

SERMONS ON
THE BOOK OF RUTH

By

R. Douglas Meadows, 2008

OBJECTIVE

My objective is to accurately convey the historical account, touching on spiritual lessons and offering practical applications.

METHOD

I have divided this book into eight sections. Each section is outlined. The discussion is in paragraph form. The three elements of the objective are interwoven throughout the text.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

Jewish tradition assigns the authorship to Samuel. Some suggest it was probably written after David became king. If that were true, Samuel could not have been the author since he died prior to David's reign (cf. I Samuel 28:3). [It is possible, however, that Samuel wrote the book after David was *anointed* (cf. I Samuel 16:13).] The book was written about 150 years after the events it records and covers a period of a little more than ten years. The events of this book took place during the time of the Judges (1:1). Many scholars believe that the judge who ruled at the time was Gideon. It is a common view among commentators that this book is an appendix to Judges and an introduction to First Samuel. John Gill said, "...[it] is fitly placed between them both" (p. 92). The main purpose appears to be the giving of the genealogy of David. The book furnishes examples of "...bearing afflictions patiently, of industry, courteousness, kindness to strangers, and young converts" (J. Gill, p. 92).

Gill, John. Exposition of the Old Testament: Joshua-Psalms. London, 1853.

"The book of Ruth is a love story, not so much between a young man and a young woman, but between a young woman and her mother-in-law."

Holdcroft, L. Thomas. The Historical Books. 1970. p. 23

Ruth 1:1-5

We are very much aware that life is uncertain (cf. Proverbs 27:1). Some of that which comes upon us unexpectedly is bad. Things happen. Life can be hard. Decisions must be made. We may not be able to control our circumstances but we can control our responses. May we make sound decisions, for we will have to live with the consequences of our choices.

PERSONAL LOSS

We begin an exposition of the book of Ruth. This book is classified as an *historical* book, so the events are that of Israel's history. Although this study will not contain all of the relevant New Testament teachings, I believe it will be helpful to spend our time here. All Old Testament writings have a purpose. They are God-inspired and God-preserved. It would be an error to bypass those blessed books.

The verses in this section are an introduction to this book. They are to this book as the *setting* is to a play. The main story of this book is being "set up" here.

I. DIFFICULTY vs. 1

There are four things to notice in this verse. One, *the society* -- this was a time of confusion. Judges came and went. The nation floundered in their faithfulness to God. See, Judges 2:11-19. Two, *the sin* -- as was mentioned in Judges 2:11, 17, 19. If these events did occur in the days of Gideon, then note, Judges 6:1. A later verse, Judges 17:6 gives a description of that time period. Of course, the individualistic sin caused the nation to depart. Three, *the suffering* -- the text states "there was a famine." God had warned the nation this could happen (Deuteronomy 31:16-18). Another warning was given in Leviticus 26:14-21. Later, in II Chronicles 7:13-14, there is a direct correlation of sin to economic disparity. Four, *the "certain" man* -- this one's name is Elimelech who happens to have a family for which he is responsible. Realize that all men are "certain" men. God takes note of every one, of every action, every thought, every word,...and, He is keeping record. **You** are a "certain" man (or, woman). You live in troubled times. You might experience difficulty in life.

II. DECISION, vs. 2

The majority of this verse lists the family names; I will consider these in a few moments. There is no doubt in my mind that he made the best decision he knew. The Scripture does not share his reasoning. Regardless, he had to live with his decision, and so did his family. Realize that he left God's promised land to go to a heathen dwelling place.

III. DEATH vs. 3

Death can come at any time. It strikes without warning. It can strike anyone. It is not a respecter of persons. Death often leaves children without parents, a spouse all alone, and parents without children. Introduced is Elimelech's wife, Naomi. How do you think she is impacted by the death of her husband?

IV. DWELL vs. 4

Naomi was handed a set of circumstances and now she has to deal with them. It does not matter whether or not she is to blame. She suffered personal loss while in a foreign land. A bright spot, however, is that both of her sons found wives. The loss she has suffered is replaced by the joy of daughters-in-law. The only problem here is, both boys married outside of the nation. They married foreigners who have their own beliefs and their own gods.

Naomi decided to stay there. She "dwelled there about ten years."

V. DECLINE vs. 5

Suddenly and without warning, more death. Naomi loses both boys. Now she is bereft of all her kin, her husband and both sons. How does this affect her? Verse six tells us she now has a desire to return to her homeland. Notice, verses 20-21.

VI. CONSIDER

Elimelech ("my God is King") would appear to be a follower of Jehovah-God of Israel. He departed from Bethlehem ("house of bread") to go to a pagan land. He took his wife Naomi ("gracious" / "pleasant one") and his sons Mahlon ("weakly" / "sick") and Chilion ("pining" / "consumption"). Both of the sons married outside of God's instruction. Both of the sons apparently died young.

VIII. CONCLUSION

We have seen a brief introduction to this book. We are now poised to enter the main story presented. Yet, haven't we learned that the *decisions* we make can have long-lasting results, and that, as Solomon states, "time and chance happens to them all" (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

Sadly, we have read of one who led his family *away* from God. May we not do the same. May we, when sudden and traumatic circumstances come, be found to be faithful to God! May we respond in a godly fashion. May God's hand of blessing rest upon us, both now and forever.

Ruth 1:6-18

The verses under consideration reveal to us a rose among the thorns. In our text is a

triumph rising up from the ashes of defeat. What we find is a touching story of commitment. We find something, of which, if we have had the opportunity to experience, we have indeed been blessed of God.

PRECIOUS LOVE

I. HOMEWARD BOUND vss. 6-7

The word “then” relates to us that there are **trials that educate**. Naomi lost her husband but chose to stay where she was. After losing both sons, now she decides it is time to move on. Conditions can teach us many things, and, as we say, it can be the “school of hard knocks.” To learn from this we must be reminded that we are always in the midst of some sort of circumstance, either positive or negative. Our text involves the negative. I recall when I was in college, I loved the setting so much I would have probably stayed there as long as possible, but God allowed afflictions to come. Soon, I was willing to leave. Negative circumstance can be a real motivator. Remember the death of Stephen and the persecution of the church brought about the dispersion of the Christians, (Acts 8:3-4). They had been commanded to carry the gospel abroad but had found it comfortable at home. God used hard times to bring about His will. Therefore, God will often use circumstances to teach us lessons of life and specific truths or motivate us to certain action.

Next, we have a **telling that encourages**. The text reads, “for she had heard.” Proverbs 25:25 states, “As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so *is* good news from a far country.” Also, “Heaviness in the heart of a man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad” (Proverbs 12:25). This is true in Naomi’s case. Things were tough but then she heard some good news and she decided to head home. The blessing, by the way, is that God brought an end to the famine. Knowledge of such blessings may cause us to take courage. Also, glad tidings are often magnified by the negative circumstances. Perhaps, if she had not lost her husband and sons, she might not have cared if the famine in Israel was over. Please consider: it should always thrill us to hear of God “visiting” His people; and, departure from God and from among His people positions us to only “hear” of the good news and not “experience” it.

Finally, these verses tell us it is **time to exit** (vss. 6a, 7). Naomi and her daughters-in-law set out for Israel together (vs. 7a). We find a decision was made to return just as a decision was made to depart. I think of the prodigal son whose story is recorded in Luke chapter 15. See verses 12-20a.

II. HOPELESS BRIDES vss. 8-13

It appears that soon into their journey, it occurs to Naomi to speak to the girls. In verses 8 and 9 we find Naomi’s consideration. She thinks they should return home. She even asks God to bless them. Upon which, she kisses them goodbye and great emotion surfaces. Both girls, however, express good intentions (vs. 10). Usually, the focus is placed upon Ruth but there is positive intent in Orpah too, “they said unto her.” Then, in verses 11 through 13 we find a lengthy commitment. Naomi asks them to reconsider. Serious thought reveals the kind of commitment required. Notice that Naomi is truly compassionate toward

them (vs. 13c). She also seems to accept blame for their troubles.

III. HONORABLE BOUNTY vss. 14-18

Permanent answers are offered in verse 14. After reconsideration, Orpah chose to remain in Moab. It is interesting to notice that Orpah means “stiff-necked” (and possibly) “turning the back.” After reconsideration, Ruth chose to cleave to Naomi. The word *clave* means *to cling, adhere; abide fast, be joined, follow close, cleave*. By the way, Ruth means (scholars are unsure) “companion, friendship,” perhaps, “beautiful.” In either case, this is a distressing situation for all concerned. Emotions run high.

A **persuasion is attempted** in verse 15. Naomi tries to convince Ruth to stay behind. Two methods were used here. One, by way of comparison, “thy sister-in-law” has returned. Two, by way of heritage, “her people...her gods...” Orpah’s gods are Ruth’s gods; Ruth was Moabitish too. I believe that Naomi had good intentions but she is encouraging Ruth to follow strange gods. By way of a spiritual application, Naomi is trying to dissuade Ruth from coming to the people of God and to the place of God.

Verses 16 and 17 demonstrate a **precious attachment**. This involves a *going*, “for whither thou goest, I will go.” It involves a *dwelling*, “and where thou lodgest, I will lodge.” There is the matter of *associating*, “thy people *shall* be my people.” That of *worshiping*, “and thy God my God.” Of *living*, “*if ought* but death part thee and me.” Finally, that of *dying*, “where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried.” To me, it sounds like a complete abandonment of one to another. It is a precious love which speaks this way. These words express a total commitment. It is no wonder these verses are often used in wedding ceremonies. Here you find a recipe for a successful marriage, viz., total commitment coupled with precious love. Such is a priceless treasure, hence, “honorable bounty.”

Finally, in verse 18 there is a **persistent attitude**.

IV. CONCLUSION

Would to God that such precious attachment would persevere. Yet, marriages often do not continue as they began. Praise God if you have been blessed with someone who loves you in such fashion. Certainly, there is no greater example for this kind of love than Jesus!

Ruth 1:19-23

Every event of life must first pass through the hands of God before it can come to

pass. God may prevent it. He may permit it. He may alter it. Or, He may choose to cause it. Any way you turn, God supervises every event and every detail. God does allow things to happen to us. Also, permit me to say that nothing catches God by surprise. Nothing messes up His plans. Nothing causes God to return to the drawing board to redesign His will. GOD IS IN CONTROL.

Theologians define God as possessing a *directive will* and a *permissive will*. The directive will (decreed will) is when God causes a thing to come to pass according to His purpose. The permissive will (negatively, will of approbation) is when God allows a thing to come to pass according to His purpose. Either way, God interacts in the affairs of men and God's will is perfectly accomplished in Heaven and in Earth. This interaction is termed *the providence of God*. J. L. Dagg wrote it is "God's care of his creation" (p. 116). "The will of God is also manifested in his providential care and government of the universe. In creating it, he has established laws, both mechanical and spiritual, by which it is regulated. Yet he has not withdrawn his own presence and power in its continued guidance and preservation; but is constantly developing, through it and in it, his eternal purpose." (Boyce, J. P. Abstract of Systematic Theology. Philadelphia, 1887. p. 108)
[See also, Simmons, T. P. A Systematic Study of Bible Doctrine. Daytona Beach, 1969. pp 71-76; Dagg, J. L. Manual of Theology. Harrisonburg, VA: Gano Books, 1990.]

I personally believe that God was providentially working in the life of Naomi. From the human viewpoint, humans made all the decisions apart from God's intervention. From the divine standpoint, humans made decisions which God allowed. He may have *guarded* ~ that is, kept man from changing his mind; *protected* ~ that is, nothing interfered with the decision; *altered* ~ that is, caused man to change his mind; or *hindered* ~ that is, allowed interference affecting man's decision. In summary, Proverbs 16:9 says, "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps." Or, as a pastor friend phrases it, "Man proposes, but God disposes." That is the providence of God.

PROVIDENTIAL LEADING

I. PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE 1:19-22

The text tells of Naomi's **return**. Four things I bring to your attention. Notice she came to a *specific place* (vs. 19a). She went home but she could have gone anywhere. God also protected the travelers from thieves and other harm. What if she had not moved from Moab? Or, what if she had moved to somewhere other than Bethlehem? See the *stirred people* (vs. 19b). This incident introduces her attitude. They call her by her right name. This provokes a response [more in a moment...]. Also, reckon the *specific pair* (vs. 22a). She did not return alone. As noted before, they are a truly wonderful set of friends. What if Ruth had not come? What if Orpah had come too? Finally, notice the *certain period* (vs. 22b). They came during the barley harvest. It was true, God had blessed the nation with bread (cf. 1:6c). The time frame is late April. What if they had come earlier? Or, later? It appears to be perfect timing!

The text speaks of a **renaming** (vs. 20). What is in a name? Remember that Naomi

means *gracious / pleasant one*. She now wants to be called Mara which means *bitter one*. She has had a difficult time. She doesn't like it. She wants everyone to know it. Yet, amidst the bitterness there appears to be a recognition of the divine (vs. 20b). She accepts that the events of her life has come from the hand of God. Did God cause the events of the past ten years? Did God cause the deaths of her family members or were they to blame? One may ask, would they have died if they had remained in the land of Israel? Why was it that she still lived? Or, what if Ruth had not married into the family and returned with her?

There are many variables in life. Various alternate endings are possible. But, life is what it is. Naomi sees most of it as being bad. Yet, are those events random? Or, is there a purpose? Could Naomi trust God with the conditions of life? Recall, she made decisions, but do not forget God's providence.

Verse 21 speaks of the **reason**. Why is she bitter? Why does she want a name change? The first part of the verse mentions her *experience*. She had gone through some rough times. But she isn't alone. We all experience like things. Will it be because of sin? Will it cause us to be stronger? Will it be for God's glory? Certainly, not all experiences of life are bad, but these were. The latter part of the verse speaks of her *expression*. There are two ways of looking at this. One, she may simply be blaming God for her circumstances. Two, she is of the understanding God knew her faults and had punished her. I am not sure which one is her view. It is hard to tell. Then, by my observation, I believe an *expectation* is implied. That is, from her perspective, all is lost. There is nothing to look forward to. "Things will always be against me now."

One thing we can learn from this is that circumstances will either draw us closer to God or we will allow them to pull us away.

II. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY 2:1-3

We have the mention of the **family line** (vs. 1). When thinking about her family there are more players in this game than originally thought. There is a glimmer of hope. A kinsman is near. His name is Boaz. We also learn what type of man Boaz is, he is mighty. In other words, he is a man of wealth and power. He is a man to be respected. I wonder what would have happened if he was dirt poor? It is true that he was a kinsman, but there was one who was closer than he. A kinsman was a "near relative, one who had the right to redeem" (New Compact Bible Dictionary, p. 309). One might refer to the daughters of Zelophehad in Numbers 27:8-11 *especially*, vs. 11. What if there were no kinsman at all? What if there were many and Boaz was way down on the list?

Yet, Boaz was near and he was second in line. The name Boaz either means *alacrity* (that is, a cheerful promptness or readiness) or it means *mighty man of valor / strength within him*.

Verse two tells of a **fervent lady**. Ruth saw there was a *need*. They had just returned. They had no income. What if she never perceived the need? She also saw her *ability*. She might not know a trade or have much ability, but she can glean in the fields; she

was healthy, so she can work. What if she were unable? Then, she *desired* to help. She volunteered. She got involved. She was willing to contribute. What if she could have cared less?

Verse three speaks of the **field of labor**. She *went*. This expresses human responsibility. Her thoughts provoked her to action. She went where work was available. She didn't sit around waiting for work to come to her. She *worked*. This also requires human responsibility. There was active participation. She did what she could do. She was "*lucky?*" I realize this is a human expression, but, was she lucky? No. Of course not. God directed her to the right field, to the right man, at the right time. She didn't know, but God did. It is God's providence at work.

III. CONCLUSION

I have purposely raised some questions in order to introduce various possibilities or other scenarios. "What if?" may be a question we like to ponder, but it is impossible and foolish for us to try and figure out every contingency. It isn't for us to resolve whether an event was by God's directive will or His permissive will. Either way, God has a plan and purpose for every event in life. We will not have the answers.

What is important, however, is that we know that God is ultimately in control. See Daniel 4:35; Isaiah 45:9; Psalm 115:3; Psalm 135:6; and, Romans 11:33-36. We must also be responsible. There is the sovereignty of God but there is also human responsibility. Do what you know to do. Do what God says to do. Don't do what you should not do. If you have trouble trusting God, ask yourself, if God is not in ultimate control of this universe, including every event and item within it, how could we say that Romans 8:28 is true?

Ruth 2:4-17

The Apostle Paul says, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound" (Philippians 4:12a). Uncertainty prevails upon most of us. Life usually has its ups and downs. We would do well to be able to adapt to our circumstances like that. We must know how to be abased. We must know how to abound. Fortunately, by God's grace, pain and travail normally comes to an end. Winter lasts for a season and then comes the Spring.

Difficulty usually gives way to comfort. I did not say *luxury*, nor are we carefree, but relief comes. That is where we find Ruth. Death came to her husband. A move to Israel was made. Hard work was necessary. But this text offers a “breath of fresh air.” A measure of comfort is found. Confirmation is given. Blessings are bestowed. Ruth is going to learn how to abound.

PRIVATE LICENSE

I. BOAZ CAME vs. 4

Ruth is out working in the fields and the hero shows up. Get a basic vision of the picture presented in the text, “Boaz came.” Being a man of great responsibility, he comes to check things out. He owns the fields and he wants to see how things are going. You can see in this text what kind of man he is by noticing the attitude he has toward his servants. He greets his servants with a blessing. He desires God’s hand to be upon them. He recognizes good things come from God (cf. James 1:17). He believes and trusts in God. He has a kind and pleasant disposition toward his workers. Better yet, note the attitude of the servants toward Boaz. They likewise desire God’s blessings to be upon their employer. That, my friend, is a good work relationship.

II. BASIC QUESTION vss. 5-7

It is obvious that Boaz looked over the field and the workforce. He speaks to the servant in charge. (It may be deduced that he had delegated his authority in a proper fashion.) After seeing Ruth he raises the question, “Whose damsel is this?” A basic answer follows.

The servant states her identity and association (vs. 6b). Then he explains how it came to be that she was in the field. The servant had granted her permission to glean there. Four things emerge. One, there are the *stated preliminaries*, viz., Who is this? Two, Ruth had *sought permission* to work in the field, “I pray you, let me.” Three, *she persevered* in her labors, “and hath continued.” Four, there was a *short period* of break time. This time of rest appears to be just a little before lunchtime.

She wasn’t looking for a handout, she was looking for a “hand-up.” She needed help and she got it. The servant graciously allowed her to glean. But now, a good thing is about to get better.

III. BE CONTENT vss. 8-9

Boaz takes an interest in Ruth. He invites her to stay in his fields. He takes measures to protect her. He gives her special liberties. She already had permission from the field manager, she now has the owner’s approval. Boaz could have overturned his servant’s decision and expelled her from the field, but he did not. Just the opposite. He gives her his personal blessing. She has reason to be content.

IV. BEAUTIFUL CHARACTER vss. 10-14

In this passage we find Ruth's humility expressed (vs. 10). Notice: *her position*, "fell on her face, and bowed"; *her perspective*, "why have I found grace"; and *her person*, "I am a stranger?" Her character is also expressed (vs. 11). This testimony is indirect because it was learned by someone else and conveyed to Boaz. The first part of verse eleven tells of her kindness. The second part of the verse speaks of her commitment. Then, it is seen that a reward is deserved (vs. 12), at least, from Boaz's perspective. Why? Because in Whom she had placed her trust, that is, the Lord, "whose wings thou art come to trust." Of course, God takes notice and will reward accordingly, "the Lord recompense thy work." This should be prosperous, "and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel."

Through these things I see Boaz was a man who recognized good character. He also was a man who acknowledged God. He further believed that there was an opportunity to serve God by being a blessing to her. Upon such words, Ruth accepts Boaz's offer (vs. 13). Giving recognition to his favor is an expression of thanks for his beneficence. She speaks of the comfort his kindness brings. She admits she is undeserving since she was not in his employ. Then, she is invited to stick around for lunch (vs. 14). She responds, bravely eating with the workers. Apparently, Boaz chose to eat with her, for he gave her the food. She eats until she is full, then goes back to the fields.

V. BLESSED COMMAND vss. 15-16

Notice the special permission which is given (vs. 15). Notice the "handfuls on purpose" (vs. 16).

VI. BOUNTIFUL CONCLUSION vs. 17

She worked all day and gleaned about nine tenths of a bushel. A bushel of grain is about 8 gallons. Gleaning that much grain would take a great deal of work. In this we notice her work ethic.

VII. CONCLUSION

We, like Ruth, were strangers and foreigners who have come under His wings. It is Christ Jesus in Whom we trust. Though we be poor and undeserving, the master of the field has given us his personal permission to serve in his field. He protects us in our labor. He gives us handfuls on purpose.

Ruth 2:18-3:5

Sometimes we as Christians get the idea that since we are saved by the Spirit and we live in the Spirit, plus, we handle spiritual matters, there is nothing to the physical. We sometimes adopt the philosophy of "let go, and let God" figuring that He will do everything and we will do absolutely nothing. Sometimes the phrase, "That person is so heavenly minded that he is no earthly good" rings true.

Yes, I know that the warfare which is before us is a spiritual warfare and our weapons are not carnal weapons. At the same time, we are still in this world, and believe it or not, God has chosen to accomplish His tasks, *while we are* in this world. Do you realize that much of what we do is physically related? Our labors for the Lord are not solely abstract and spiritual. Most often they relate to the physical. The key, however, is to accomplish the physical with the spiritual being the basis for our work.

Simply stated, Christians are to be practical in their lives. I didn't say worldly. I didn't say fleshly minded. Our spiritual lives are to be utilized in a practical fashion so that we would actually be of help to someone and a tool in the hands of God. The thoughts which emerge from this text are still spiritual, still truth, and still applicable to each of us, but they are also "fleshly" or practical.

PRACTICAL LABORS

I. GRAIN SHARED vs. 18

Ruth worked and she worked hard, "had gleaned." We all have to work! We all have a work to do! She also ate supper, "after she was sufficed." Although we have work to do, we still must eat. We are human. Then, notice that she shared, "and her mother-in-law saw...gave to her." More often than not, what we do in this life *should* and *will* affect others.

II. GRAND BLESSINGS vs. 19-22

I wish to point out four things. One, there was a *general* blessing (vs. 19). This verse relates a report of the labor, a blessing to be able to labor, and the specific labor. It sure is a blessing when the Lord provides! Consider that God's provision is not always in spiritual things, but most often, it is in the physical arena. Two, there was a *special* blessing (vs. 20). Here we find a pronouncement of beneficence, "blessed is he." This applies to Boaz (there is a similar statement found in verse 19). This blessing turns out to be a greater blessing than at first thought. It also appears to be the possible solution for the present problems. Haven't you found that blessings are uniquely given by God? Three, there is an *extended* blessing (vs. 21). Sometimes, blessings are more than just a short answer. She had the privilege of staying through the end of the harvest. Four, this was a *recognized* blessing (vs. 22). God does provide for us physically. May I say, there is nothing wrong in enjoying God's blessings and giving Him the glory.

III. GRASPED LABOR vs. 23 "...kept fast..."

We find the necessity "to keep at it" for the work did not cease. There was a continual participation in the work. There was a further extended provision, "and of the wheat harvest." We see that the conditions for life and living did not change overnight. Therefore, personal responsibility was required, Ruth "kept fast...gleaned...dwelt."

IV. GREAT ADVICE 3:1-5

Verse one reveals a possible opportunity. Although opportunities (as thoughts or ideas) are abstract, the results are tangible. Verse two reveals Naomi had a knowledge of the circumstances. It helps to be aware of our conditions. Verses three and four reveal the importance of proper timing and proper response. Good timing is good, but God's timing is great! So are godly responses. Naomi instructs her in cultural manners. Ruth is to clean off the dirt and sweat of the workday. She is to sneak down to the threshing floor where Boaz is working. After he retires for bed, she is to go in and lie in a place of submission, at his feet. She is humbling herself and showing that she is like his bare uncovered feet. That she needs protection and covering. Verse five reveals she was wise enough to listen. Wisdom is indeed practical, isn't it? Perhaps Jewish ways didn't make any sense to her, but she was willing to comply. We don't see any questions as to "Why?" or argument over the method. We find simple obedience. "All that thou sayest to me I will do."

V. CONCLUSION

Ruth had a task to fulfill and she strove to complete it. She was blessed of God in her circumstance. Notice how her *immediate* blessing was a preparation for the *future* blessing. She did not know this at the start, but it is how it ended. Ruth also discerned what the proper response should be and she acted accordingly. It is important to point out that her afflictions were not immediately removed. She worked hard in the fields for months. All of the events discussed require people, things, and circumstances, coupled with response; *we must be practical*.

Ruth 3:6-18

We have seen marvelous characteristics of Ruth. We know she was a wonderful woman. Is such a life worth living? Is there benefit in good conduct? Will God reward a godly lifestyle? I believe such answers are, "Yes!" In this passage we will see further evidence of this.

PLEASING LIFE

I. STRICT OBEDIENCE vss. 6-7

Naomi gives Ruth some instruction. Success will require a few things. There must be *hearing*. She must have a knowledge of what she is supposed to do. Then there is *understanding*. She must not only know she must comprehend. Of course, there is a *response*. She must take action upon what she knows to do. All of these things were accomplished in the manner expected. We, therefore, recognize this as complete obedience. She did not leave anything undone. She didn't pick and choose what her response would be. She trusted Naomi, accepted her instruction, and obeyed.

The first part of verse seven is a simple narrative. Here we find needful information to complete the story. Her compliance is mentioned in the last part of the verse. Things could have turned out a lot different than expected. Did she wonder if he would respond positively? What if he did not awake until morning, what then? Did she have any second thoughts? Did she have some suggestions of her own about how this matter should be handled?

II. STRAIGHT OBJECTIVE vss. 8-9

Boaz stirred while he was sleeping. He senses a presence and becomes afraid. He looks around and notices a woman at his feet. Of course, he asks, "Who are you?" To which she replies, "I am Ruth." Then, she states her intent (vs. 9bc). What this boils down to is a request for him to accept responsibility for her. It is almost like a proposal of marriage. She was very careful to declare the relationship mentioning he was a near kinsman.

III. STATED OBSERVATION vss. 10-11

Boaz was well aware of Ruth's character (vs. 11b). He knew what she needed (vs. 11a). He understood the kindness Ruth has shown to Naomi and to himself (vs. 10). As a result, he readily gave her a blessing. What was it that defined her as a virtuous woman? Was it: her commitment and love (1:16-17); her industriousness (2:2); her work ethic (2:7, 17); her perseverance (2:23); her humility (2:10, 3:7c); her obedience (3:5); her kindness and compassion (2:11); or, her self-sacrifice (2:18)? One thing for sure, Proverbs 31:10 says, "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies." Boaz did. He struck it rich!

May we learn that a pleasing life will speak for itself.

IV. STANDING OBSTACLE vss. 12-13

While it is true that Boaz had the right to redeem her, there was a closer relative than he. He must find out what that guy will do first. At first glance it might seem that the whole plan is going right down the drain (vs. 12). But, no one knows for sure, so he will seek to resolve the issue one way or another (vs. 13).

V. STRONG OBLIGATION vss. 14-18

We find that Ruth stayed the remainder of the night. The text is very clear that there was no immoral activity (vs. 14a). Of course, Boaz requested discretion; probably to avoid false accusation (vs. 14b). He sends her away but not empty-handed. He gives to her six measures. The exact measure used is not known but it was most likely an omer. An omer equals four pints. Therefore, six omers equals twenty-four pints, or just under two-fifths of a bushel.

Upon Ruth's return home, Naomi inquires about what happened (vs. 16). After her report, Naomi reassures her, realizing that Boaz has a strong obligation (vs. 18) and he will see it through. Do you think there was any anticipation throughout the day on their part?

VI. CONCLUSION

Three things become evident. A pleasing (godly) life is worthwhile in and of itself. A pleasing (godly) life is recognized by others; such a testimony is of great value. A pleasing (godly) life often provides opportunities.

Ruth 4:1-12

As we come down to the close of this book, we come to the climax of our story. Naomi has returned to the land of Israel and Ruth came along. Ruth offered to go to work, and she did! She worked hard and God blessed her. God provided not only for her at that time but God also providentially led her to the field of Boaz. That, my friend, was a preparation for the future. For, at the end of the barley and wheat harvests, a request for redemption was extended. That is, Naomi and Ruth made it clear to Boaz that Ruth was up for redemption. Naomi planned it, Ruth obeyed, and Boaz became an interested party. He then promised Ruth he would settle the issue. But, before he could fulfill the part of the kinsman redeemer, first, he had to give the opportunity to a nearer relative. What we have in this passage is that story.

PURCHASED LIBERTY

I. PREPARATION vss. 1-2

Most of what we do takes some type of preparation. It might be our job skills or the purchase of a home. Perhaps the pursuit of higher education or merely the routine tasks of the day, even, our service to the Lord. Preparation is essential. Very little things in life “just happen.” Therefore, if Boaz is going to resolve the issue, he must do a few things first. We find him going to the right place, “to the gate.” He patiently waits for the other party to come, “and sat him down there.” When the man shows up, he takes advantage of the opportunity, “ho, such an one.” The second verse tells of further (or, continual) preparation. The impending legal transaction requires witnesses. Ten elders were invited to participate.

II. PROFITABILITY vss. 3-4

The offer Boaz makes is an opportunity for the nearest of kin to increase his land holdings. The man realizes this will be a good financial move and declares his interest in the land. Such is life. Sometimes opportunities arise which may, on the surface, appear to be the right thing. Or, should I say, profitable. As in this case, sometimes, we speak or act before we know all the facts. [I am reminded of how the Gibeonites tricked Joshua and the elders of Israel. The Scripture says they “took of their victuals, and asked not *counsel* at the mouth of the LORD” (Joshua 9:14).] The kinsman accepts the offer immediately. At which point he declares, “I will redeem it” (vs. 4). I wonder if there was a moment of disappointment when Boaz heard those words? Either way, however, Ruth and Naomi is on their way to liberty.

III. PROBLEM vs. 5

Yet, as often happens, an apparent blessing may complicate things. Opportunity sometimes provides us with the privilege to *bite off more than we can chew*. Our prayer in life should be that we can know about the extenuating circumstances prior to a final commitment. The deal for Elimelech’s land includes taking responsibility for Ruth. It was required under the Law for a kinsman to fulfill such an obligation. See verse 7 and 8 below.

IV. PROHIBITION vs. 6

With all of the information available, that which seemed to be profitable was not the best move to make. The kinsman professes, “lest I mar mine own inheritance.” What really occurs here is that God’s providence places the ball back into Boaz’s court. What arose as a hindrance and disappointment to one man, turns out okay for another. I am reminded of Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” The way is now clear for Boaz to do the part of the kinsman redeemer.

V. PROGRAM vss. 7-8

The Law in Israel required Levirate marriage; after a man dies, one of his brother's were to marry the widow to raise up a son to carry on the family name. In this situation, the nearest 'brother' failed in fulfilling this duty. Failure originally provoked a curse. See Deuteronomy 25:5-10, especially, vs. 10. The custom is evidenced as he draws off his shoe. This is called the Halizah Shoe.

Not all students of the Scripture view the actions of Boaz as I just expressed. Others believe he is performing the "institution of go'el." This term refers to a close relative, or kinsman redeemer, who is responsible for the redemption or recovery of a needy family member.

Either way it is viewed, God is triumphant in His providential activity, providing a means for Naomi to be financially secure, Ruth to be married, and a son to be born who will lead us to Jesus. But, Boaz first must take on the role of redeemer.

VI. PROCLAMATION vs. 9-10

Boaz steps in and accepts the responsibility of the *kinsman redeemer*! Only the next of kin can fulfill this obligation ~ Jesus became a child of Abraham, He became a man (our "next of kin"). This also required ability, or, purchase power. The next of kin had to be able to pay the price ~ Jesus is the Only One Who could pay our debt. This redemption will set at liberty that which was in bondage ~ Jesus made it possible for us to be set at liberty.

Boaz is not ashamed to become the kinsman redeemer. He makes his intentions clear. He not only buys the property, he purchases Ruth to be his wife. His desire is public and is witnessed by others. Neither is Jesus ashamed. Hebrews 2:11-12 says, "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." He is the sinner's kinsman redeemer. He has purchased our freedom so we can be joined unto Him (cf. Romans 7:4).

VII. PRAISE vs. 11-12

Praise rings out! May the "seed" of the woman multiply the family such that there are many descendants (vs. 11abc). This will certainly be true in a physical sense. It will also be true in a spiritual sense (cf. Hebrews 3:1, 3, 6). It is also spoken of that she would "be famous in Bethlehem" (vs. 11d). This was certainly true in that we yet today have a historical record of these things. It is also true because that is where Jesus was born. Then there is a request for God's blessings on such unusual circumstances. The people even give example of Pharez (cf. Genesis 38:27-30). Notice if you will, Matthew 1:3, "And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram." Then, verses four and five, "And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naason; and Naason begat Salmon; and Salmon begat Booz of Rechab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;" This is unique in that Judah had committed adultery with his daughter-in-law while thinking she was a prostitute. Then, there is Boaz who was the son of Rahab the

harlot; the woman who helped the spies of Israel and so was spared from the destruction of Jericho.

Now, we see a foreign born girl who married an Israelite. He soon dies but she decided to stay with her new family. She moved to a new land, adopting a new God. Through these marvelous circumstances, she will be included in the Christ line. How unique.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The climax to this story is that Boaz purchased Ruth's liberty! My how God works!

Ruth 4:13-22

Why this book? Why has God preserved this historical account for us? What makes this story so special? I believe that this record holds the mighty works of God. This book is not merely an account of people by the names of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. It is a display of God's marvelous works through His providence.

Is not the theme of the Bible a man called Jesus? I speak of the One Who was God manifest in the flesh. Is the lineage of our Lord of particular concern for us? Now, we realize that His father is the Heavenly Father, yet, the Scriptures tells us that He was to be of the root of David, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Was He? Of course He is. Should we not then have an interest in the line of David? The final portion of this text reveals a part of David's family tree.

PROMISED LINE

I. GOD'S GIFT vs. 13

Notice that Boaz followed through on his commitment. The narrative simply states that Ruth became his wife. Of course, they became intimate, God blessed, and she bare a son. The Scripture makes it clear Who it was that gave her conception, "the LORD." By God's providence she gives birth to a son. Children are not accidents. Neither is the gender.

II. NEIGHBORS REJOICE vss. 14-15

~ also, in vs. 17a

We find proper thanksgiving because the Lord is thanked. This is indeed a great blessing because the family is being extended. Again, we find a reference to this child *being famous*. How famous is it to be listed in the Bible? Yet again, Ruth's virtue shines forth (vs. 15). Basically, Ruth surrendered her child up to her mother-in-law. This was a tremendous blessing to the aged Naomi, "a nourisher of thine old age." Once more, we find a restatement of Ruth's love for Naomi.

The virtue found in this text is the humility and self-sacrifice as demonstrated by Ruth. She manifested her love to Naomi. She permitted Naomi to nurse the baby. Ruth's thoughts were on her mother-in-law, not herself. Even in the end, Ruth is found to be a virtuous woman!

III. NAOMI'S BLESSING vss. 16-17

The narrative is simple and declares her nursing of the child. Interestingly enough, the neighboring women had a part in naming the baby. I assume they simply spoke toward the situation and the name stuck. The name Obed means *servicing*. The last part of verse seventeen gives an abbreviated genealogy.

IV. THE FAMILY TREE vss. 18-22

Permit me to give you a few preliminary considerations. Keep in mind the importance of the seed of Abraham and how that relates to Jesus. Hebrews 2:16 says, "For verily he took not on *him the nature of* angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham." Also, notice the importance of the tribe of Judah. Hebrews 7:14 states, "For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." See also, Genesis 49:9-10; Isaiah 11:1-2, 10; Revelation 5:5; and, Revelation 22:16.

Remember the reference to the unique circumstances surrounding Pharez's birth (cf. Genesis 38:27-30 ref.). Then, compare this genealogy to Matthew's genealogy as recorded in Matthew 1:1-5. Which, by the way, is referencing the line of Joseph. (Luke's account in Luke 3 references Mary's line -- note especially vss. 31-33.) Matthew chapter one tells us,...

1. Phares (Ruth's spelling is Pharez)

2. Esrom (Hezron)
3. Aram (Ram)
4. Aminadab (Amminadab)
5. Naasson (Nashon)
6. Salmon (Salmon)
7. Booz of Rachab (Boaz)
 ~ “of Rechab” -- this is the woman, Rahab, who helped the spies when
 they entered into Jericho
8. Obed (Obed) ...of Ruth...
9. Jesse (Jesse)
10. David the king (David)

* Boaz and Ruth were David's great grandparents! Of course, Obed was David's grandfather.

V. CONCLUSION

It is important to see the divine intervention in the affairs of men. God guides certain events which He has deemed to come to pass. God oversees all events so that everything remains in the pleasure of His good will. God is the sovereign God Who rules in Heaven and upon the Earth. This same God has preserved a home in Heaven for the saved, and a place of punishment (called Hell) for the unsaved. Look to Jesus, the Son of David, to be your Savior.