

*The book
of Ruth*

or

"Intreat me not to leave thee"

by

Rick Shoemaker

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The book of Ruth is one of the two books in the bible that is named for women (Ruth and Esther). The writer of the book is unknown. Jewish tradition tells us it was written by Samuel but we cannot be certain.

Ruth was not a Jew, she was from the land of Moab. The land of Moab was a barren desert on the east side of the Dead Sea. It measured about 60 miles from north to south and 20 miles from east to west.

The land of Moab was a place of great importance in Israel's history.

Balak, the king of Moab, tried to curse Israel (Num.22-24). Moses transferred leadership to Joshua in the land of Moab (Dt.29-33). Moses was buried there (Dt.34:1-6). David left his parents there while he dealt with Saul (1 Sam.22:3-4).

Moab was the son of Lot's incestuous relationship with his older daughter (Gen.19:37). From the most repulsive of all sins, came a man who would be a thorn in the side of God's people.

The people of Moab caused Israel a great deal of trouble (Num. 22; 25; Dt.2:26-29; Judges 3:12-14; 1 Kgs.3:5). They rejected the God of Israel and worshipped false gods. Their primary god was Chemosh. They practiced human sacrifices to this so-called god. To say the least, these were ungodly and wicked people.

God cursed Moab because of their extreme sin and idolatry (Isa. 15-16; Ezk.25:8-11; Amos 2:1-3). God is merciful but He does not allow sin to continue without acting.

Since Ruth was a Moabitess, she was under this curse.

Amazingly, Ruth is found in the genealogy of David and of Jesus (Mt.1:5-6). She was the great-grandmother of David.

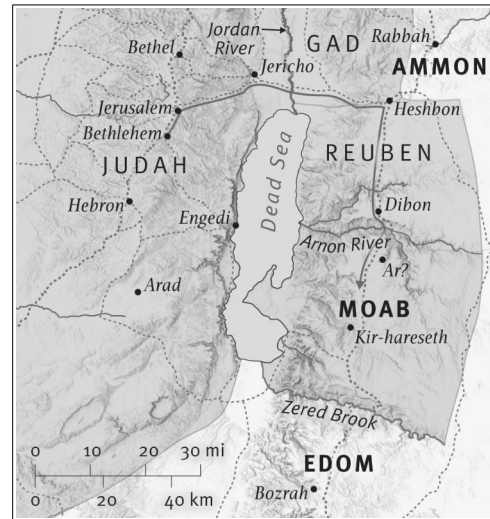
Ruth is mentioned only in this book and in Matthew where her genealogy to Jesus is given (Mt.1:5).

I believe Ruth's own words give us one of the primary themes of this book. She said, "*Intreat me not to leave thee*" (Ru 1:16). She did not want anything or anyone to hinder her from going to the place where God was working.

This book is a picture of how Jesus, as a kinsman-redeemer, willingly paid the price for sinners and takes them into the family of God.

It also is a picture of how the people of Israel left their God. Naomi is a picture of the people of Israel leaving the blessings of God. Ruth is a picture of the remnant of Israel who will be restored by God's grace. Boaz is a picture of Christ being willing to pay the price for his bride, the church. God's grace is abundant in this book.

One thing that makes the book of Ruth unique is the fact that there are no obvious miracles. God did not part any seas, heal any diseases or raise the dead. However, the book is full of miracles done in an inconspicuous manner. God was in the background causing the circumstances to come together precisely. Some of the greatest of God's miracles are the ones he does anonymously.



THIS BOOK DEALS WITH RUTH'S LAND

To understand the details of Naomi and Ruth's land we need to look at how they related to Naomi and to Ruth.

How the estate of Elimelech related to Naomi:

Naomi was being forced to sell the estate that had belonged to her deceased husband. For her to regain ownership the nearest relative would have to redeem it by repaying the purchase price to the person who bought it. If no one was willing to redeem it, she would lose it until the year of Jubilee.

How the estate of Elimelech related to Ruth:

Ruth, being the daughter-in-law of Elimelech, was entitled to the inheritance that had been passed on to

Mahlon, her deceased husband. Old Testament law said if a man died without having a son, his estate should be passed to his daughter. The order of inheritance was son, daughter, brother, uncle, and then closest relative (Num.27:8-11). So, Ruth, just like Naomi, needed someone to redeem her property.

THIS BOOK DEALS WITH RUTH'S LOVE

Ruth's husband died but the Lord had another man who would love Ruth in a way she had never experienced before.

THIS BOOK DEALS WITH RUTH'S LORD

The real hero of this book is not Boaz, it is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is seen on every page

1. RUTH ENDURED HER GRIEF 1:1-10

We first hear of Ruth as a destitute woman in a cursed land. But, as we will see, despite being cursed, God's grace would be extended to Ruth.

A. THE WICKED MEN 1:1a

This book was written in a time when God led His people through men called judges. Sadly, many of these judges were ungodly. As we will see, God expected His people to live godly even in a wicked day. Our environment does not excuse us from living pure and godly lives. We are to live "*soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*" (Tit.2:12). Noah lived godly in an ungodly time (Gen.6:9).

Ru 1:1 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 Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

The "*days when judges ruled*" refers to the period in Israel's history when God led Israel, not by kings, but by individuals called judges that He raised up. A judge was a ruler, military leader, and someone who presided over legal hearings.

The period of judges extends from the death of Joshua (Josh.24:29) until the time when Saul was declared king (1 Sam.10:24). This period is described in the book of Judges. There are twelve judges mentioned in the book of Judges. They are Othniel (Judges 3:8-11), Ehud (Judges 3:12-30), Shamgar (3:31), Deborah (Judges 4-5), Gideon (Judges 6-8), Tola (Judges 10:10), Jair (Judges 10:3-5), Jephthah (Judges 10:6-12:17), Ibzan (Judges 12:8-10), Elon (Judges 12:11-12), Abdon (Judges 12:13-15), and Samson (Judges 13-16).

The days of the judges were dark days for the people of Israel. It was a time when everyone did what they thought was right. The bible says, "*In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes*" (Jdg. 17:6). Man is perverted, so any time he does what he thinks is right, there will be big problems.

How did Israel come to this sad state?

First, they forgot God's goodness and ignored God's law.

Secondly, they failed to stay separate from the people who were left in the lands they conquered inside the Promised Land. They began to marry into their families and to adopt their culture.

Thirdly, they began to adopt the social and religious practices of those who were still in the Promised Land. Jesus warned about trying to love the world and God at the same time (Mt. 6:24). We are admonished to "*love not the world*" (1 Jn.2:15).

When Israel turned against God, He removed His blessings. He also removed His protection from their enemies. The book of Judges says, "*And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed*" (Judges 2:14-15).

Even though God was angry because of the sin of His people, He still loved them and set out to restore them. In mercy, God sent judges to lead them in righteous living. The book of Judges says, "*Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them*" (Jdg 2:16). God was merciful and would not forsake His people. I am glad He is faithful even when we are not (Dt.7:9; 2 Tim.2:13; 2 Th.3:3).

Unfortunately, some of the judges lacked wisdom and godly integrity. So the moral and spiritual values of the people of Israel continued to deteriorate. When a nation has ungodly leaders it will suffer greatly (Ec.10:16).

In spite of these judges, time after time the people disobeyed. Judges says, "*And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so*" (Jdg 2:17).

This resulted in a cycle of sin that lasted for years. God would judge His people, they would repent, God would forgive them and start blessing them again. Before long they would fall back into the same sins and force God to judge them again. This vicious cycle of blessing, sinning, judgment, repentance, and blessing, continued time after time.

And this is the state of the people of Israel when the book of Ruth was written. There is little doubt that the "*famine in the land*" was the judgment of God.

The wickedness of the people of Israel had become so great that God had to deal with them. He had promised to bless His people with abundant crops as long as they obeyed Him. He had also promised to stop the rain if they disobeyed (Dt.11:13-17). They had forfeited God's promise of blessing by disobeying.

The words, "*in the land*" seem to indicate the famine did not extend beyond the land of Judah. God controls feast and famine. If He stops His supply, famine is always the result. Whether feast or famine, He always has a purpose.

The word "*Bethlehemjudah*" means "the house of bread". The famine was so great that even the places known for their abundance were without. The same God who gives can take away. He who loves to bless will curse if the need arises.

The word "*sojourn*" means "to turn aside from the road". It gives the picture of someone pulling off the road to temporarily rest from their journey. Elimelech planned to stay in Moab just long enough for the famine to end in Bethlehem. He planned to return soon but little did he realize he would die in Moab and never step into the Promised Land again.

B. THE WRONG MOVE 1:1b-3

It seems obvious that Elimelech made a wrong decision when he took his family to Moab. It was more than a simple change of location. By moving to Moab, Elimelech was forsaking his God-given inheritance in the land of Israel. It is a perfect picture of how Israel had forsaken God and His goodness by walking their own way. It reminds us also of a believer who compromises with the world. God would intervene and bring about a blessing, but Elimelech would die and never see it come to pass.

Ru 1:1b ...And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

Elimelech moved his family to the land of "*Moab*".

The land of Moab is clearly a picture of the world (Jn.15:19; Rom.12:2; Gal.1:4; Eph.2:2; 1 Jn.4:5). We are warned about the world and its influence and admonished to avoid it at all cost (1 Jn.2:15; 2 Tim.4:10).

As previously mentioned, the nation of Moab was cursed. The people of Moab were forbidden to take part in the worship services of Israel (Dt.23:3-4). They were cut off from God's blessings. However, even though the nation of Moab was cursed as a whole, God invited individuals from Moab to come to Him. Any individual who was willing to leave their religion and follow God would be accepted (Isa.56:4-8). What a wonderful picture of God's grace.

Elimelech's desire to take care of himself and his family was commendable. However, in my opinion, he should not have gone to the land of Moab in his attempt to provide for them. We will discover his decision caused his family great harm.

Going to Moab took him towards the wilderness where the people of Israel struggled many years earlier. Certainly, he was going in the wrong direction. God's people should never turn to the world for their provision.

The word "Bethlehem" means "the house of bread" and "Judah" means "praise". Elimelech decided to leave the house of bread and the place of praise to go to a place that was cursed. Way too often, we make unwise choices when difficult times come.

Humanly speaking, the move to Moab seemed logical. There was no food in Judah, so going where the food was seemed to make sense. However, when doing the will of God, the people of God are to trust God and not logic. As far as we know, Orpah was never converted and Ruth was not converted until she decided to leave Moab and go to the land of Israel with Naomi.

Some say the fact that Ruth met Boaz proves it was God's will for them to move to Moab. We are experts at trying to excuse wrong behavior by pointing out something good that supposedly has happened. We hear this type of logic quite often. I have heard people defend contemporary Christian churches because they know someone who supposedly got saved at a contemporary Christian church. That certainly does not mean God is pleased with such an affair. God can work good things out of bad situations but that does not mean He is pleased with our misconduct or disobedience. It is never right to do wrong.

Later, Naomi certainly seemed to think their trip to Moab was, at least partially, the reason for their difficulties. She will say, "*the hand of the LORD is gone out against me*" (1:13). She will also say, "*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*" (1:21).

Ruth will ask Naomi to let her go with her when she returned to Bethlehem (1:16-17). If Ruth was right to move from Moab to Judah, surely Elimelech was wrong to move from Judah to Moab.

We should notice the fact that nowhere in these verses does it say anything about Elimelech asking God about going to Moab. Any time we follow our own opinion instead of following God, we will find ourselves in trouble.

Elimelech decided to leave the land God had given His people and go to a land and a people that were clearly cursed by God. He would regret this decision. It may take time, but we will always regret decisions we make on our own. The prodigal decided to go to the far country. He certainly regretted going.

This is one of the many reasons we need to stay close to God, keep right relationships with fellow believers, and stay faithful to the local church (Mt.18:20; 1 Tim.3:15; Heb.10:25).

Man's philosophy is always the exact opposite of God's. As Christians, we must always be on guard against the temptation to turn to things other than God and His will. There will always be the temptation to turn to pleasure instead of purity, science instead of Scripture, and a career instead of Christianity.

We must decide whether we are going to be out of step with God or out of step with the world. We cannot do both (Mt.6:24).

Ru 1:2 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 Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

The name "*Elimelech*" means "My God is king", "*Naomi*" means "pleasant", "*Mahlon*" means "pining" and "*Chilion*" means "sickly".

The words, "*continued there*" speak volumes. It makes me think of them settling in and becoming part of the environment of Moab. We will become like those we mingle with (Pro.13:20; 22:22; 1 Cor.15:33).

Ru 1:3 And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.

We cannot ignore the likelihood that Elimelech's death was a result of his decision to move to Moab. The land of Moab may have provided an escape from the famine, but it offered no protection from the reality of life. We can not run fast enough to get away from the results of our own bad decisions.

Whether his death was the judgment of God or not, one thing is certain, things did not improve for him or his family when they moved to Moab. Changing our country does little to change our condition. We cannot run from our problems or our responsibilities.

C. THE WORLDLY MARRIAGES 1:4-5

Naomi's sons married women of Moab. The focus of the book will turn primarily to one of these wives, named Ruth.

Ru 1:4 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.

Naomi's two sons foolishly married women from Moab. The Moabitish women worshipped false gods.

Certainly, they would want to raise any children they might have to do the same.

Once again, we see the damage caused by their move to Moab. It is difficult to live in the world without being influenced by the world. Jesus said we are not to be "*of the world*" (Jn.15:18-19).

God warned His people of the danger of marrying unbelievers. He said, "*For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly*" (Dt 7:4).

There is seldom a positive outcome when a believer marries an unbeliever (Ex.15-16). Many a Christian has made the mistake of their life because they thought they could win them after they married them. It is much more likely that the unbelieving spouse will influence the believing spouse than the other way around.

The word "*Orpah*" is from a root word meaning, "stiff-necked". The word "*Ruth*" means "friend". Both of these women would live up to their names.

Ten years is a long time to be out of God's will. No doubt it was ten years of misery and heartache. We don't live our way and have a good time doing so.

These ten years also speak of the mercy of God. He was very patient in that He allowed Naomi to live. Elimelech and his two sons overstepped God's patience and paid for it with their lives. God's people can't play games with God (1 Jn.5:16).

Interestingly, neither Orpah nor Ruth gave birth even though they were married ten years. I believe this was an act of mercy from the Lord to prevent children from being born in the ungodly land of Moab.

Ru 1:5 And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

The fact that "*Mahlon and Chilion*" died is certainly heartbreaking but what makes it worse is the fact that they may not have had to die. Seeing their father die should have been a warning to them. Had they taken their wives and gone back to Judah, perhaps God would have had mercy on them. We should learn from the results of the sins of others. God is not a respecter of persons, if He deals with others, He will deal with us.

It is difficult for us to understand the severity of the situation described here. Here are three women, without a husband and no way to provide for themselves. Husbands were the providers in that day so many widows ended up having to beg, steal, or resort to prostitution to survive under such circumstances.

We should notice how the Lord is not mentioned until verse six where it tells us He had "*visited his people in giving them bread*". I find it difficult to believe this just a coincidence. I believe it reminds us how the Lord had been left out of Elimelech's life.

D. THE WEARY MOTHER 1:6-10

Naomi was weary from the heartbreak of her time in Moab. She had lost her home, her husband, and her heirs. She had two daughters-in-law who were depending on her. A child of God will never find rest in the world. Naomi simply wanted to go back home and live out whatever time she had left in peace.

Ru 1:6 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.

The death of our loved ones has a way of forcing us to examine what is truly important in our lives.

Naomi was told of how the Lord had blessed the land of Judah and the famine was over. The same God who took the bread away was able to give it again. Sadly, Elimelech and Naomi were not in the land of Judah when God visited His people and gave them food again. I can't help but wonder what would have happened if Elimelech had stayed in Bethlehem and trusted the Lord through the famine. Many of God's people wander from God's will just before He moves.

The news of God's blessings made it all the way to the land of Moab. May our Lord do such a far-reaching work. What God is doing in our lives should make others want what we have.

Ru 1:7 Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

Hearing about the good work of God in Judah made Naomi homesick. Every saint should want to be close when God is moving.

Naomi headed home. The trip of 60 miles would be difficult and dangerous for women by themselves.

Many talk about the need to get closer to God, but few are willing to pay the price. The way to the center of God's will is not an easy path, but it is worth it. It is one thing to hear about God moving, it quite another to do what it takes to be a part of His work.

Naomi had to leave "*where she was*" to go back to the "*land of Judah*". We must leave the world behind if we are to follow Christ.

Naomi not only left Moab, she returned to Judah. She had to go back to where she left the Lord. The prodigal has to go back home to make it right with his father (Lk.15:20).

Naomi had lived in Moab long enough to be established but she recognized her need to be where God was working. So many are content to struggle on in the world and seem to have little desire for the things of God.

Ru 1:8 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.

In the next few verses we will find Naomi advising her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab. As we deal with her comments we can see three points of view. In most, if not all, of our dealings in this life, these three will be trying to work. We need to keep this in mind when facing life's challenges.

First, we see in Naomi's suggestion the hand of God at work. Naomi should not want Orpah and Ruth to go to Judah on her account. If Naomi compelled or convinced them it would not be a decision they made willingly.

Trusting the Holy Spirit to work on the heart of a lost person is all but lost in our modern day. Sadly, many who claim to be soul winners are nothing more than high pressure salesmen. If we pressure a lost person into "making a decision" it is absolutely worthless. Each individual must willingly surrender to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and accept Christ as their Savior. Many have been coerced into praying a prayer that didn't amount to a hill of beans. Then, the misguided "soul winner" will try to convince them they just got saved.

Secondly, we see in Naomi's suggestion the devil at work trying to get them to do what he wanted. He had no desire whatsoever for them to leave Moab, let alone to go to Bethlehem where he knew God was working.

Thirdly, we see in Naomi's suggestion we see human intellect and reasoning at work. Humanly speaking, Naomi's suggestion made sense. The land of Judah was a strange land to Orpah and Ruth. Their families and friends were in Moab, so they certainly had stronger ties to the land of Moab than to the land of Judah. Also, Naomi felt like the hand of the Lord had turned against her. In her mind, if her daughters-in-law remained with her, God would be against them as well.

Orpah and Ruth must have been good wives to Naomi's sons. She asked for God's blessings on them because of how they had "*dealt with the dead*".

Ru 1:9 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.

At this point, Naomi placed Orpah and Ruth into the hands of God. Whether they went with her to Judah or not she wanted them to find "*rest*". She wanted them to have a life of tranquillity and free of trouble.

The words, "*house of her husband*" speak of them both being married again.

It was a common custom to kiss a friend or relative on the cheek when departing.

Even the thought of separation caused them all to weep. This was not a dysfunctional family. They truly loved each other.

Ru 1:10 And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

At first, Orpah and Ruth were so moved both of them said they would go with Naomi. It is easy to say what we are going to do. It is quite a different thing to do it. How many times have we told ourselves we were going to start praying more, reading our bible more, witnessing more, but never did it?

2. RUTH EMBRACED HER GOD 1:11-17

Naomi returned to Bethlehem. Orpah decided to stay in Moab with her family and her gods. Ruth decided to go with Naomi. One reason Ruth went with Naomi was because she wanted Naomi's God.

Both of these women lived up to their names, for "*Orpah*" means "stiff-necked", and "*Ruth*" means "friend".

Ruth's reaction to Naomi leaving Moab tells us a great deal about her. She was longing for something

better. She had lived long enough in Moab to know that what she needed was not there. It is sad that it takes so much for some people to admit they are not happy and need something more than what they have.

A. SATAN WAS TRYING TO DECEIVE RUTH 1:11-14

As previously mentioned, we must not miss the fact that the devil was working. He was trying to convince Orpah and Ruth to stay in Moab. The sad thing is, he would try to use Naomi to do so. The devil will try to use God's people to accomplish his desire. Peter advised Jesus to not go to the cross (Mt.16:22).

Ru 1:11-13 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 an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also 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.

Naomi continued her discussion with Orpah and Ruth about them staying in Moab (please refer to comments in verse 9). Her comments in this verse give us more insight about why she was advising them to not follow her.

First, I believe Naomi wanted their decision to be a SPIRITUAL one. She wanted their decision to be based on the leading of the Spirit of God and not just because she asked them to go with her.

Secondly, I believe Naomi wanted their decision to be a SENSIBLE one. She knew she was returning to a land where she had no promise of income.

Thirdly, I believe Naomi wanted their decision to be a SAFE one. She said, "*the hand of the LORD is gone out against me*". She saw herself as disconnected from the blessings of God. Her husband and two sons had already died and she had no idea what would be her fate. She did not want to take her daughters-in-law into a situation that would be unsafe for them.

Naomi believed she was experiencing the chastening hand of God. Her family had fallen apart, her future seemed uncertain and she realized leaving the land of Judah had been a mistake. The weight of guilt is difficult to bear.

Naomi's comments about a husband for Orpah and Ruth are understandable. The husband was the sole provider and protector of the family. They were both young enough to marry again and to have children. Naomi wanted them to look at all the facts before they made such a life-changing decision. We should never make decisions without much prayer and a willingness to do whatever the Lord desires.

In essence, Naomi was saying she could not help these ladies. There is no help outside of the grace of God.

The words, "*turn again*" mean "to turn back". It carries with it the idea of retreating. A person retreats when the battle gets worse than they expected. They retreat when they determine the cost is greater than they are willing to pay. This should not have been the case with Orpah and Ruth. The blessings of Judah should have been worth whatever the cost.

Notice, there is no anger or bitterness towards God in Ruth's statement. She was not accusing God for the state she was in. She realized the God of heaven always does right (Gen.18:25; Ps.145:17). Man tends to try to blame God when he is suffering the consequences of his own wrong doing. Adam told God it was the woman whom "*thou gavest*" to be with me (Gen.3:12).

Ruth may have felt like the hand of the LORD was against her, but she was still determined to go back to Judah and to her God. Our greatest need when under the chastening of God is to run towards Him as fast as we can. Like the prodigal's father, our Lord will be waiting with open arms to welcome us home.

B. SINNERS WERE TRYING TO DISCOURAGE RUTH 1:14

Ru 1:14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.

Orpah decided to leave Naomi and Ruth and go back to Moab. Many think about going to Bethlehem but decide to turn back before they make it.

Even though there is no indication that Orpah tried to keep Ruth from going with Naomi, there is no doubt

her decision discouraged Ruth. She loved Orpah and the thought of never seeing her again was difficult.

Any time we try to follow God, there will always be someone there to discourage us. Like Ruth, we must be willing to leave them behind and follow God.

Orpah "kissed" Naomi, but Ruth "clave" to her. Orpah loved Naomi but she loved her homeland and family more. This a perfect picture of the lost person who seriously considers getting saved but loves the world too much to turn to Christ. Jesus says to this person, "*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul*" (Mt.16:26). Our eternal soul is more valuable than everything in this world.

Naomi realized Orpah had little desire to go to Judah. I believe this was the lowest point in Naomi's life. She had lost her husband and sons, and now her daughter-in-law who she truly loved was leaving her. One of the most difficult things in the Christian life is to see people you care about refuse God's plan of salvation and remain in their lives of sin and destruction.

Interestingly, Jewish tradition tells us Orpah did remarry and had four sons, one of which was named Goliath. We cannot be certain about this, but if this is true, it means the offspring of Orpah ended up fighting against the offspring of Ruth (1 Sam.17:4-54).

C. THE SPIRIT WAS TRYING TO DRAW RUTH 1:15

Ru 1:15 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.

Orpah had promised to go with Naomi but changed her mind. Many make professions that are proven false when put to the test.

The story was totally different with Ruth. No doubt, the Holy Spirit was drawing her towards Judah, and the God of Israel.

Naomi's words did not discourage Ruth from going to Judah. There had to be something drawing her. Of course, that "something" was the Holy Spirit.

Naomi's words, "*unto her gods*" reveal the seriousness of Orpah's and Ruth's decision. It was more than deciding what part of the country they would settle in. It dealt with which God they would serve.

3. RUTH ESCAPED HER GUILT 1:16-22

As previously mentioned, Ruth was from a nation that was cursed and was therefore under this curse herself. She wanted to escape this curse and get out from under the guilt of her life in Moab. By God's grace, she would do just that.

A. RUTH'S DESPERATION 1:16a

By this time, Ruth was desperate enough to do whatever it took to escape the curse of Moab. She had lost all that was dear to her and had no way to provide for herself. No doubt, she felt like her only hope was to go to Judah with Naomi. This is a scary place, but it is where a person needs to get before they truly see their need for a Savior. A sinner is hopeless and helpless in their sin. Thank the Lord, there is a God who is willing to forgive.

Ru 1:16a And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee:

As I have previously mentioned, I believe Ruth's statement, "*Intreat me not to leave thee*" is one of the primary themes of this book. She refused to let anything keep her from going after God.

She was at the point of desperation and did not want anything to hinder her plan to go with Naomi. Coming to the point of desperation is difficult, but we never truly stop trusting ourselves until we get there.

B. RUTH'S DECISION 1:16b-18

Ruth had made her decision to go with Naomi. Her decision was more about Naomi's God than about Naomi herself.

Ru. 1:16b ...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:

The most important part of Ruth's statement is where she said, "*Thy God*" will be "*My God*". A commitment to Naomi would have been commendable, but a commitment to Naomi's God would be life-changing.

Ruth's commitment to Ruth's God revealed her intense desire, total sincerity, and genuine commitment to go after God. It was not a decision done quickly and without thought. This decision included her leaving the gods she had trusted all her life and trusting totally the God of Israel. To say the least, she was making a lifetime commitment.

Ruth's statement is often used at weddings but the context of this statement has nothing to do with the commitment of a bride to a groom.

Ruth's desire to go with Naomi tells us Naomi had had a definite effect on her way of thinking. This is saying a great deal considering the severe problems Naomi had endured while in Moab. Despite her horrible circumstances, Naomi had lived a life that demonstrated godliness.

It is important to note. In spite of the fact that Naomi must have lived a godly life, Ruth never committed herself to the God of Israel until Naomi determined to go back to Judah. This seems to another indication that their move to Moab was a wrong one.

Ru. 1:17 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's decision was a commitment for life. She didn't even want her dead body to be taken back to Moab. This was a clean break from her old life.

The words, "*The LORD do so to me*" mean she was asking the Lord to punish her if she failed to fulfill her promise to Naomi. This phrase is seen elsewhere in the Word of God (1 Sam.3:17; 14:44; 20:13; 2 Sam.3:9,35). It is used only when someone is totally determined to fulfill their promise.

Ruth would live up to her commitment.

I have searched the book of Ruth many times and have yet to find the place where Ruth tells us she regretted her decision to leave Moab and go to Judah. In like fashion, of the billions who have left their lives of sin and come to the Lord, not one has ever said they were sorry about it.

Ru 1:18 When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

The word, "*stedfastly*" tells us Ruth was to the point to where nothing or no one could change her mind. It sounds like a case of good old fashion conviction to me.

She wasn't sure about the severity of the trip or how she would be accepted when she got there, but she was going. There are a lot of unknowns for the person who is thinking about getting saved. They have little, or no, idea about what is ahead for them. The devil tries to convince them that getting saved will mean they have to give up everything enjoyable. Nothing could be further from the truth. True enjoyment comes only to those who are saved. The pleasure of the world is temporary at best (Heb.11:25b). The life dedicated to Christ provides true joy and contentment. David wrote, "*in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore*" (Ps. 16:11).

Naomi "*left speaking*" to Ruth. There are times when we have said all we can and being quiet is the right thing to do. When we can say no more, we need to say no more.

No doubt, Naomi was glad about Ruth's decision.

C. RUTH'S DESTINATION 1:19

Ruth was heading to a place she had only heard about. As far as we know, everything Ruth knew about Judah had come from Naomi. Believers should be telling unbelievers about the wonders of being forgiven.

RUTH'S DESTINATION INVOLVED A NEW LOCATION 1:19a

Ruth went with Naomi to a place she had never been before.

Ru 1:19a So they two went until they came to Bethlehem.

We must remember, it had been at least ten years since Naomi had been in Bethlehem. She was a widow and Ruth was a Moabitess. They had no source of income in a time when widows were ignored and Moabites were despised. Their only hope was God.

RUTH'S DESTINATION INVOLVED A NEW LOVE 1:19b

Ruth went with Naomi and met people she had never been before. Arriving at Bethlehem, Ruth was exposed to a love she had never seen before.

Ru. 1:19b 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?

The importance of Naomi's move to Bethlehem was not totally apparent at this time. This move connects the roots of David to the city of Bethlehem. That is why Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem to register in the census of Augustus (Lk.2:1-5). Once again, we see God working in the background to accomplish His will and fulfill His Word.

The town of Bethlehem was small, so everyone knew everyone. Many of those living there remembered Naomi.

As we have already seen, the name Naomi means "pleasant". This may be an indication that she had been a cheerful woman and had many friends before they left to go to Moab. Her old friends were really glad to see her.

The warm reception had to be a joy to Naomi and a relief to Ruth. No doubt, they had wondered how the people in Bethlehem would treat them. Ruth was accepted well because of Naomi. She experienced a love she had never known in Moab. Likewise, there is a love in the Christian family that you can find nowhere else on earth. We may have our little squabbles, but our love is genuine. It's a love that remains constant through the difficulties of life.

The question, "*Is this Naomi?*" lets us know there was a vast difference between this Naomi and the Naomi who had left several years earlier. No doubt, the glow she had before was gone. Where there had been joy, now there was sadness. The burdens of life had aged her greatly. Life itself takes its toll on us, but a life out of God's will is hard on the body, mind, and spirit.

Ru 1:20 And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

The word, "*Naomi*" means "pleasant". The word, "*Mara*" means "bitter".

She said, "*The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me*". This doesn't mean she was bitter, it means her time away from Bethlehem had been bitter. How different the land of Moab looked now. Their place of hope had become the place of despair. Those who have gone to the pigpen never forget its horrible smell.

Naomi was not bitter but she could have been. Bitterness never fixes anything. It actually makes matters look even worse than they are. Some of the greatest Christians who ever lived have been ruined by bitterness. Also, some of the Christians who have suffered the most have kept a sweet attitude. Suffering can turn us towards God, or away from Him. None of us are exempt from bitterness so we should guard against it at all costs.

Ru 1:21 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?

Naomi's description of herself is a perfect picture of what a life in the world will do. The pig pen takes its toll on a person.

Naomi's words tell us she thought she had been under the judgment of God.

Her time in Moab had helped her see what really mattered in life. We have to be brought down before we can be taken up. We have to be emptied of self before we can be filled with the Spirit. Then and only then, can God have complete control of our lives. And then, He gets the glory for what He does with us.

Naomi's honesty is commendable. She didn't go back pretending everything was fine. She opened herself up to those who she knew would love her no matter where she had been or what she had done. This is the type of love God desires His people to have for each other (Lk.6:35; Rom.12:10; 1 Cor.13:4; Eph.4:32; Col.3:12-13; 2 Pet.1:7).

Her words were of submission and not of rebellion. She had learned a lesson God had intended to teach her. What could be worse than to suffer affliction because of our disobedience and not learn from God's chastening? Many times we suffer again because we did not learn the first time.

I wonder how many listened to Naomi and had a change of mind. Surely others had been thinking of taking a trip to Moab to see if they could find a "fun" life. No doubt, Naomi's testimony caused them to rethink their plans. We can be an example of godliness and show others the joy that comes from walking with God. Or, we can be an example of worldliness and show others the damage that comes from living in sin. We can be a Job or a Jonah.

RUTH'S DESTINATION INVOLVED A NEW LIFE 1:22

Ruth's life would never be the same. It wasn't just her location that was different, she was different.

Ru 1:22 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.

The words, "*So Naomi returned*" speak volumes. Her return involved much more than a geographical move. Her heart and life had moved back to her God and His will.

The move was certainly life-changing for Ruth. She had never experienced what she was about to experience. From a cursed land to an abundant harvest, Ruth would see the hand of God at work in her life. The first days of the Christian life are so rich as the newborn Christian begins to learn of their new life in Christ.

This verse is overflowing with truth.

It says Naomi and Ruth went together. A godly friend helps us with our walk with the Lord (Pro.13:20a; 27:6; 27:9). An ungodly friend will hinder our walk with the Lord (Pro.13:20b; 22:24-25; 1 Cor.15:33).

It says they left "*Moab*". They left the worldly life behind.

It says they came to "*Bethlehem*". They went to the place of God's presence and blessings. The Lord had removed the famine and blessed His people again. As we will see, the harvest was great that year.

And, it says they came at the "*beginning of barley harvest*". They came just at the time when the land was erupting with its harvest. The trip from Moab to Bethlehem was about 60 miles so it took several days. They came home for food and arrived when it was most plentiful. God doesn't just do His work, He does His work well. He is never late and He is never early. He is on time all the time.

4. RUTH EXPERIENCED HER GRACE 2:1-23

Ruth spoke of finding "*grace*" in verse two of this chapter. She would soon realize how God had a special grace just for her and her needs. God has grace for everyone, but I need specific grace for my specific needs. He giveth more grace (1 Cor.1:4; 2 Cor.12:9; Jam.4:6). Ruth was like a newborn babe in Christ who was learning more and more about her new found life.

A. BY THE GRACE OF GOD, RUTH'S FEAR WAS RELIEVED 2:1-4

Ru 2:1 And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz.

The first mention of the "*kinsman*" is found here. Boaz, Elimelech's relative lived in Judah and was very rich. As we will discover later, the fact that Boaz was a kinsman was very important. We will discuss this subject in detail in the introduction to the third chapter of this study.

Unlike Elimelech, Boaz had stayed in Judah and endured the famine. God had rewarded him and made him a man of great "*wealth*". God takes care of those who trust and obey Him. A famine does not decrease God's storehouse. Those who stayed in Bethlehem were more blessed than those who tried going their own way.

Unlike Mahlon (Ruth's first husband) who was sickly and weak, Boaz was a "*mighty*" man.

No doubt, when Ruth drew closer to Bethlehem, her anxiety heightened. Many fears filled her heart and mind.

RUTH HAD BEEN FEARFUL ABOUT HER FOOD (2:2-3a)

Ru 2:2 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.

God made sure they arrived in Bethlehem just as harvest time was beginning (1:22). However, none of this harvest belonged to Naomi or Ruth. No doubt Ruth wondered where their food would come from. But, as mentioned, God's grace would provide.

Ruth said, "Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn". God had given a law that gave the poor or needy the right to glean (Lev.19:9; Dt.24:19-21). Ruth had the right to glean because the law for gleaning included a "stranger", which means a foreigner (Dt.24:19).

The word, "glean" means "to pick up" or "to gather". It refers to a person who goes to a field that does not belong to them and picks up the barley left by the reapers. The workers were to leave the corners of the field unharvested so the poor could come and gather what was left behind (Lev.19:9-10; 23:22). If a worker accidentally dropped a sheaf or even an entire bundle, they were to leave it for the gleaners to gather. This also applied to the olive tree and the vineyard (Dt.24:19-22).

The law of gleaning was God's method of social assistance. This was not socialism. It is referring to an individual who gives willingly, not the government gathering from those who they consider rich and giving to those they consider poor.

This tells us how God views the poor. First, He loves them and is willing to provide for their needs. Second, He expects those who have extra to be willing to give to those who have less. Third, He expects the needy to do what they can for themselves. If they were able to glean, and did not, they went hungry. Getting something for nothing ruins the character of a person. They come to the place to where they think they deserve a free handout. Our country is a perfect example of this. God's plan to provide for the needy was not an enabler for lazy people.



God providing Ruth with food reminds me of three things about the newborn Christian.

First, the newborn Christian enters a world of blessings when they get saved. It may take a while for them to learn of the many privileges that come with being a child of God. Many cry out to God for the things He has already given them.

Second, the newborn Christian finds themselves hungering for God, His Word, and His will. They have a new desire to live right (Mt.5:6), learn the Word of God (1 Pet.2:2), and to please God (Ps.37:4). Where they had eaten from the world's table, now they feast at the banquet table of the Lord.

Third, the newborn Christian, like Ruth, finds a God who provides. They experience a whole new world with all kinds of spiritual delicacies from the Lord.

Ruth learned getting food was an act of grace. Anything and everything we receive is an act of God's grace.

Ruth could have stayed home and prayed for food, but she decided to go and glean. We should always pray, but there comes a time when we should pray and work.

Ruth's request shows her humility in that she was admitting her need and her inability to provide for herself. It also shows that she was not lazy or seeking to blame others for her desperate situation.

Ru 2:3 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 HAD BEEN FEARFUL ABOUT HER FRIENDS (2:3b)

Ruth left all her friends behind when she came to Judah with Naomi. No doubt, she wondered how this void would be filled. Even though Naomi had told her of the land and the people, she did not know how she would be treated. She feared she would be ostracized by the people of Judah because she came from Moab.

Fortunately, she soon learned her fear was unfounded. God gave her new and better friends than she had before. She went to a field full of "reapers" who were much like her. They may have not been Moabites, but they were in the same position Ruth was. So, they understood her.

In like fashion, the person thinking about getting saved wonders how their friends will react. They wonder if they will be left friendless. However, the opposite is true. The newborn Christian will discover friends who stand with them during the good times and the bad.

RUTH HAD BEEN FEARFUL ABOUT HER FAMILY (2:3c)

Ruth left all her family back in Moab. Her fear was relieved when God led her to Boaz, a "*kindred*" of her father-in-law. Boaz's family would become Ruth's family. God had a plan to give Ruth a new and better family.

So it is with the newborn Christian. We are brothers and sisters and God is our Father. There is no better family on earth than the Christian family.

RUTH HAD BEEN FEARFUL ABOUT HER FUTURE (2:3d)

Ruth had no idea what laid ahead for her. She had left everything behind when she left Moab. But, God was already at work making sure her future was not only secure but better than she could have ever imagined. He led Ruth to a "*field belonging unto Boaz*". God would use Boaz to take care of her for the rest of her life.

Every sinner thinking about getting saved wonders about what lies ahead if they accept Christ. To say the least, the future of that person will dramatically different. But, it will be different in a good way. Old things are passed away and all things are become new (1 Cor.5:17).

The word, "*hap*" means "by chance". This does not mean it was an accident that Ruth ended up in the field she did. It is saying that no one directed her to this particular field. There is no doubt that God had led her. God does not need the assistance of mortal men to accomplish His will. He does some of His best work anonymously. Nothing happens with God by accident (Ps.66:7; 89:9; 103:19; Pro.16:13; Rom.8:28).

This is even more amazing when we understand there were no fences marking boundary lines at that time. At the most, there would be a rock or landmark marking the corner of a person's property. This made it very easy to wander from one person's land to another. For Ruth to end up on Boaz's property was nothing short of a miracle. As mentioned before, God doesn't do any obvious miracles in this book but that doesn't mean He isn't doing the miraculous.

Ru 2:4 And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee.

God led Ruth to a good and godly man. He was a spiritual man and a man of integrity.

The comments of Boaz tell us a great deal about him. The character of a person can often be seen by how they treat those under their authority. His greeting to the common laborers was not one of abruptness or disdain. It was a greeting of friendliness and compassion. Most of all, it was a spiritual greeting. He did not say "Good morning" or any such greeting. His greeting, the "*LORD be with you*" speaks of receiving the blessings of God. He spoke of the Lord and His blessings, which was an indication that he was thinking about God and His care.

Notice, the reply of the reapers was the same as Boaz. Since others are apt to take on our attitude we should be careful to show forth a godly disposition.

Every boss could learn a great deal from Boaz. When the workers are treated fairly and with respect, they are much more likely to do their best at their work. Many employees feel like a slave under an evil taskmaster. Such an employee has no desire to do their best.

This certainly reminds us of the personal relationship Jesus has with the Christian. God treats His children with respect.

B. BY THE GRACE OF GOD, RUTH'S FAITH WAS REWARDED 2:5-10

God rewarded Ruth's faith by leading her to Boaz, the one He would use to take care of her and change her life.

Ru 2:5 Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?

Undoubtedly, this was the first time Boaz had actually seen Ruth. The scripture seems to indicate that Boaz saw Ruth before she saw him.

Clearly, Boaz was stricken by Ruth. He asked his workers who she was.

No doubt, Boaz was attracted by Ruth's beauty, but there was a greater power involved. God touched his heart and stirred an interest in Ruth. This interest was more than something physical. It was a spiritual interest that we will see at work throughout the rest of this book.

The "servant" mentioned here probably refers to a man Boaz had placed over the reapers to make sure they were doing their job. We are not told his name. Many of God's servants do what they do without recognition. Dear servant of God, mankind may not know who you are, but your God does.

Boaz's question, "*Whose damsel is this*" opened the door to what would become a wonderful relationship and a life of happiness for him and for Ruth. Big things can start from small beginnings.

It is important to note that Boaz took the first step in what would eventually become an intimate relationship and marriage. Boaz's interest in Ruth reminds us of how God loved us first. We love Him because He loved us first (1 Jn.4:19).

Ru 2:6 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:

The "servant" knew the answer to Boaz's question. His answer was direct and straight to the point. As with the wedding Jesus attended, the servants knew what others did not (Jn.2:9). God reveals secret things to those who give themselves to His service (Dan.2:21).

Ru 2:7 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.

The "house" was a tent or shed that had been set up near the field to give the workers a place to stop and rest for a while. Perhaps Ruth was actually at this place taking a break when Boaz arrived. We should notice there was no rebuke from Boaz for Ruth taking time to rest. The one who labors in the Lord's work needs to take time to get away and rest. Jesus said, "*Come ye apart into a desert place, and rest a while*". Vance Havner said, "If we don't come apart, we will come apart".

Probably Boaz came to the field in the afternoon when things had cooled down. So, Ruth had labored all day trying her best to provide for herself and Naomi. To do less than her best would be shorting herself from the blessings of Boaz. It would also be a dishonor to Boaz's kindness.

In like fashion, our heavenly Boaz admonishes us to "*not be weary in well doing*" (Gal.6:9). He says we are to always be "*abounding in the work of the Lord*" (1 Cor.15:58).

No doubt, a day of such labor was difficult indeed. Yet, we have no reason to think that Ruth uttered one word of complaint. She was delighted to do what she did because she realized she did not deserve it. Laboring for the Lord may be difficult at times but it is always worth the effort. God certainly pays more than minimum wage.

The servant's explanation of Ruth's labor reveals the fact that he had been observing her throughout the day. Ruth probably had no idea she was being watched. We may not be aware of it, but someone is watching us. How we act and react matters.

Ru 2:8 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:

Now, Boaz knew who Ruth was and what she was. Despite knowing where she came from, he was drawn to her. I am so glad that the Lord did not reject us because of what we were before we met Him.

Boaz gladly gave to Ruth. The heart of a person is revealed by how they treat those who cannot repay or are unable to do something in return.

The wording of what Boaz is interesting. He said, "*Hearest thou not*". This speaks to the importance of hearing what God says to us. His Word makes the difference.

Boaz asked Ruth to not leave his field or to go to the field of another. His care for Ruth was already revealing itself. He wanted her to stay with him.

The child of God is to hold to God and His Word. We are so prone to wander. Somehow, we forget the goodness of God or we think we know better than He does. There is no better field than God's. We must guard against anything that might draw us from the center of God's will (2 Th.2:15). That is why the bible says "*Set your affection on things above*" (Col.3:2).

As previously mentioned, working close to these "*maidens*", allowed Ruth to develop the friendships she was concerned about when she was leaving Moab.

Ru 2:9 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.

God watches over His people, especially those who are willing to work in His field (Ps.105:15).

The gathering of sheaves was done by women but the assortment and binding of the sheaves was done by men. Knowing Ruth could not escape the looks and desires of the "young men", he warned them to leave her alone. He was truly concerned for her safety, but he really wanted her to be at peace.

God is concerned about the severity of what we might face in this world, but He is also concerned that we have peace of mind. Jesus said, "*My peace I give unto you*" (Jn.14:27).

The water in the "vessels" could have been from the wells at Bethlehem. These wells contained excellent water. This was the water David longed for (2 Sam.23:15).

The waters of the wells of salvation provide refreshment to the weary saint. We may get tired and thirsty in our walk with the Lord, but we are never without His refreshing assistance.

We live in a dry and thirsty land (Ps.63:1; Ezk.19:13). God promises to give water to the thirsty (Isa.41:17; 44:3; 49:10; Mt.5:6; Jn.7:37).

Ru 2:10 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 thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?

Ruth "*fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground*". These were common ways of showing reverence and gratitude (Gen.18:2; 33:3; 42:6; Mt.2:11; 8:2).

The word "*knowledge*" deals with more than just knowing facts about someone. It carries with it the idea of being considerate or taking care of.

It was obvious that Boaz had a special interest in Ruth. Ruth was also wondering why Boaz was treating her so graciously. She even asked him "*Why have I found grace in thine eyes*".

She asked the question because she knew who she was. She was a "*stranger*", which means a foreigner. She never lost sight of where she had come from or the fact that she was unworthy to be in Judah. Every child of God should have the same attitude. It should amaze us that He would even glance in our direction (2 Sam.7:18; Ps.8:4; 139:17; 144:3).

Ruth's attitude was quite different than what is prevalent in today's society. She was amazed that she was treated so well and realized she did not deserve such blessings. So many today believe they have the right to special treatment. God's grace is intended to help us recognize our unworthiness and not to lift us up in pride.

Isn't it amazing that we are never told of a time when she asked why about the terrible things that happened to her, but she does ask why good things happened? We are quick to devour the good and complain about the bad.

C. BY THE GRACE OF GOD, RUTH'S FAITHFULNESS WAS REMEMBERED 2:11-19

Boaz had heard about the woman who came back with Naomi. He knew more about her than she realized. He would honor her, partly because of her faithfulness to take care of her mother-in-law. I have a feeling one of the reasons Boaz would want to marry Ruth is because he saw this quality in her. A woman who would serve her mother-in-law as Ruth had would probably make a good wife.

Ru 2:11 And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed 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 word, "*answered*" carries with it the idea of raising your voice. Boaz was already getting excited about Ruth.

Ruth's past had been "*fully*" shown to Boaz. We are not told how Boaz came to this information but it does remind us that our Lord knows everything about us (Jer.1:5; Mt.10:30).

Boaz had heard about Ruth *loving*. She demonstrated her love for Naomi by what she did.

Boaz had heard about Ruth *leaving*. She left her father and mother and her homeland behind.

Boaz had heard about Ruth *living*. She came to live in a strange land with a strange people.

No doubt Ruth was surprised that Boaz knew so much about her. Realizing God knows all about us can be comforting or convicting. It can be comforting because we realize He is aware of the problems we encounter. It can be convicting because we realize He knows every dumb thing we do.

When we analyze that which Ruth did we realize these were the most important parts of her life. This was not simply a minor adjustment, it was a total life change.

Ru 2:12 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.

These words were spoken to Ruth but they are also a prayer spoken for Ruth. Boaz was asking God to show His favor to her.

The word "*recompense*" is an interesting word. It means "to repay". It also means "to make good". It refers to someone who pays a debt. God promises to "make good" on His promise to reward those who serve Him. Unlike mankind, God will never be guilty of not paying His debts.

Boaz spoke of Ruth's "*trust*". This is another reason why I believe Ruth became a believer when she decided to leave Moab and go to Bethlehem.

Ruth was not just looking for a better life. What she did, she did because of her faith in God. She had been faithful and God would "*reward*" her for it. Boaz was about to make it all worthwhile. Our heavenly Boaz will do the same. We never give up anything for the Lord without Him giving us something better to replace it (Mt.10:42; 25:40).

More than once, we are reminded of how we can hide under the "*wings*" of the Almighty (Ps.17:8; 36:7; 63:7). God is like the mother hen who calls to her young and raises her wings when danger is near. The little chicks come and hide under her wings until the danger is gone.

Ru 2:13 Then she said, Let me find favour 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.

This was a nice way of saying "thank you". We certainly should not devour the goodness of God and forget to thank Him.

The word, "*comforted*" means "to sigh". It has the idea of breathing a sigh of relief. Boaz was relieving Ruth of her anxiety. Our God is the God of "*all comfort*" (2 Cor.1:3-4). There is nothing like the deep settled peace that comes from God (Jn.14:27).

The word, "*friendly*" has the idea of speaking with feelings. Ruth could tell Boaz was truly touched. We could say, there was a connection between them.

Ruth asked that Boaz continue to give her "*favour*". Once we have experienced the goodness of God, we are never satisfied with anything less. We can find these types of blessings only in the field of our Boaz.

Ruth knew she was not like the "*handmaidens*" of Boaz. She was from Moab, they were from Israel. His handmaidens were under his employ, Ruth could claim no such connection to Boaz. Realizing our true condition is vitally important.

Ru 2:14 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.

Boaz invited Ruth to "*come*" at mealtime and eat with the workers of his field. That makes it sound like Boaz planned to be there.

These words seem to reveal the romantic intentions of Boaz. He did not have to invite Ruth to eat with his workers, let alone tell her to enjoy the delicacies of the meal. The invitation to glean was commendable but an invitation to a meal was astounding. Our Lord loves a table that is full. He enjoys fellowship with His own. He sets a table for his beloved.

The "*reapers*" were the women who had been working in the field.

The "*vinegar*" was a cool liquid in which they dipped their bread (cf. Jn.13:26). It offered cooling to the hot workers as well as enhancing the flavor of their meal. It was not required but it did make the meal more enjoyable. Does this not remind us of the extra favors God gives His children.

The "*corn*" is referring to the grains of wheat that had been roasted.

The word, "*reached*" means "to hand out". What a glorious picture this is. Boaz passed the roasted grain to Ruth. Does this not remind us of how we are fed at the Lord's table by his own hand. If he does not "pass" the bowl to us, we will go hungry.

As already mentioned, this indicates Boaz actually ate with them or, at the least, stood close by to make sure Ruth was taken care of. There is no more glorious time than the time we sit feasting with our Lord at His table.

The word "*left*" does not mean Ruth left the room. The word means, "exceed" or "to remain". She ate all she wanted and had leftovers. When we are at God's table He wants us to receive enough to help us now and later. No doubt, Ruth had Naomi in mind because she took some home. What we receive from God, we are to pass on to others. If it is good for us, it will be good for them.

If we go to the Lord's table and leave unsatisfied, it is our fault and not his. He always has plenty and He

wants us to eat to the full.

Ru 2:15 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:

The "*sheaves*" were stalks of barley or wheat that had already been cut and bound together in a bundle.

Boaz's command to allow Ruth to "*glean even among the sheaves*" went further than the instructions of gleaning found in the Old Testament. The law said if a worker dropped a sheaf they were to not pick it up (Dt.24:19-21; Lev.19:9-10). Boaz told his servants to allow Ruth to take some of the sheaves that had already been cut and bundled but not yet removed from the field.

What a tremendous and unusual privilege this was. Boaz increased his blessings towards Ruth. Before he told her to go "*after*" the reapers (2:7), now he said she could go "*among*" the reapers. God's goodness always increases to those who are willing to walk close to Him. This was a privilege Ruth would have never enjoyed in any other field. We need to stay in His field and not wander to another.

Boaz told his reapers to not "*reproach*" Ruth. Had he not, they would have driven Ruth from the field. No doubt, some of the reapers and the other gleaners were jealous of the special treatment of Ruth. So it is with those Christians who live close enough to the Lord to where they can enjoy some of His "special" blessings. Sadly, many get upset when they see others blessed.

This should be a warning to those who are prone to jealousy. To begin with, God has the right to do what He wants to with His blessings. Also, realize if you desire His blessings you must be willing to do what it takes to get them. He does not hand out blessings haphazardly.

The young servants knew Boaz meant business and knew better than to defy him. They may have violated Ruth, but their fear of Boaz kept them from doing so. Our fear of God should keep us from doing things we should not.

Knowing she did not have to worry about the abuse of the reapers must have given Ruth peace. There is nothing like the deep settled peace that comes from our Lord.

Ru 2:16 And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.

Boaz told his servants to drop "*handfuls*" of grain on purpose. Notice, the wording here. it does not say drop handfuls "on" purpose, it says, handfuls "*of*" purpose. His purpose was to win the heart of Ruth.

Boaz instructed his reapers to let Ruth have extra barley and to not "*rebuke*" her. His kindness was revealed not only by doing good but by preventing bad.

Boaz's treatment of Ruth is a perfect example of someone obeying the "spirit" of the law.

The "spirit" of the law is quite different than the "letter" of the law.

The "letter" of the law deals with the exact wording of the law without any regard to a deeper meaning. For instance, the law says the speed limit is 55 miles an hour so going faster than 55 would be breaking the law.

However, the "spirit" of the law looks deeper. It examines the intent of the law. For instance, Leviticus says, "*Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD*" (Le 19:14). Clearly, this law says we are to not "*curse the deaf*" or "*put a stumblingblock*" in front of a blind person. But, the "spirit" of this law is saying that we should not take advantage of anyone with any handicap.

Jesus gave an example in the Sermon of the Mount. The letter of the law clearly forbids murder. But, the spirit of the law, which Jesus pointed out, addresses anger and hatred (Mt.5:21-22). The reason is because the attitude that causes anger and hatred is the same that causes murder. The same is true of adultery (Mt.5:27-28).

Certainly, keeping the "spirit" of the law is more difficult that keeping the "letter" of the law. Boaz was fulfilling the "spirit" of the law because he went further that what the law demanded.

Ru 2:17 So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.

Boaz did not dishonor Ruth by making her a charity case. But, he did make it easier for her to obtain an abundance.

Even though Ruth recognized she had favor with Boaz, she did not take advantage of it. She labored just as hard as before Boaz talked with her. We should never take advantage of the goodness of God.

After she beat out the chaff, she had "*about an ephah*" of barley, which was approximately seven gallons. An "*ephah*" equaled ten omers (Ex.16:36). When God told His people to gather manna, He told them to gather one omer for each person for one day's consumption. Using this scale, in one day, Ruth gathered

enough grain to provide her and Naomi five days of food. This was an unbelievable amount for one gleaning. God is good.

Ru 2:18 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.

The words "took it up" make me think of Ruth's appreciation for what she had gathered. She was careful with that which God had given her. The reapers in the field may have carelessly dropped some as they harvested, but we can be sure Ruth did not drop any on the way to the city.

Naomi was amazed when she "saw" the amount Ruth had gleaned. Ruth "gave to her" what she had gleaned. That which she had "reserved" is referring to the leftovers from the meal she had enjoyed with Boaz (2:4). Naomi was enjoying Ruth's blessings. It is a blessing when our blessings spill over to others.

Ruth was willing to share what God had provided. The blessings may run out for those who try to hoard them all for their own benefit. Those who tried to gather more manna than they could eat found it begin to stink (Ex. 16:20).

I believe Ruth was blessed when she saw Naomi enjoying the benefits of what she had gotten. It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

Ru 2:19 And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz.

Naomi could tell that someone had assisted Ruth in her gleaning for she had more than what could be gleaned under normal circumstances. May we live in such a manner to where others can tell we have been blessed of the Lord.

Naomi's question was a good one. At the end of each day we should ask ourselves, "What have I done today, where have I gone, what have I said, what did I accomplish". We can waste days, weeks, months, and even years if we fail to examine our daily activities.

D. BY THE GRACE OF GOD, RUTH'S FANTASY WAS REALIZED 2:20-23

Naomi's comment about Boaz being near kin delighted Ruth. There is little doubt that by this time, Ruth had dreamed about marrying again and having a family. To her delight, by the grace of God, she would realize her fantasy.

Ru 2:20 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.

When Naomi heard the name Boaz she rejoiced because she realized God was working.

No doubt, Naomi realized since Boaz was their kinsman he could redeem their land and marry Ruth if he so desired. We will discuss the fact that Boaz was one of the "kinsmen" in more detail later.

God is the God of the living and the dead (Mat. 22:32). Naomi and Ruth were the "living", Elimelech and Mahlon were the "dead".

Naomi recognized what God was doing. When she first returned to Bethlehem she was talking about bitterness (1:20), now she was talking about blessings. We need to look back and see what God has done for us. Many times, we are so busy that we don't notice the hand of God at work in our lives.

Ru 2:21 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.

Ruth described her conversation with Boaz. She was permitted to work the fields until the end of harvest.

Ru 2:22 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.

Naomi said, "It is good".

That means, she recognized the blessing of Ruth being able to glean in Boaz's field.

It means she recognized the danger of going to another field. There was the danger of Ruth being abused if she went to another field. This reminds us of the low morality of the time they were living (1:1).

It also means she recognized if Ruth went to a different field it would offend Boaz. We should take care to not offend our Lord.

Ru 2:23 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.

This verse tells us Ruth continued to glean in Boaz's field for a good while. She stayed through barley and wheat harvest. This could have been up to four months.

Some would have become dissatisfied with these types of circumstances. Working the fields every day was difficult and humbling. But, Ruth seemed content to be where God had her at the moment. Patience and contentment are two of the most important of all Christian attributes (Ex.2:21; Pro.15:15; Phil.4:11-13; 1 Tim. 6:6; Heb.13:5).

5. RUTH ENTICED HER GROOM 3:1-18

Though the word "enticed" can be used in a negative sense, it can also be used in a very positive way. The word means, "To attract by offering hope". There is no doubt that is exactly what Ruth did to Boaz. I am not suggesting for a second that she did anything inappropriate. There was a natural attraction that comes from being human and was not sinful.

A. AN UNDERSTANDABLE PLAN 3:1-4

Naomi had a plan to help Ruth and herself. This is understandable because of the situation they were in. Harvest time was ending, their food source was coming to an end and neither of them had a husband to provide their needs. To say the least, they were in a difficult situation.

Naomi's plan dealt with the two problems she and Ruth were dealing with. One, was the need for a redeemer and the other was the need for a husband. Their problems dealt with *money* and with *marriage*. Both of these needs would be fulfilled by Boaz.

Both of these problems, money and marriage, are dealt with in chapter three. Before we look at the verses in this chapter we need to examine these important factors.

NAOMI'S PLAN DEALT WITH THE NEED FOR MONEY

The solution to their problem could be settled by a kinsman-redeemer. Boaz would be the one who would be Ruth's kinsman-redeemer.

THE RESPONSIBILITY INVOLVED WITH A KINSMAN-REDEEMER

One, a kinsman-redeemer's responsibility dealt with PAYMENT.

He was responsible to buy a relative out of slavery (Lev.25:48). There were times when a person had to give themselves into slavery to pay a debt they were unable to pay. A kinsman-redeemer could pay the debt and have their relative set free.

Two, a kinsman-redeemer's responsibility dealt with PUNISHMENT.

He was responsible as the "*avenger of blood*" (Num.35:19, 24-27; Dt.19:11-12). The avenger of blood was a family member who was legally responsible for carrying out justice when a relative was murdered. The avenger was to seek justice by tracking down the guilty person and putting them to death. The avenger was to act only in cases of deliberate murder. It is important to know, this was an act of justice and not of revenge. The Old Testament law is rooted in God's justice for sin. God required blood for blood and life for life (Gen.9:6; Ex.21:12, 24-25; Lev.24:17). God also provided cities of refuge for those wrongly accused of crimes (Num.35:19, 24-28).

Three, a kinsman-redeemer's responsibility dealt with PURCHASE.

The kinsman-redeemer bought the property that had sold by his relative who had happened upon difficult times. Leviticus says, "If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold" (Lev.25:25). This was the circumstance of Naomi and Ruth.

God was serious about the land He gave His people. When Israel entered the Promised Land, He divided the land among the tribes and family groups. He intended it to stay within these tribes and groups just as He gave it. He told the Israelites the land actually belonged to Him, should never be sold (Lev.25:23) and

would be for the people of Israel forever (Gen.12:7; 15:18; 26:3).

The land was a demonstration of how God kept His promises to His people. For this reason, the land of an Israelite was never really permanently sold. If an Israelite had to sell his property, he still owned the title (Lev.25:25-28). A land sale was actually more of a rental or lease because the ownership reverted back to the original owner on the year of Jubilee, which was every fifty years. God said, "*In the year of this jubile ye shall return every man unto his possession*" (Lev.25:13). The price of the property was determined by how many years it was till the year of Jubilee. The amount would be less the closer to Jubilee because the person buying it would be able to use it less time.

Four, a kinsman-redeemer's responsibility deals with POSTERITY.

He was responsible to marry the widow of a deceased relative (Dt.25:5-10). If a man died childless his brother was to marry the widow and produce children in the dead man's name. Their firstborn son would be considered as a part of the deceased husband's family that his name might continue.

A note of interest: In fairness to Scripture, I must say that the bible does not state distinctly that the brother had to be unmarried. But, I have a difficult time believing God would give instructions that would cause one of His children to do something that was clearly against His will. God may have permitted polygamy, but He was never pleased with it.

Our modern way of thinking may cause us to feel like the law of the kinsman was unfair to both the man and the woman. After all, a woman who just lost her husband had to marry a man who she had known as her brother in law whom she probably did not love. And, a man had to give up his search for his dream girl and marry a woman he probably did not love. As if that wasn't enough, they had to have and raise a baby that would not be considered as theirs.

The one factor we must keep in mind is the fact that neither the man or the woman were forced to go through with this marriage. They both had the option of declining (Dt.25:7-8).

I believe this law revealed two very important things. One, it reveals how serious God was about keeping His children together. The modern church should remember this fact. Two, it reveals the spiritual condition of the man and woman. Their willingness to obey God's instructions showed they cared more about pleasing God than their own desires. We certainly need more of their kind in our day.

The circumstances between Boaz and Ruth dealt with the purchase and the posterity issues described above.

THE REQUIREMENTS INVOLVED WITH A KINSMAN-REDEEMER

In the case of a kinsman-redeemer there had to be...

RELATIONSHIP:

He had to be a part of the family (Lev.25:25 "if any of his *kin*"... emphasis added).

RESOURCES:

He had to have the finances so he could make the purchase (Lev.25:26 "be *able* to redeem it" ...emphasis added).

READINESS:

He had to be willing to make the purchase. He did have a choice (Lev.25:25 "*If* any of his kin"... emphasis added). Simply being the near kinsman did not make the person a redeemer. He had to be willing to pay the price required.

RELIABILITY:

Some said they would and then changed their mind. That was what happened with Ruth (4:6). The nearest kin changed his mind and refused to pay the price when he discovered marrying Ruth was a part of the transaction. Boaz, on the other hand, saw marrying Ruth the highlight of the transaction.

JESUS IS OUR KINSMAN-REDEEMER

Of course our kinsman-redeemer is none other than Jesus (Ps.106:10; 130:8; Isa.48:17; Gal.3:13).

Jesus met the requirement of RELATIONSHIP:

For Jesus to be our kinsman-redeemer, he had to become "one of us". He had to be part of the family

called mankind. Jesus certainly was born as a human. However, simply being born as a human did not make him truly "one of us". He was born as a human but he did not have the sinful nature of man. For Jesus to truly be "one of us" he had to experience the effects of man's sin. He did that by going to Calvary and taking our sin on himself. There, he truly became "one of us" (Isa.53:6; Rom.8:3; 2 Cor.5:21; Gal.3:13; 4:4-5; 1 Pet.2:24; Heb.2:16-17). And, there he paid the price that was required to set us free from our bondage.

Jesus met the requirement of RESOURCES:

Only Jesus was able to pay the price for sin for he was the only one without his own sin (Isa.53:9; Mt.27:4; Jn.8:46; 2 Cor.5:21; Heb.4:15; 7:26; 9:28; 1 Jn.3:5).

Jesus met the requirement of READINESS:

Jesus willingly gave his life for sinful man (Jn.10:18). He was not a murder victim (Mt.26:53; Jn.10:11,18; Lk.23:46; 2 Cor.11:2; Phil.2:6-8; Heb.12:2; 1 Jn.3:16).

Jesus met the requirement of RELIABILITY:

Jesus did not change his mind. He endured the cross (Heb.12:2). Jesus left heaven and came to this world for one reason, to die for our sins (Lk.9:51; 18:31). He never had a thought about doing otherwise. This amazes me when I think of all the people who reject his salvation and how we who are Christians treat him from time to time.

NAOMI'S PLAN DEALT WITH THE NEED FOR MARRIAGE

The second part of Naomi's plan dealt with marriage. A husband would help provide for Ruth and give her a relationship to give her contentment. Naomi's plan dealt with an ancient custom of proposing marriage. There was absolutely no impropriety involved with what Ruth would do.

Looking at the marriage between Ruth and Boaz, there are some questions we need to ask.

Question one: Was Boaz already married?

Answer: The bible does not tell us whether Boaz was, or ever had been, married. We must be careful to add anything to God's Word. I have trouble believing God would do something that clearly goes against His design of mankind, which is, one man for one woman, for life (Gen.2:24; Mt.19:6; Rom.7:2; Heb.13:4). God was never pleased with polygamy.

Question two: Was not an Israelite forbidden to marry a Moabitess? Didn't God forbid His people from marrying people of other nations?

Answer: The nations God forbade His people to marry were the ones who were living in the Promised Land (Ex.34:16; Dt.7:1-6; Josh.23:12). This did not include Moab (Dt.7:1).

We must also consider the fact that Ruth was actually a part of Abraham's family. She was from the family of Lot, Abraham's nephew. So, she was not a Jew, since the Jews come directly from Abraham, but she was a descendant of Abraham.

Question three: Was not an Israelite forbidden to marry an unbeliever?

Answer: We must remember Ruth was a committed proselyte before Boaz married her, so he was not marrying an unbeliever. God would not have endorsed an unequally yoked marriage (Ex.34:16; Dt.7:3; Josh.23:12; 1 Cor.7:39; 2 Cor.6:14).

And now, let's take a look at chapter three.

Ru 3:1 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?

The harvest was complete and the time of winnowing the grain had come, so the time of gleaning was over. Naomi was faced with three problems. One, what could she do to continue her deceased husband's name in Israel. Two, how could she protect her inheritance from Elimelech. Three, what could she do to provide for herself and Ruth. A marriage between Ruth and Boaz seemed to be the solution to all three problems. These were legitimate concerns and she was not acting selfishly.

The word, "rest" means "quiet" or "a settled spot". It carries with it the idea of comfort. Of course, Naomi was referring to the money and marriage problems we have just discussed.

Certainly, Naomi felt responsible for Ruth since she brought her from Moab to Bethlehem. She loved Ruth and wanted to help her to find peace and provision. It seems obvious that her plan was to help Ruth work things out with Boaz. She could envision Ruth being happily married to a good and godly husband who

would love her and provide for her.

I do not encourage match-making. Marriage is too important to play games with. Many times we are wrong about who should marry whom. We need to leave it to the Lord and let Him work it out. Plus, to be honest, it is none of our business. However, God was involved with Naomi's plan for Ruth and Boaz.

Naomi was not Ruth's mother but she had a motherly love for her. Though Ruth was not Naomi's daughter, she was wise to obey her instructions. God instructs children to obey their parents (Ex.21:17; Dt.27:16; Mt.15:4; Eph.6:1; Col.3:20). God blesses the children who obey their parents (Dt 5:16; Eph.6:2). He would certainly bless Ruth for her obedience to Naomi.

Ru 3:2 And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor.

Knowing Boaz was a kinsman, Naomi instructed Ruth about how she should handle the situation.

The time of harvesting being ended, it was time to winnow the grain. Winnowing was a process of grinding grain on a hard surface, throwing it in the air so the chaff would blow away, and leaving the good grain behind.

Winnowing was usually done in the late afternoon when the winds blew gently. Boaz spent the night at the "threshingfloor", either to guard the grain against thieves or to be able to get an early start the next day.



Ru 3:3 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.

Naomi told Ruth to go to the threshingfloor where Boaz was staying. She encouraged Ruth to clean up and dress up so she would look her best. I'm sure Ruth did not need this instruction. Like all ladies who are interested in a particular man, she wanted to look her best when she went courting.

Naomi's instructions involved four things.

One, she was to "wash". Ruth had been working in the fields in the heat of the day. She would certainly need a bath. Believers need to be clean from the filth of the world when they attempt to approach their kinsman-redeemer. (Isa.1:16; 2 Cor.7:1; Heb.10:22). Jesus spoke of the importance of keeping our feet clean (Jn.13:10).

Certainly, a believer can come to the Lord even when they have sin in their lives, but for there to be no obstructions between us and our Savior, we need to be spiritually clean. Consistent confession is a must for a close walk with the Lord (1 Jn.1:9).

Two, she was to "anoint" herself. It was common for women to use fragrant oils to help protect and perfume their bodies. Solomon spoke of this (Song. 1:3; 4:10). Anointing in the bible speaks of the Holy Spirit working in our lives (Isa.61:1; Acts 10:38; 2 Cor.1:21; 1 Jn.2:27). We have access to the Lord and His power, only through the Holy Spirit.

Three, she was to change her "raiment". No doubt, the clothes she wore to the fields were tattered and worn. She probably did not have a large selection of clothes, but certainly, she picked out her best for this occasion. The bible speaks of righteousness as clean clothing. (Isa.61:10). I am glad I took off the old coat and put on the new. The prodigal's father had a new robe ready for his son (Lk.15:22). No son of his would have to dress in rags.

Four, she was to go down to the threshing "floor". She was to go where Boaz was. Going "down" to the threshing floor speaks of her humility. We should never get so used to being a part of God's family to where we think we can prance into His presence like we own the place. No doubt, we are His children and He tells us to come to Him (Eph.2:18; 3:12; Heb.4:16) but we should always go in reverence and humility. There should always be a reverential fear of God in our hearts.

Ru 3:4 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.

Ruth was to go to where Boaz was sleeping, pull up the end of the covers, and lay down at his feet. This seems strange to us today but it was an act that dealt with two customs of their day. We will look at these customs when dealing with verses 7-13.

Naomi's instructions to Ruth may seem rather forward to us, but they are based on the biblical command that deals with a kinsman-redeemer. As described in the introduction of this chapter, a kinsman-redeemer was one who acted on behalf of a relative in need. Her way of handling the situation was common in their day.

Naomi's final instruction at this point was for Ruth to do whatever Boaz said. We see here the faith of Naomi. She had faith in Ruth to follow her instructions, she had faith in Boaz to do the right thing, but primarily she had faith in God. God honored her faith because Ruth did exactly what she requested and Boaz immediately began working on a plan to make Ruth his bride.

B. AN UNUSUAL PROPOSAL 3:5-9

In the next verses, we find Ruth actually proposing to Boaz. Her method of proposing is certainly unusual to us but it was common to them.

Ru 3:5 And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do.

Ruth's willingness to do as Naomi suggested tells us more than just the fact that she wanted a husband. It shows us her respect for Naomi, her trust in Naomi, and especially her desire to follow the law of God.

Ru 3:6 And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her.

Ruth did "all" Naomi had instructed. We'll never go wrong when we obey godly instruction. Mary told the servants "*Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it*" (Jn.2:5).

Certainly Ruth was somewhat apprehensive as she approached Boaz. Her first marriage had not go well. And, now she is putting her heart on the line again. The same is true of the believer. Our first "marriage" with the devil certainly did not go well. I am glad we can have absolute confidence that our "marriage" with Christ will be different.

Ru 3:7 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.

After eating and drinking Boaz laid down near the grain to go to sleep. The fact that Boaz had "*eaten and drunk*" does not imply he had done either in excess. The word, "*merry*" means "cheerful". He was happy because the end of harvest was a time of celebration. There is no reason to assume he was in a drunken state.

Ruth came in quietly, "*uncovered his feet*", and laid down crosswise at his feet. Uncovering a person's feet in this fashion was a marriage proposal. Boaz, being older than Ruth, would not have initiated the proposal to a younger woman. The customs of their day made it inappropriate for an older man to propose to a younger woman. Ruth's actions were a way a woman could very gracefully initiate a proposal to a man. There was absolutely no immorality involved.

We should keep in mind, Boaz had taken the first step in the romance when he took care of Ruth in his fields (2:14-16). Ruth's approach was actually a response to Boaz's prior interest in her.

Even though Ruth came seeking a kinsman, there is little doubt she did what she did because she loved Boaz and wanted him as her husband.

Ru 3:8-9 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.

Boaz awoke at midnight and was startled to find someone at his feet. Being there to guard against thieves, no doubt he thought the worse to begin with. He could tell it was a woman lying at his feet but in the darkness, he could not tell who she was.

Ruth got straight to the point and did not beat around the bush. She told Boaz who she was and what she wanted.

The "*skirt*" was a covering or bed clothing. Spreading a skirt over a person was a custom that signified accepting a marriage proposal. God spoke of spreading His skirt over Israel (Eze 16:8). If Boaz did as Ruth requested, it meant he had accepted her proposal and was agreeing to take her as his wife.

The word, "*skirt*" actually means "wing". The wing was an emblem of protection as seen in a mother hen who protects her chicks by spreading her wings over them. In essence, Boaz was doing just that by accepting Ruth's proposal.

Ruth was coming to ask Boaz to fulfill his responsibility as her kinsman. Yet, she came with humility, knowing Boaz could refuse (Dt.25:5-10). What husband would not like for his wife to treat him in such a manner? But, what wife would not like for her husband to treat her as Boaz did Ruth?

Ruth called herself Boaz's "*handmaid*". She was no longer the outcast from Moab.

Someone may ask why Ruth was so forward in this situation. As I have already mentioned, this was a common custom of their day. However, I believe there is another reason for Ruth's forwardness. I believe

she saw this as an answer to prayer. No doubt, she and Naomi had been asking the Lord to take care of them. She believed Boaz was the way God was answering those prayers. There is nothing like the peace that comes from believing God is in the process of answering one of our prayers.

C. AN UNIMPORTANT PAST 3:10-11

One of the most delightful truths of this event is the fact that Ruth's past was unimportant to Boaz. He didn't mention a word about where she had come from or what she used to be. What she had been did not matter to him.

Ru 3:10 And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

What I have said before (cf. 3:4) bears repeating here. Had he so desired, Boaz could have easily taken advantage of Ruth. I believe this to be one of the most insightful parts of Ruth's experience. When she put herself in a place where she could have easily been treated horribly, Boaz treated her with the utmost kindness. Does this not tell us we can trust our sweet Savior? Placing ourselves totally into His care is not only safe, it is smart.

His words, "*Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter*" reveal his spiritual nature. Much of the recorded words of Boaz of a spiritual nature.

The fact that Boaz spoke of "*young*" men reminds us, as previously mentioned, he was older than Ruth.

Boaz saying "*thou followedst not young men*" shows he understood that Ruth was asking for marriage. He was thankful she had pursued him instead of a younger man. No doubt, many younger men were interested in her. This should warn us of the many things in this world that seek our attention. It should also remind us that none of those things are as wonderful as a close walk with our Lord.

Ruth had "*shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning*". She had been totally dedicated to her husband and had continued to be faithful to his memory by remaining single and not marrying the first man who became available. Now, her willingness to honor her husband's memory and marry his relative was an even greater kindness.

Boaz's comments about Ruth further revealed his desire for godliness. He was impressed by Ruth's kindness and the fact that she had not allowed herself to be overcome by the natural desire for companionship.

Ru 3:11 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.

Boaz accepted Ruth's proposal for marriage and her request for being her kinsman-redeemer.

Boaz said, "*I will do to thee as thou requirest*". His willingness to be Ruth's kinsman-redeemer should not be taken lightly. He, being a rich man, had much to lose by marrying a woman who was from the "wrong side of the tracks".

Boaz's words, "*fear not*" had to be a great comfort to Ruth. Her future depended on whether Boaz would be willing to be her and Naomi's kinsman-redeemer. Every woman needs to feel secure.

The word, "*virtuous*" is a word that we would not often use when referring to a woman. It actually means "strength, army, band of men". How could such a word be used of a godly lady? We understand when we recognize the fact that it means Ruth was a woman who, like a soldier, demonstrated resistance to the enemy, devotion to her leader, and patience in the battle. It certainly is not suggesting she had any manly attributes.

The "*city*" knew about the life of Ruth. Her testimony as a godly lady had already spread throughout Bethlehem. She was the very type of woman Boaz desired. By the way, she was the type of lady the Lord desired also. God is still looking for some godly ladies.

D. AN UNEXPECTED PROBLEM 3:12-17

An unexpected problem arose. There was a man who was more closely related to Elimelech than Boaz. He would have the first choice about fulfilling the role of the kinsman-redeemer.

Ru 3:12 And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

Since Boaz was not the nearest kinsman, he had to let the "nearer" kinsman decide whether he was willing to redeem Naomi's property and marry Ruth.

Once again, we see the integrity of Boaz. Even though he wanted Ruth for his wife, he still refused to do something wrong. He knew if this marriage was God's will, He would work it out. We all need to learn that lesson. When we put doing right before our desires, God will bless us (Ps.37:5). And, He may just give us our desires as our reward for doing right (Ps.37:4; Mt.5:6; 6:33). When Solomon asked for wisdom instead of riches, God gave him both (1 Kgs.3:11-13).

Ru 3:13 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.

Boaz told Ruth he would give her an answer in the "morning". This is another indication that they had no physical contact during the night.

Boaz said he would "do the part of a kinsman" if the nearer kin refused. This reveals his love for Ruth. He was willing to pay the price and marry her. Jesus did not have to die for us but I am so glad he loved us enough to do so.

Ruth was to "lie down until the morning". Perhaps Boaz asked her to stay the night because the roads were too dangerous for a woman to travel alone. Also, usually the only women who walked the roads at night were prostitutes. Boaz certainly did not want Ruth to be mistaken for a prostitute.

No doubt, Ruth's anticipation about what would happen made it a long night.

Ru 3:14 And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor.

The fact that she "lay at his feet until the morning" indicates there was no improper behavior between them. Boaz and Ruth were careful to make certain their desires did not get the best of them.

Boaz encouraged Ruth to leave before sunrise to make sure no one would get the wrong impression. Many a person has been ruined by a misplaced rumor.

What people think about us does matter (Ecl.7:1). The book of Proverbs says, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches" (Pro.22:1). A good reputation is one of the requirements for a pastor (1 Tim.3:7). Peter tells us we should live in such a way to where no one would believe anything negative said about us (1 Pet.2:15).

Ru 3:15 Also he said, Bring the vail that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city.

Boaz certainly would not send Ruth away without giving her a token of his love for her. He had no flowers and candy so he gave her what he did have. The closest thing at hand was the barley. It was really a thoughtful and loving gift. She needed food more than some trinket.

The "six measures of barley" were probably as much as she could carry. The Lord does indeed load His children with benefits (Ps.68:19; 103:2; 116:12).

Notice, Ruth "went to the city". She wasted no time to obey the instructions of Boaz. It would do us well to follow the instructions of our Lord as quickly. David said he would "run" to do the Lord's will (Ps.119:32). He also said he "made haste, and delayed not" to keep the commandments of God (Ps.119:60). No doubt, Felix wished he had not delayed in obeying the call of God (Acts 24:25).

Ru 3:16 And when she came to her mother in law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her.

Sadly, some have found the need to play with the Word of God because in this verse it says Ruth "came to her mother in law" while the previous verse says she went to the "city". They go so far as to say it was Boaz who went to the city, even though it clearly says "she" went.

A simple look at this book will clarify such confusion. Naomi and Ruth went to the "city" when they came from Moab (1:19). Naomi was in the "city" when Ruth told her about gleaning (2:20). Boaz spoke of the entire "city" knowing about Ruth's virtuous life (3:11). There is no doubt that Ruth went to the city where Naomi was residing until the situation with the land was settled. We would do well to let the Word of God speak for itself. Jesus said it was forever settled, we had better not try to change it (Mt.5:18; 24:35).

Naomi asked, "Who art thou, my daughter". It was light enough for her to be able to tell a woman was approaching but still too dark for her to recognize exactly who it was. She used the word "daughter" in generic sense since she could tell it was a woman.

Ru 3:17 And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law.

These are the last recorded words of Ruth in the bible. What wonderful words to end with. She spoke of her beloved and talked about his abundant goodness to her.

The barley that came from Boaz was meant for Ruth but not just for Ruth. Boaz intended she pass some of her blessings to her "*mother in law*". So it is with the blessings which our Lord gives to us. If we become selfish with what we receive He may stop giving them. We must guard against selfishness of any kind in our lives. Paul rebuked those who "*seek their own*" (Phil.2:21; 1 Cor.10:24; 2 Tim.3:2).

6. RUTH ENDED HER GLEANING 3:18-4:17

Naomi is about to give Ruth some of the best advice that could be given. She told Ruth to "*Sit still*". Ruth had gleaned but the harvest time was over and so was the ability to glean. She had approached Boaz and requested that he assume the place as kinsman-redeemer. She had indeed done all she could do, so it was time to "*sit still*" and let God move. She was at a point to where all she could do was trust God. What a wonderful place to be. Moses told the people of Israel to "*stand still*" before God opened the Red Sea (Ex.14:13). God certainly took care of their problem (Ex.14:19-31).

Ru 3:18 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.

These are the last recorded words of Naomi in the bible. What she said says a great deal about her.

She told Ruth to "*Sit still*". She knew they could rest in confidence knowing God would handle the situation. Sitting still meant she was resting in the Lord and trusting Him to work out what she could not.

There are times when we need to sit still and let God move. When we move when we should be sitting we make a mess out of what God has planned. Nothing in this world can give us the type of peace that comes from sitting still and trusting God.

She said, "*Until thou know how the matter will fall*". She realized the Lord might have some other plan in mind. She did not know what God would do, but she did know God would do the right thing. There are times when God, in His wisdom, has a different plan than what we might desire. But, His plan is always the best.

Naomi's comments also show her confidence in Boaz. She said, "*The man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day*". She believed Boaz would do the right thing if he could. She was trusting Boaz to do all he could.

Ruth's comments also show her confidence in Ruth. She knew Ruth would do the right thing even though it might not be the easy thing.

No doubt, despite Naomi's encouragement, Ruth spent a somewhat restless night. She knew she would probably be getting married, which was exciting enough, but she did not know who she would be marrying. What young woman in our modern society can understand the emotions Ruth was experiencing?

A. AN UNWILLING PERSON 4:1-8

The near kinsman was unwilling to purchase Elimelech's estate because he did not want to marry Ruth. This was a serious situation because Elimelech's family name would vanish if she did not marry and have children. Considering the fact that Jesus would come from this bloodline, this was a very important issue.

Ru 4:1 Then 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 a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down.

Since most cities were surrounded by walls the "*gate*" became a place where people gathered. Any news or public announcements and any business affairs were taken care of at the gate. Much like an outdoor courthouse, it was the place where judges and officers were to be found (Dt.16:18). This provided a way to make business matters legal before written documents were used.

The nearer "*kinsman*" Boaz had spoken to Ruth about "*came by*" and Boaz began a conversation. We are not told the exact relationship of this man. Some believe he was the brother of Elimelech but we cannot be certain. In response to Boaz's request he "*sat down*". It was obvious that Boaz had a business matter to

discuss.

No doubt, Boaz knew this man, but he did not call him by name. His name was never mentioned in Scripture. He was one of many who would live his life without making much of a mark in this world. Those unwilling to assume their responsibility seldom have much of a positive affect on the world around them.

Ru 4:2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.

Boaz gathered ten of the "elders of the city" as a legal delegation. They would serve as judges and witnesses for the transaction by Boaz. Boaz wanted to make sure it was legal.

They "sat down" that they might hear the particulars of the matter Boaz was bringing before them. When we have important business matters we depend on lawyers and the judicial system to make sure it is settled according to the law and that all decisions will be legally binding. Wisely, Boaz was doing much the same thing. God admonishes His people to obey the law of the land (Mk.12:17; Rom.13:1-4; Tit.3:1; 1 Pet.2:13).

As we have seen before, Boaz's actions reveal his spiritual condition. No doubt, he was motivated by his love for Ruth and his desire to take care of her but he did not let his emotions get the best of him. He was determined to handle the situation in a biblical and legal manner. We may have right motives but we need to do things the right way. Many people try to excuse their faulty behavior by saying they care.

Humanly speaking, Boaz was taking a big chance. If the nearer kinsman agreed to redeem the land and marry Ruth, his chances with her would be forever gone. I believe his actions reveal his faith in God to work it out. We can trust God, even in the most serious of matters. In fact, we had better trust God when facing serious matters.

Ru 4:3 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:

Boaz got straight to the point with the nearer kinsman and elders. He didn't call them together to share recipes, he wanted to get the business settled as quickly as possible.

Boaz used wisdom in how he presented his case for Ruth. He did not even mention her, to begin with, but spoke only of Naomi's property.

Naomi "*selleth a parcel of land*" tells us Elimelech did not sell his land when he and Naomi left Bethlehem and went to Moab (1:1). Upon returning to Bethlehem, Naomi felt her best option for survival was to sell the land. No doubt, this was an extremely difficult decision. Of course, she hoped that a family member would buy back this property on her behalf.

Owning land for an Israelite meant several things. One, God had been good to them. They saw land as a gift from God (Gen.12:7; 13:15; 15:18-21). Two, God was providing for them. The land provided a living by planting crops and raising livestock. Three, God was providing for their future. The land was to stay in the family and be passed on to their offspring (Gen.12:7; 17:8; Ps.105:11). For more information please refer to the comments about a kinsman-redeemer in the introduction to this chapter.

For these reasons, every Israelite took their land seriously. They would not sell it unless they thought it was the only way they could survive. Naomi had undoubtedly come to that point. Neither she nor Ruth had a husband or son to work the land. It would have been impossible for her and Ruth to work the land especially if it had laid unattended for the years they had been in Moab.

This sad affair brings us to the heart of the book of Ruth. Naomi and Ruth needed someone to assist them.

Ru 4:4 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.

In essence, Boaz said, "If you want it, buy it now, if you don't, I will".

At first, the nearer kinsman said. "*I will redeem it*". No doubt, Boaz's heart fell when he heard those words. The situation did not look good for Ruth or Boaz but God was not finished. There are times when it seems like our hopes and dreams have been taken away. We, like Boaz, need to keep trusting God in such cases.

Ru 4:5 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.

The details of Naomi and Ruth are not quite as simple as they might appear. To understand these details we need to look at how they related to Naomi and to Ruth.

How the estate of Elimelech related to Naomi:

Naomi was being forced to sell the estate that had belonged to her deceased husband. For her to regain ownership the nearest relative would have to redeem it by repaying the purchase price to the person who bought it. If no one was willing to redeem it, she would lose it until the year of Jubilee.

How the estate of Elimelech related to Ruth:

Ruth, being the daughter-in-law of Elimelech, was entitled to the inheritance that had been passed on to Mahlon, her deceased husband. Old Testament law said if a man died without having a son, his estate should be passed to his daughter. The order of inheritance was son, daughter, brother, uncle, and then closest relative (Num.27:8-11). So, Ruth, just like Naomi, needed someone to redeem her property.

Buying the field fulfilled the law dealing with the widow of a deceased husband (Lev.25:25). Please refer to the information about a kinsman-redeemer in the introduction to this chapter.

Raising up the "*name of the dead*" refers to the law dealing with the firstborn son of this type of marriage. That son would be considered as the son of the deceased husband that his name might continue in Israel (Dt.25:5). The son of Ruth and Boaz would always be known as the son of Mahlon and not the son of Boaz.

As we have already discussed, God took the survival of His people seriously. For more information please refer to the introduction to this chapter,

Ru 4:6 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.

His response, "*I cannot redeem it*" was not completely true. The fact was, he did not want to redeem it once he knew Ruth was included.

This man wanted the property, but he did not want Ruth. He knew if he married Ruth the son she bore would carry the name of her first husband and not his name (4:6). This son would also inherit everything that had belonged to Mahlon. His decision makes it clear that he saw it only as a business opportunity and had absolutely no feelings for Ruth.

The decision of the nearer kinsman revealed his selfish attitude. He was willing when he thought there was a good deal to be had, but when he discovered the responsibility towards Ruth, he quickly changed his mind. Sadly, he was not the last person who has had this same selfish attitude.

As a side note, this situation should help us to remember the seriousness of who we marry. There is no doubt that God's will is that one man and one woman spend their lives together (Gen.1:27; 2:24; Mt.19:4-6; Lk.16:18; Rom.7:2; Eph.5:25; Col.3:18-19; Heb.13:4). Anything else grieves God and causes great distress for everyone involved.

Ru 4:7 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 neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel.

The writer explained a custom of their day that symbolized a transaction between two people. The kinsman who refused to fulfill his duty was to remove his sandal and give it to the widow (Dt.25:9). The instructions include spitting in the face of the man (Dt.25:9). Spitting in the face was a sign of reproach for him refusing to fulfill his responsibility. For some unknown reason, on this occasion, they either did not spit in the face of the nearer kinsman, or it simply was not recorded.

The person who refused to fulfill his duty as a kinsman would be known as the "un-sandaled" (Dt.25:10). He carried the stigma of being one who refused to do his duty.

Ru 4:8 Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe.

The removal of the shoe showed the surrender of his will in regards to his responsibility as a kinsman.

By the nearer kinsman giving up his right, passing it on to Boaz, and Boaz paying the price to redeem the property, all the laws of inheritance were satisfied. We may wonder why Boaz didn't just go ahead and marry Ruth without going through all this trouble. As has already been mentioned, he wanted to do things legally, but I believe also it is a picture of how the law must be satisfied before redemption can take place. Salvation does not set aside the law. In fact, Jesus' work in this world satisfied God's law (Isa.53:11; Mt.5:17; Lk.24:44; Rom.10:4; Gal.3:13).

B. AN UNFORGETTABLE PURCHASE 4:9-12

Boaz made the purchase of a lifetime. He paid for all that was Elimelech's and took Ruth as his wife. Jesus did the same thing on the cross. He paid for the sin of mankind and made preparation for His bride (Gal.3:13; 4:5; Eph.1:7; 5:25).

Ru 4:9 And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi.

Boaz purchased everything that Elimelech had owned which provided Naomi the money she needed to live.

Boaz spoke aloud the details of this purchase that there might not be any confusion or disagreements later. This was their way of making sure the transaction was legally recorded.

Ru 4:10 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.

Part of his agreement was to take Ruth as his wife and have a child in the name of her deceased husband. The sacrifice of this decision is greater than we might first realize. In a very real way, Boaz was giving up his firstborn son. He and Ruth would raise and support their first son but he would be considered as the son of Mahlon. That is exactly what God did for us, He gave his Son (Jn.3:16). The story of Ruth is a story of romance, but it is also a story of sacrifice.

All the family members were mentioned in verses 9 and 10 with the exception of Orpah. Her decision to stay in Moab cost her more than she realized (1:25).

Ru 4:11 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:

The people of the city and the elders served as witnesses of the transaction of Boaz and his marriage to Ruth. The elders spoke aloud saying, "*We are witnesses*". The phrase, "*the woman that is come into thine house*" was not suggesting Ruth had already moved into the house of Boaz. It was a statement of fact indicating the legal marriage contract between Boaz and Ruth. The legal marriage of Boaz and Ruth took place at the gate that day.

Some in our modern-day believe there is no reason for a legal marriage license. Nothing could be further from the truth. God instituted the law of marriage. He brought Eve to Adam and united them (Gen.2:22,24). A "love" that is not willing to make it legal is not real love.

The elder's acknowledgment of Ruth and Boaz's marriage included a blessing. They asked "The LORD" to make Ruth like "*Rachel and like Leah*". Like Ruth, "*Rachel*" had been barren for many years but God gave her a son (Gen.30:1, 22-24). Rachel and Leah did "*build the house of Israel*". They were the legal mothers of the twelve tribes of Israel. Rachel's maid, Bilhah, and Leah's maid, Zilpah, are not mentioned here.

Of course, the city of "*Bethlehem*" would be the place where the Lord Jesus Christ was born (Mic.5:2; Mt.2:5-6). Naomi's move back to Bethlehem connected the roots of David to the city of Bethlehem. That is why Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem to register in the census of Augustus (Lk.2:1-5). God was putting all the pieces together.

Ru 4:12 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.

The birth of "*Pharez*" is described in Genesis 38:12-30. Pharez became the main ancestor of the Ephrathites and Bethlehemites.

Tamar, like Ruth was a Gentile woman who was in the line of Christ's ancestors. She was another example of how God loves all people and is willing to redeem anyone who will come to Him.

C. AN UNLIKELY POSTERITY 4:13-17

Of course, the word "posterity" refers to the descendants of a person. Ruth's family tree was one of the most unlikely we will ever see. From a cursed woman from Moab to the grandmother of David. Even more amazing, through Ruth came the Lord Jesus Christ. It is amazing what God can do with those who will give themselves to Him.

Ru 4:13 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.

As previously discussed, the first son of Ruth and Boaz would be considered the son of Mahlon (Dt.25:6). Any children afterward would be legal children of Boaz.

The "*Lord gave her conception*" reminds us of the fact that God is in charge of fertility and barrenness (Gen.29:31; 30:2).

Ru 4:14 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.

It is interesting that the women addressed Naomi instead of Ruth. Notice instead of calling Boaz by name, they spoke of her "*kinsman*". The emphasis was on his ministry to Ruth. Because of this redeemer she would enjoy the life described in the next verse.

The Lord had not left Naomi "*without a kinsman*". He did not leave Naomi in her place of despair (1:20). He turned her life around by providing a kinsman-redeemer. Is that not what He did for all those who have accepted Him as their Savior?

What a wonderful way to describe the relationship between Boaz and Ruth. It almost sounds like, "And they lived happily ever after". Naomi was comforted, Ruth found her love, and Boaz ended up with the woman he loved.

Even more wonderful is the truth this book reveals. It reminds us of the true kinsman-redeemer who would pay the price to purchase the one he loves. A hopeless and helpless sinner found love and liberty because Jesus cared enough to pay the price.

Ru 4:15 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.

The women spoke of Boaz being a "*restorer*" of life to Naomi. The word, "*restorer*" means "to turn back". Boaz would give her a new lease on life. She had no joy, no peace, and no hope. But, her kinsman had turned that all around.

The women spoke of Boaz being a "*nourisher*" to Naomi. The word, "*nourisher*" means "to make provision". God reassured Naomi that Boaz would be there to provide what she needed in her "*old age*" when she needed it the most. When we get older our thoughts naturally turn to how we will be able to take care of ourselves.

The women spoke of Ruth being better than "*seven sons*" to Naomi. In the bible, the number "*seven*" is the number for perfection. Ruth had been to Naomi what "*seven sons*" could not have been. She may not have had a husband or children, but she had a daughter-in-law who gave her more joy and comfort than many sons could have.

Ru 4:16 And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.

As we have discussed, the firstborn son of Boaz and Ruth was considered the son of Mahlon. Additional sons would legally be the offspring of Boaz (Dt. 25:6).

Naomi's story takes her from bitterness to blessing.

This means simply that Naomi took care of the baby. It does not suggest she actually fed the baby. It does however mean Naomi possessed the natural affection of a godly grandmother.

No doubt, Naomi was overwhelmed with joy to be able to hold her grandson and then to watch him grow. There was good reason to rejoice. After all, how many ladies have become a grandmother after their husbands and sons have died?

Ru 4:17 And the women her neighbours 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.

The women in the neighborhood named Ruth's baby. This means the neighbors suggested a name and Naomi and Ruth accepted their suggestion. This is the only place in the Old Testament where someone named a child other than a family member. Our Lord was named by someone other than his earthly parents (Isa.7:14; Mt.1:23).

It is interesting that the emphasis is on Naomi and not Ruth since it was Ruth who actually had the baby. Perhaps Naomi is emphasized as a reminder of how God blesses those who are willing to put Him first and walk in His will. She may have strayed, but she got right and finished her life walking with God.

Of course, Obed was Naomi's grandson. The word "*son*" is used in the bible for son or grandson.

The name "*Obed*" means "serving". We are not told why he was given this name. Since many names in the bible were given for specific reason, perhaps it was because he would be one who served his mother and grandmother as they grew older. It may have been because he would be a servant of the Lord.

Several men in the bible are named "*Obed*" but we are told very little about this Obed. He is mentioned in four genealogies (Ruth 4:22; 1 Chr.2:12; Mt.1:5; Lk.3:32). In spite of what seems to be an ordinary life, he was anything but ordinary. Through this relatively unknown man, came the mighty man of God, named David, and the very Son of God, named Jesus. There are no "ordinary" people in this world.

He was the "*father*" of Jesse and David. The word "*father*" is used in a generic sense and means they were ancestors of Obed. There is little doubt that this information is one of the primary reasons the book of Ruth was written. God wanted us to know He had a plan for mankind.

Ruth was the great-grandmother of "*David*". The lineage of David is nothing short of a miracle. From an idol worshipping woman who was the result of an incestuous relationship (Gen.19:30-37), to the ancestor of the

king of Israel and the King of kings.

The names "*Jesse*" and "*David*" form a summarized genealogy which will be explained in more detail in verses 18-22.

7. RUTH ENRICHED HER GENEALOGY 4:18-22

The book ends with a short genealogy with Boaz taking the place of Elimelech. Boaz, instead of marring his inheritance as the nearer kinsman feared, gained a special place in the history of Israel. We never lose when we go with God. This genealogy is recorded in four different places in scripture (Ruth 4:21-22; 1 Chr.2:12-15; Mt.1:5-6; Lk.3:31-32).

Ruth's genealogy reveals the hand of God at work in keeping His promise for a deliverer (Gen.3:15). Anyone in the direct lineage between Judah and David was an ancestor of Jesus, which includes an unknown, unimportant, unnoticed lady by the name of Ruth.

Ruth certainly enriched her future when she decided to go to Judah with Naomi. Nothing in her life would ever be the same.

This genealogy is not complete and was not meant to be. Obviously, it is given primarily to point to the connection between the son born to Boaz and Ruth and the Son of God.

There are none who unknown or unimportant to God. We may know little or nothing about some of these in this list, but God knows them all and He had a purpose in their lives.

Ru 4:18 Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron,

The account of Pharez and Hezron can be found in the book of Genesis (Gen.38:12-30). Hezron was with the children of Israel when they went to Egypt (Gen.46:8-9).

Ru 4:19 And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab,

Ram is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 2:9.

Amminadab was the father-in-law of Aaron (Ex.6:23; Mt.1:4; Lk.3:33).

Ru 4:20 And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon,

Nahshon was the head of the house of Judah when they came out of Egypt (1 Chr.2:10; Num.1:7; 7:12; 10:14).

Ru 4:21 And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed,

Salmon was the husband of Rahab and the father of Boaz (Mt.1:5). This fact shows there were some generations omitted in this genealogy. By no means, does that mean it is faulty. It simply means God did not include every generation.

Ru 4:22 And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.

God promised David a place without end (2 Sam.7:8-17).

Obed's significance in this story does not involve some great deed he did, but he made a mark that cannot be overstated. His mark on history came from the fact that through him came David and eventually Jesus. All important matters end up with Jesus.

David truly did many mighty works during his day, but there was none greater than being a part of bringing the Savior into this world.

As I have already mentioned, Ruth's genealogy was unlikely. There is more to it than first meets the eye. It tells us a great deal about the road from the Garden of Eden (Gen.2:8) to the Garden Tomb (Jn.19:41-42).

A. RUTH'S GENEALOGY INVOLVES A SERPENT THAT WAS FIBBING (Gen.3:1-6).

The fact that there is a genealogy at all is a miracle. The devil did his best to stop Jesus from being born or from going to the cross.

He tried to stop Jesus by SIN. He convinced Adam to sin in an attempt to corrupt the seed of man and make it impossible for a sinless Savior to be born (Gen.3:1-6).

He tried to stop Jesus by SLAVERY. He tried to work through Pharaoh to bring about the end of the Hebrews by laying on them extremely difficult labor (Ex.1:7-14).

He tried to stop Jesus by SLAUGHTER. He tried to use Pharaoh when he attempted to annihilate the Hebrew race and thereby stop Jesus from being born (Ex.1:15-22). He attempted the same thing again when he tried to use Herod when he put the male children to death (Mt.2:1-12).

He tried to stop Jesus by SINNING. He tempted Jesus in an attempt to cause him to sin which would have disqualified him as a sinless sacrifice for the sin of man (Mt.4:1-12).

He tried to stop Jesus by SUBTLENESS. He spoke through Peter and told him to not go to the cross (Mt.16:21-23). What he could not do directly, he tried doing in a subtle way by speaking through one of Jesus' own disciples.

Thank the Lord, he failed every time.

B. RUTH'S GENEALOGY INVOLVES A SINNER THAT WAS FORGIVEN

Salmon (4:20) was the husband of Rahab, the woman who had been a harlot (Mt.1:5). After she was forgiven, she assisted the people of Israel (Josh.2:1-24). Who would expect a woman who had been such a sinner to be a part of the birth of the sinless Son of God?

C. RUTH'S GENEALOGY INVOLVES A SON THAT WAS FORGOTTEN

Everyone, including David's own father, forgot about David when a king of Israel was chosen (1 Sam.16:1-13). But, God had a different plan. David became a mighty deliverer and Israel's greatest king. Ruth and Boaz were great grandparents of David.

David was more than just another name in an unimportant list of names. His name gives hope for the promised Messiah and a time of peace on earth. David truly did many mighty works during his day, but there was none greater than being a part of bringing the Savior into this world (Lk.1:31-33).

D. RUTH'S GENEALOGY INVOLVES A SAVIOR THAT WAS FAITHFUL

Ruth's genealogy stops at David but God did not stop there. It leads to Jesus who was called the "*son of David*" for a reason (Mt.1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 21:9).

Scripture tells us the Messiah would be a descendant of David and would come from the tribe of Judah (2 Sam.7:12-17; Isa.11:1). Jesus fulfilled these prophecies (Mt.1:1; Lk.1:32-33; Acts 15:15-16; Heb.1:5).

POINTS TO PONDER

In concluding this wonderful book we should consider the following thoughts.

- This book reminds us of the importance of trusting and obeying God at all times

Elimelech panicked and moved to Moab. No doubt God would have taken care of him and his family if he had trusted Him and stayed in Judah. Difficult times call for faith, not fear.

- This book reminds us of how God can turn our lives around

This book opens with three funerals and ends with a wedding. Naomi's story takes her from bitterness to blessing. It starts with rebellion (1:1) and ends with restoration (4:13). It starts with reproach and ends with respect (4:14). It starts with regret and ends with rejoicing (4:16).

God blessed Naomi, a woman who had strayed, and Ruth, a woman who had been a sinner. God can take our blunders and make them a blessing. He can turn mistakes into miracles.

God took a cursed woman from Moab and used her to bring His Son into the world.

- This book reminds us of how important it is to follow the Spirit of God

Naomi left Moab and went back to Bethlehem, she encouraged Ruth to pursue Boaz, Ruth followed her instructions, and Boaz paid the price and married Ruth. All the little parts fit together to accomplish God's will. It is amazing what God can do with those who give Him control of their lives. Nothing we do in obedience to God is insignificant.

It is important to remember, all this happened in a dark time when everyone was doing what was right in

their own eyes (Ruth 1:1 cf. Judges 17:6). The sin around us does not give us an excuse to not live for God. In fact, the darkness should compel us to live even more godly.

The book ends with a genealogy but Boaz takes the place of Elimelech. This tells us, Boaz, instead of marring his inheritance as the first kinsman feared, gained a special place in the history of Israel. We never lose when we go with God.

As far as we know, Naomi and Ruth died never knowing their part in the Messiah coming to earth. We may not see the full results, the good or the bad, of our lives until we stand before the Lord (Rom.14:11-12).

- This book reminds us if we live for ourselves, we won't make much of a mark in this world

Mahlon, Chilion, and Orpah were long forgotten, but Ruth became one of the most admired women of the bible.

- This book reminds us of how God is involved with our everyday lives

The book of Ruth shows us how our lives connect us to something far greater than we might imagine. God can make the ordinary events of our ordinary lives can be quite extra-ordinary.

Ruth lived in a dark day but God was working. Even in the darkest days in our lives, God is still at work. In fact, the darkest times are when He may be working in the most significant ways.

- This book reminds us of how God does His best work in a way that we may not even notice

As mentioned earlier, there are no obvious miracles in the book of Ruth. However, the book is full of miracles done in an inconspicuous manner. God was in the background causing the circumstances to come together precisely. Some of the greatest of God's miracles are the ones he does anonymously.

We see God's hand working throughout the book of Ruth.

He sent the famine (1:1). He will send trials into our lives to try us and to help us trust Him.

He dealt with Elimelech and his sons while in the land of Moab (1:2-5). After ten years of ignoring God's will and Word, God took them off the scene (1:3,5). God chastens His wayward children (Job 5:17; Ps.94:12; 119:75; Pro.3:11; Heb.12:6, 8; Rev.3:19). If they refuse to repent, He may end their lives (1 Jn.5:16).

He worked through His backslidden children to bring an unbeliever into the family (1:4,16). God is still God and He works in spite of His children's behavior.

He moved on Ruth's heart to stay with Naomi and come to Bethlehem (1:16). God speaks to the unbeliever in an effort to convert them (Jer.31:3; Jn.6:44; 12:32; Lk.19:10).

He brought Naomi and Ruth to Bethlehem at the beginning of the harvest (1:22). God will always supply the need of His children (Mt.6:8; 6:33; Phil.4:19; 1 Tim.6:17).

He led Ruth to the field of Boaz (2:3). God will lead us where we need to go. We should trust Him and obey Him.

He touched the heart of Boaz and gave him a love for Ruth and a willingness to pay the price for her (4:9). God does not force us but if we will submit to His Spirit, He will give us the desire to please Him (Ps.19:14; 37:4).

He took care of the problem with the nearer kin of Elimelech (4:6). God may allow obstacles to come but He will always provide the way for us to overcome them (1 Cor.10:13). We must be alert to the way to escape and take it.

He enabled Ruth to conceive (4:13). After being barren for ten years during her first marriage, God gave Ruth a child. God is in charge of birth (Gen.29:31; 30:2). In His wisdom, there are times when it simply is not His will for a couple to have children.

He brought David and Jesus into the world (4:13; Lk.2:11). There are some things that God will bring to pass no matter what man does or does not do.

The last word in this book is "*David*". This speaks of the wonder of God's grace. From a desolate girl from Moab to the grandmother of the king of Israel. Only God can do such a thing.

And so, we end our look at the book of Ruth. May our walk through this book make a difference in our daily walk with our Lord.