

THE BOOK OF RUTH

The story of Ruth and Naomi is the story of all generations. As a Jewish woman, Naomi enjoyed many blessings because she was familiar with the Law and with some prophecies. She had heard about salvation and about the dealings of God with her fathers. In time of suffering, she fled from Judea, as though fleeing from Christ (who came from the tribe of Judah) to live an easy life in Moab. This is similar to a soul that tests the grace of God but denies Him in time of trial and runs back to the world seeking satisfaction. Just as there is a Naomi in every generation, there is also a Ruth. Ruth grew up in Moab (the house of her pagan father), but has heard of the Living God. She went out by faith to Bethlehem to meet the Incarnate Word of God and to find in Him her rest and satisfaction.

The Lord Jesus Christ came "for the fall and rising of many" (Luke 4:34). Naomi fell because she scorned the grace of God while Ruth, the Moabitess, rose by her living faith in Him.

THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK

According to the Talmud, the author of the book is Samuel the Prophet.

The language of the book indicates that it was written before the Babylonian captivity and not after it as some suggest.

The story took place during the time of the Judges. The famine mentioned here is the one that occurred in the days of Gideon (Judges 6:1-6,11). Josephus thinks that Ruth lived during the time of Eli the high-priest.

Some believe that this story was recorded to strengthen the relations between King David and the King of Moab (1 Sam. 23:3-4) and to show that David's grandmother was a Moabitess.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BOOK AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS:

This book was connected to the harvest feast (Pentecost) and was read during the feast. This could be due to the fact that Ruth gathered the grain that was left by the reapers so that she and her mother-in-law could eat. It is the book of harvest; the acceptance of the Gentiles of the faith in the person of Ruth as a new harvest. She carried in her off spring the Lord

Jesus Christ "the True Grain of Life," and gave satisfaction to her mother-in-law.

This is the only book in the Bible that is named after a gentile woman, because Ruth excelled over many others. The genealogy of Christ mentions her name (Matt 1:5) which reveals to us that, although she was a gentile, her blood ran in the veins of the Saviour of the world.

It offers us "the secret of real satisfaction" for the human soul, which is realized through unity with her real Groom, the true Boaz. The words "kinsman, relative, in-laws" appear frequently in the book. This symbolizes the close, family-like relationship between Jesus and the human race; Jesus and gentiles alike.

It draws a connection between the life of faith and conduct. It records the proper manners of speech as in the dialogues between Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth; Boaz and Ruth; and Boaz and the reapers in his field.

The book contains some Jewish customs and traditions. Ruth offers a living example of the active church member.

ITS DIVISIONS

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| 1. The World and Emptiness | Ruth 1. |
| 2. Christ Satisfaction | Ruth 2-4. |
| a) Ruth in the field of Boaz | Ruth 2. |
| b) Ruth on the Threshing floor of Boaz | Ruth 3. |
| c) Ruth and Heavenly Wedding | Ruth 4 |

THE WORLD AND EMPTINESS - RUTH 1

Elimelech (=my God is King) left Bethlehem with his wife Naomi (=blessed in heart) and his sons Mahlon (=drought or illness) and Chilion (=destruction, ruins) because of the famine that came upon Judea and they rushed to Moab. This is like the person who thinks that the church (Bethlehem) means deprivation and that following Christ means loss. So, he goes with his wife, which represents his body, and his two sons, representing his talents and potentials. He thought that the world is capable of satisfying his needs, fulfilling his body and developing his talents, but he ends up losing everything, even his own self.

The man was called Elimelech, but unfortunately he bore the name superfluously, since it means "my God is King," which in his heart he did not rely on his God as a King. Instead, he went out to live in the shadow of the King of Moab. He bore the name without living up to it, so he begat drought (Mahlon) and ruins (Chilion).

Elimelech and his family left the land of their inheritance and rushed to a strange land, seeking refuge in it, in spite of God's warning to them about associating with the heathen nations that might lead them astray; away from the truth (Deut. 23:6). As a result, Naomi lost her husband while her two sons married Moabites, settling there, contrary to the Law (Deut. 7:3-4; Exodus 34:15,16). Later those two sons died without heirs.

Naomi, the type of the pampered flesh, became bitter and completely empty and realized her need to return to Judea, representing the desire of those who deviated from the truth to return to the church.

Naomi treated her daughters-in-law with gentleness and kindness. There is no doubt that their commitment to her was as a result of her love for them. She asked them to return to their land declaring to them that what she desired for them was more than what she desired for herself (1:11-13). After pleading three times, Orpah bade her mother-in-law farewell and returned home after shedding tears of love. Orpah represents type of human loyalty. Ruth extended the level of human limits. She excelled in faith and exceeded above the human mind. She carried the faith of Abraham, who crossed over from Haran to Canaan to follow God thereby enjoying being the spiritual father of believers. As for Ruth, she fled from Moab to Canaan worshiping the true God and granting all believers the beginning of the royal lineage. From her offspring came the King of Kings in the flesh.

The return of Naomi and Ruth to Bethlehem moved the whole city (1:9), because Naomi returned with a bitter heart and an empty soul. She considered this divine chastisement for her sins.

- Naomi- symbolized the law = old age, bareness, inability.
- Ruth- Symbolized grace = marriage to Boaz (symbolized Christ) the taking away of widowhood, the bearing of King and the renewal of hope (insistence on returning).

CHRIST AND SATISFACTION - RUTH 2 - RUTH 4

Ruth came to Bethlehem accompanying Naomi and she entered Boaz's field gathering the fallen heads of grain, as though symbolizing the gentile nations that entered the faith and accepted membership in the

Church (Bethlehem = house of bread). She clung to the Law (Naomi) spiritually, but she wasn't slack. Instead, Ruth entered the field of Jesus Christ (the real Boaz) gathering in the last days what the patriarchs and the prophets had previously labored for. She gathered the "Grain of life," the Lord Jesus who grants fullness.

FIRST: RUTH IN THE FIELD OF BOAZ - RUTH 2

As Ruth entered Bethlehem, she found Boaz who was a relative of hers. When we receive membership in the Church, we find our Saviour Himself a relative of ours.

Boaz (= Strength or might) - Christ is our strength and might. He lifts us from the humiliation of Hell.

(Mighty man of valor) (2:1) does not merely mean "man of war," but also implies someone who commands respect, since in Christ Jesus we have victory (2Cor. 2:14).

Ruth, the foreigner, took permission from her mother-in-law to go and gather the fallen heads of grain after the reapers. She was serious about that, not taking much rest (2:7).

Naomi symbolizing the Law = she stayed at home (the passiveness of the Jews in receiving Christ).

Ruth representing the Gentiles = she went out to gather the grain heads that the farmers had labored on (John 4:37-38).

Boaz's question was, "whose young woman is this?" (2:5) and the answer was that she was a foreigner (2:6) without a man to belong to, like all nations and gentiles who wait for Christ as their Groom.

As Ruth went to Boaz's field, he had a conversation with her (2:8-16) that entailed:

- a) Calling the foreigner his daughter (2:8)... enjoying son ship (adoption to God).
- b) Asking her to stay close to his maidens, to stay with him (Christ) (2:8) and His saints (song 1:18).
- c) To keep her eyes on the field like it was her own (2:9).
- d) To drink from the vessels with the young men as to drink from the springs of the Holy Spirit (John 3:37) through the Church.

When Ruth felt the overflowing love, she knelt down to the floor pouring down (2:10) as a sign of gratitude for the free gifts of God. Because she humbled herself, she deserved to hear words of praise (2:11).

She left her first (Satan) and her mother (the sinful life) and walked to a people she did not know before (the new church). In humility, Ruth offered her gratitude (2:13).

Boaz asked her to join him and share his food (2:14), as a symbol of the union between the Church and Christ in the communion of His holy body, sustaining her to work in His vineyard (2:15-16)

In short, the dialogue revealed the love of Christ and His gifts, and Ruth's humility and her gratitude.

After a long and joyous workday, Ruth gathered the fallen grain heads and beat them with a rod to separate the barley from the shaft. She entered the city and gave her mother-in-law about an ephah of barley, which was enough for both of them for about five days. She symbolizes the soul that, in its spiritual love, has met with the real Boaz, and is beaten with the rod of the cross. She has gathered the satisfying fruit of the Spirit.

What engaged Naomi's heart was the person of Boaz and not the harvest itself, representing the law whose aim is to lead the believer to enjoy Christ and not only His blessing in themselves (2:20). Naomi asked Ruth to cling to Boaz maidens that is to have fellowship with the saints so she can enjoy with them the heavenly wedding feast.

SECOND: RUTH AT THE THRESHING FLOOR OF BOAZ - RUTH 3

Naomi guided Ruth in going down to the threshing floor and meeting Boaz in the bed chamber. There, Ruth asked him to "cover her with his blood" and to accept and unite her to himself after she had been widowed for a while and had lived without a husband.

Naomi's heart's desire (the Law) was to see Ruth united with a bridegroom (Christ) and to raise up offspring for the dead according to the Law. Therefore she told Ruth to meet Boaz, not in the field, but in the bedchamber at night, where is the life of secret private meditation. There she can hear His voice, obtain His promise, enjoy His person and be in His embrace.

Naomi's advice to Ruth led to the fulfillment of her unity with Boaz (3:3-4) through:

- a) Washing = baptism, without which no one will enter the kingdom.
- b) Anointing = Chrism, so one can have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in her.
- c) Putting on garments = Christ is our garment (Galatians 3:27).

- d) Going to the threshing floor = meeting with the Judge who separates the chaff from the wheat.
- e) Waiting until he had finished eating and drinking = so he would be alone (a confidential love dialogue).
- f) Entering at his feet = leaving worldly concerns and entering into God's love discovering His divine secrets as much as one can take (at the feet). In the world to come, we will meet Him face to face and not at His feet.
- g) Lying down = accepting suffering and burial with Him to enjoy the power of His resurrection.

THE MEETING OF RUTH WITH BOAZ (3:6-13)

She uncovered his feet to indicate that she is a relative in need of his protection and covering (3:9). Boaz blessed her wisdom and her love and started to praise her for her loyalty to her first husband and her mother-in-law. He also praised her pure conduct, since she didn't go after young men, whether poor or wealthy, but rather she went to her near kinsman so that he could fulfill his right of kinship.

THE RETURN OF RUTH TO HER MOTHER-IN-LAW (3:14-18)

She carried double what she obtained from her full day's work (3 measures of barley). What a person gains through meditation is double what he gets through striving, but one can't enjoy the threshing floor experience without the field and meditation without work.

Noami didn't recognize Ruth, because she asked her "Is that you my daughter?" (3:16). Maybe Ruth's meeting with Boaz caused her heart to rejoice so that even her countenance was changed. With every meeting with the Lord Jesus our life is filled with glory.

THIRD: RUTH AND THE HEAVENLY WEEDING (RUTH 4)

Boaz sat at the city gate to acquire Ruth as a bride for himself after she was freed from her redeeming kinsman according to the Law. He redeemed what was Elimelech's and his sons, to raise up offspring for the dead.

A meeting was held at the city gate with a council of elders; ten elders representing the Law and its ten commandments, which gave freedom to Ruth (the human soul) from her near kinsman (the authority of Satan who rules over it) so Boaz could acquire her a bride to raise up offspring for the dead. The near kinsman was unable to redeem her (save her) so he left her to Him who is able to save. The custom of taking off the sandal and giving it to the next kinsman indicates the unworthiness of the

first kinsman to tread the land of the deceased and the passing of the right to another, so he could tread it and own it.

Boaz's concern was not for Elimelech's field or his land, but for Ruth, so she would bear children and a name would be raised for the dead, that he would not be cut off from among his brethren (4:10).

Everyone blessed the self-giving spirit of Boaz (4:9-12) by:

- a) Blessing his wife as God blessed Jacob's wives who bore the twelve tribes of Israel.
- b) Giving him a name in Ephrathah.. what better name than being a symbol for Christ!
- c) Blessing his house so it would be like the house of Perez who preached his brother Zerah in the womb, and took the birth right from him (Genesis 38:29-30).

Ruth bore Obed, who was attributed to her lineage (4:13) because he is the fruit of her faith in God, who is able to give life after death (4:15).

Obed (which means slave) represents Christ who became a slave (Philippians 2:7), eased her old age (4:15) by taking it away and renewing her youth. This son was better for her than having seven sons (4:15). The seven sons symbolize the blessing of the Lord (1Sam. 12:5). The "True Obed" in us is greater because he points to the Lord Jesus.

Naomi's joy over Obed (she embraced him and nursed him) represents the fulfillment of the Law and the prophecies in the person of the Messiah.

The book concludes by announcing the coming "David" as a fruit of his grandmother Ruth. The holy royal root started in the Jewish nation and grew and produced the unique fruit, the Son of David, who is the true spiritual King.

The book starts with the famine from which Elimelech fled with his family to Moab. It ends with real satisfaction as the whole world enjoys the Son of David, who is "the desire of the nations."

STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why was a whole book dedicated to Ruth, who was a gentile?
2. Describe the living faith that works out of love in the lives of Ruth and Boaz.
3. Compare Naomi who left Bethlehem and was bitter and Ruth who

came to Bethlehem and reigned.

4. Compare Naomi as a symbol of the law and Ruth as a symbol of grace under the new covenant.
5. Does the Divine love of God ignore human love? Elaborate.
6. How did Boaz portray a living picture of the Lord Jesus and His work of salvation?
7. What does the taking off of the sandal mean for a man who refuses to marry his relative's widow?
8. Describe the practical aspects of faith in Ruth's life:
 - a) in Moab.
 - b) in the field of Boaz.
 - c) at the threshing floor of Boaz.

