **In order to follow a similar path today, where can we reach out, and to whom should we go, so that we too might find spiritual, Godly guidance?**

Ruth 2:14-23

Kindness to the Stranger

From the time of the Exodus, kind and thoughtful references are made to the strangers within the gates (Deut. 5:14; 10:19). These injunctions found beautiful exemplification in Boaz. How careful should be we who live on a higher level, so far as the knowledge of God is concerned, that we exceed the ancient Hebrews in tender regard for the lonely and bereaved! A desolate woman whose husband had met with an accident said to a visitor whom God had sent on an errand of mercy, "I thought nobody cared." Like Boaz, it is our business to speak kindly to such, though not of our friends and relatives, and who can know how far our words may travel?

We have a glimpse into Naomi's soul in v. 20. It would seem as if she had come to the conclusion that God had forgotten and forsaken her. But when Ruth repeated the words of Boaz, the human love rekindled her faith in God's love. She began to see God's purpose shaping itself. The rainbow shone on the retreating cloud of her tears. What an opportunity is presented, each day we live, of bringing the consciousness of God to weary and heavy-laden lives!

(Through the Bible Day by Day, F. B. Meyer)

We who know Christ and His love, find opportunities to show love to those in sorrow and distress, His never-ceasing love, understanding and care. **Have you experienced these lately, and have you perhaps sacrificed your own plans and time in order to give these lives a new purpose for going on? If so, have you found an inexpressible joy and satisfaction in that opportunity?**

Ruth 3:1-18

The Part of a Kinsman

According to the old Hebrew law, Ruth was already married to Boaz, on the supposition that he was next of kin. Naomi apparently had no knowledge of a nearer kinsman than he. Compare 2:20; 3:12; Deut. 25:5-10. There was therefore no immodesty in Naomi's proposals, though they are foreign to our modern practice. But clearly Boaz acted with admirable self-restraint. His earnest concern was for the good name of the young girl who had thrown herself on his protection, vv. 11, 14. Next to God's grace, the one thought which helps us in the hour of testing is to put the interests of another before our own. Love to our neighbor is ultimately love to ourselves.

What confidence these two helpless women reposed in Boaz! The words with which Naomi closed their conversation suggest a character of absolute reliability. His word was his bond. He was prompt, decisive, and instant in carrying out any measure to which he felt himself pledged. Procrastination will wear out the heart of those who trust us. Let us finish promptly what we undertake! "Diligent in business, fervent in spirit!" Remember that when you trust Christ with anything, he also will not rest till he has finished it.

(Through the Bible Day by Day, F. B. Meyer)

In our society today do you have a good feeling that a persons word is his bond?

Ruth 4:1-22

In the Line of David's Ancestry

We are admitted here to a graphic picture of the old world. Men's memories were longer and stronger than ours, and what was done publicly in the Gate, the place of public concourse, had the seal of permanence irrevocably attached to it. The transference of the shoe indicated the inferior position of woman, though she was honored in Israel more than in the neighboring nations.

What a happy ending! The gleaner need never again tread the fields, following the reaper's footsteps. All the broad acres were now hers, since she had become one with the owner. When we are one with Christ, we no longer work for

redemption, but being redeemed, we bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4). The curtain falls on a blessed group. The tiny babe lies on Naomi's bosom. The women who had gone together into the valley of the shadow of death stand together in the light of the mountaintop. God turns mourning into gladness (Ps. 30:11). And let us Gentiles learn that we too have a part in Christ. In Him is neither Jew nor Greek (Col. 3:11).

(Through the Bible Day by Day, F. B. Meyer)

When Christ redeemed us was there any type of negotiation going on between Christ and the Father and if so what was it?

After we were redeemed is everything taken care of or is there still fear of some type of punishment by God for the things we have done wrong?

"Ruth is hereby brought in among the ancestors of David and Christ, which was the greatest honor. The genealogy is here drawn from Pharez, through Boaz and Obed, to David and so leads towards the Messiah." (Matthew Henry)