

## A Living Hope Bible Church Bible Study Course

### Complete Ruth Study Notes

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#### Introduction

This series of study notes is designed to cover the book of Ruth on a verse by verse basis

They are the notes from the Bible Study program used at Living Hope Bible Church Bible Study Group on a week by week basis, hence you will find regular references to “last week”, but the notes can be used in whatever way best suits your own program of activity and study

There are, as you will discover, a total of 16 studies, most of which can be covered within about forty five minutes or so of personal reading and study. However, if you are using the notes to guide a group meeting, then I would advise that you build in a time of worship and prayer, and allow time for group discussion and reading the advised Bible cross references, in which case the time for each study would rise to perhaps 90 minutes.

Mostly the studies allow for discussion, but there are some that would be better used as a didactic teaching session because the content is more detailed and complex, and difficult to split.

All the Bible references and Bible verses quoted are from the ESV translation

Apart from direct verse by verse exposition of the text there are instances where related side issues are investigated in order to assist with understanding and application of related doctrines

I hope that you find this study program to be of benefit to you in your own study of the book of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter.

Be blessed.

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## Study 1

### Introduction to the Book of Ruth

For an undefined period of time ahead it is my plan to spend some time in the Book of Ruth.

This book is written about the time of the Judges of Israel, it is likely that the famine referred to is the one that hit the region during the time of the judge Gideon. However, the book is likely to have been recorded for Scripture much later, possibly written by Samuel who was not born when the events happened, but handed down to him and recorded by him probably about 1000 BC when David was king of Judah but before he was king of Israel and before the birth of Solomon. There are various clues to this dating within the text, but I'm not going through those tonight.

So it is a confirmed book of history that is accepted as part of the ancient writings that make up both the Jewish Talmud and the Christian Bible.

It is a true account of the life of this individual, a book that gives us several insights into the culture of the time. But more importantly it gives us a picture of the Christ-like work of redemption in the way that this proselyte gentile woman is protected by God and by her Jewish relatives. We come across the term "Kinsman redeemer" which is an important term in the Jewish culture and to us also as Christians, as we shall see later in our studies of the book, but again that is not for tonight. Of course, there is in the book, the revelation of the ultimate purpose of God in the redemption of this woman that we don't discover until the final verses - I want to encourage you not to look at the end until we get there if you don't already know the end of the story. Let's reveal it as we go through over the weeks and months ahead.

#### Background

Ruth, then, is a foreigner, a gentile, from a nation who were ranked as one of the enemies of Israel – Moab. A Moabite - a woman of the tribe of Moab. One of the 2 daughters of Lot who bore a son from an incestuous action by laying with her father after she and her sister had made him drunk especially in order to do this. Clearly they had learned nothing from the events that preceded this - the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah for evil sexual sin (see Genesis 19 and especially verse 37)

But let's go back a little further to pick up the picture. Lot was Abraham's nephew and back in Genesis 12 when God called Abram out of the land of Ur - to leave his father's house and go to a land to which God was calling him, Lot left with him and travelled with him.

Though a close kinsman of Abram, Lot was a selfish man who, when given the option to choose a portion of land, chose the rich and fertile land of the Jordan Valley, wanting that for himself, so leaving the rocky and arid area of the Negev for Abram, but God blessed the work of Abram's hands and his crops flourished and all that he did brought good return. Meanwhile Lot settled in the area of Sodom and Gomorrah and suffered at the evil hands and under the evil pagan influences of that place. He believed God and believed in God, but like many before

## Study 2

### Ruth 1:1-5

- 1 In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.

2 The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there.

3 But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons.

4 These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, 5 and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

Last week we looked at the introduction to the subject of the book of Ruth, its background, date author and touched on one or two of the key learning points that we will be looking out for as we go into the text of the book.

This week we will start on the text and to begin we are looking at what could be described as a massive chunk by comparison to the normal few verses - 5 verses - but we need to set the scene and get a hold on what is happening – hopefully as we do so, we will begin to pick up some of the themes and the key learning points from the passage right from the start of the history of the situation that we find.

I am expecting to sometimes look at larger sections of the book, but then perhaps to take more than one week looking at that section so that we understand as much as we can about the things we find there.

This week we are dealing with what we might call the prologue - the scene setting - so let's look at what the passage tells us:

Verse 1-2 - "In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. 2 The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there." - So this is back when Israel was ruled by judges - before the appointment of Saul as their first king. As we saw last week - it is likely that this was about the time that Gideon was the God appointed Judge of the nation. We know from Scripture that there was a famine in the land at that time.

It is worth noting that the words that are an accurate illustration of the state of Israel during the time of the judges appear in the last verse of the last chapter of the book **Judges 21:25** "***In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.***" The people of Israel had come into the Promised Land of Canaan and the LORD had warned them that if the people were disobedient to the Law of God, then there would be famine in the land (see **Leviticus 26:18-20**), so it is reasonable to make the suggestion that the famine was the judgement of God upon the unfaithful people.

But this book, Ruth, shows us something of the other side of the coin - but not just yet, later on it displays faithfulness as we shall see. **Nevertheless** - for now it opens with an illustration of the fear and unfaithfulness of the man Elimelech. He was a man from the region of Bethlehem and we will see later in the narrative, that he was a man of some significance, from among the aristocracy of the region, his relatives were considered among the town elders. For Elimelech to cut and run at this time of need with the famine in the land was unthinkable, as a man of significance, the local population would have looked to him and those of his family to help them through this time of difficulty. Instead of supporting the people of the area and being as he was called to be - a community leader - he closed up his property and left for better pickings elsewhere, which was to disobey the call of God upon the people of Israel to remain in the land of Promise and populate it - the famine hits the Israel and he takes his family and leaves the land to which the Lord Himself has led the people.

Verse 3-4 - "But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years" – We name children generally out of a liking for a name – but that was not the case in ancient Israel, they named with huge significance on the meaning of the name. This significance is suggested as the narrative develops, based on the meaning of the names of the characters we are meeting in these verses. Elimelech means "My God is King" - clearly Elimelech failed to recognise that his God was King - instead of trusting God, he ran away. Could it be that death was the judgement on Elimelech for leaving the land? Certainly that is the suggestion of some of the rabbinic teaching and it would seem to be the assumption of Elimelech's wife Naomi as we shall see later in our studies. His death leaves Naomi widowed, but with her 2 adult sons, so she is not desolate, she is supported and protected by her sons in this foreign land, in which they have settled and her 2 sons look to the local people for wives. Naomi's name means "pleasant", "delightful"

The sons each married a Moabite woman, one was named Orpah and the other was Ruth, the subject of the book. However - though life worked well enough for this family for the ten years mentioned there came a time when the wheels came off:

Verse 5 - "and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband." - Continuing with the names; Mahlon means "to be sick" and Chilion means "failing" or "pining" or "annihilation". A sad set of names in deed. Apparently a recent television movie suggested that the sons were killed – stabbed in a brawl, but there is absolutely no suggestion that this is the case, the names suggest they were of weak stock and simply died. That same film also suggested that Ruth was a slave girl who was taken into the service of a ruler of Moab for whatever purpose he intended, but that is not true either, rabbinic tradition would indicate that both Ruth and Orpah were the daughters of royal households of Moab and the match with the 2 sons of a well-established member of the aristocracy of Bethlehem would have been a reasonably good match for the girls, however, though this would seem to fit the facts, this is still only rabbinic tradition and is not proven by any available documentary evidence.

The death of the 2 sons was more than just tragic and emotionally devastating - it was frightening - we now have 3 women who are vulnerable and unprotected - an Israelite and her 2 Moabite daughters-in-law. They are displaced, in the land of Moab and away from the family of Elimelech and the possibility of protection that would normally be provided by the patriarch's family. Additionally, the fact of their isolation from their family means that they do not have any hope of a continued line for the family now, as all the men are dead and there is no child to carry the family of Elimelech onward into future generations. As we have already been told, Elimelech's family are of the tribe of Judah from the early settlement of the region, the name Ephrathites signifies a significant family from the line of Judah who live in Bethlehem in Judah.

And so the scene is set. We now see the 3 women and their plight in the land of Moab and from here we will see the story unfold over the weeks ahead

In closing though for tonight I just want to bring your attention to a few things – the first is the issue, once again, of God's discipline on the ones He has called who act in disobedience to His commands. We've considered this before, but here in the text, is yet another reminder of this fact. Secondly, we must never mistake popular fiction for biblical truth. Thirdly, there is one fact that comes out of these first verses, which we might miss if we don't note it at the start of our studies. The Tribe of this family is the tribe of Judah of the Ephrathites from Bethlehem of Judah. It might not mean much to you straight away, but just look at the verse in Micah 5:4; hold this fact in your minds and we will without doubt collect it up later in our studies and the significance will become clear.

Study 3Ruth 1:6-14

Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food. 7 So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.

8 But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

10 And they said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? 12 Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, 13 would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me."

14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

Last week then we looked at what I have called "the prologue" - it covered a period of more than 10 years from the time that Elimelech decided to leave his home in Bethlehem and migrate to Moab with his family - then his death and the marriage of his sons and then the death of his sons Mahlon and Chilion, and we left Naomi and her 2 daughters-in-law Orpah and Ruth, alone, unsupported, unprotected, isolated and in a foreign land. It is at that point that we start today's study:

Verse - 6-7 - "Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food. 7 So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah." - The only logical thing to do - return to her husband's home town in Judah - Bethlehem - to her family. A place where she might at least have relatives who would look on her with kindness. It is interesting to note, as the text says, that by this time the LORD had visited His people and given them food. The famine was over - it begs the question - How long was it that the Lord had restored His provision of food to Israel before this runaway family considered that they must return? It may have been just recently or perhaps many years before - did Naomi and her 2 sons perpetuate the sin of Elimelech by staying away? Well - that is just speculation - the scripture does not tell us this information - but it did make me wonder. Anyway, the time had come for the 3 women to consider their future and the decision was made to set out for Naomi's home in Judah.

Verse 8-9 - "But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept." - As they begin the first steps of this move, Naomi stops and talks to her daughters-in-law about the logic of their own future situation. Remember that I said last week, that for them to have married the sons of Elimelech, a Jew from the tribe of Judah the

family line of Judah of the Ephrathites, they would have to have taken on their husbands faith by becoming proselyte Jews - that is gentiles who have converted to Judaism. But now their husbands have died and since they are childless, possibly also part of God's judgement upon the family, there is nothing that binds them to Naomi other than any love that they have for her. With this in mind therefore, Naomi offers the girls the chance to "return to the house of their mother". This was clearly not something that she wanted, but it was something that might bring a better hope for the girls in the long run, rather than following their aged mother-in-law back to a strange land with an unknown future ahead of them.

The reference to "returning to their mother's house" rather than the house of their father might seem odd - it did to me. However – in my studying I discovered that the tradition was that a bride was said to have been "taken from her mother house", and the term "find rest, each of you in the house of her husband" refers to finding a new home to be cared for in by a new husband – taking the opportunity to start over again in their own home land.

Verse 10-13 - "10 And they said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? 12 Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, 13 would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me." – Initially the 2 girls reject the idea of leaving Naomi, but here we see Naomi pursuing the case for the girls to leave her and go home to their own people for their own sakes.

Notice the argument that she uses for the girls to do this. Remember - I said last week about the Jewish law relating to the custom of the unmarried brother continuing the line for a dead brother by marrying his widow and raising a son for him to carry his name. This is what Naomi is referring to here. Let's just take a few moments and look at this subject.

- Deuteronomy 25:5-9 "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.
- 6 And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.
- 7 And if the man does not wish to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.'
- 8 Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he persists, saying, 'I do not wish to take her,'
- 9 then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.'

This is referring to what is known as "the rules of levirate marriage" and is designed to ensure that a man's family line and claim to his estates continues on through the generations. This passage shows us that, in the Jewish law and culture, a kinsman who fails in this duty, is treated as a despicable person publically.

Because Naomi was a widow and of an age where she was very unlikely to marry again, there would be no hope of this facility being available for the girls. This is the first introduction to a person who would have a role as "Kinsman

Redeemer” – a phrase that we will consider much more later on in the text of this book – the phrase refers to a person who is related, who takes the necessary action to ensure the redemption of the land and property including wife, servants and possessions, for future generations since Jewish law placed great importance on families retaining possession of their land and estates.

Clearly this was a fairly persuasive argument that Naomi put forward for her daughter-in-laws to consider. Do you notice that she refers to them as “my daughters” – her love for them is such that she is even prepared to press this separation for their sakes.

**Verse 14 – “Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.”** – At this second request by Naomi, “Orpah kissed her” meaning that she accepted the offer of freedom and left Naomi, but Ruth “clung to her” meaning that she did not seek freedom – rather she confirmed the commitment to remain with Naomi. We should not under-estimate the choice that Ruth made in doing this. Basically Ruth rejected the possibility of freedom and of a new settled life because of her love for Naomi and took on the commitment to follow Naomi – to share her poverty and her vulnerability, even in any possible disgrace that may come upon her for fleeing the homeland when the famine first struck, to go to a land where she, personally, would be likely to have no respect as a Moabite woman and a widow with no likely hope of any restoration of her husband or father-in-laws wealth or estates, a life of probably virtual slavery at best for the sake of carting for her destitute Mother-in-law, who would herself have no means of redeeming the family estates. This is some sacrifice because of love. Bear in mind that the departure 10 years before would have been the likely forfeiting of the family estates to provide for their Moabite sojourn.

Discuss....

#### Study 4

#### Ruth 1:15-19

And she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." 16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you." 18 And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

19 So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, "Is this Naomi?"

Last week we looked at the beginning of Naomi’s journey back to Bethlehem and her people; and we considered the challenges and the responses of the 2 girls – her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. We also looked at the biblical text relating to levirate marriage and how Naomi used that to help the girls to realistically view their decision making process and so consider their future.

As we left the last study we learned that Orpah had chosen to be obedient to the wishes of Naomi and to remain in Moab and start again with building her life, but Ruth, because of her deep love for Naomi, had chosen the potentially

even harder path of commitment to following and supporting Naomi on her return to Israel and to give her future unconditionally to her Mother-in-law.

This week we pick this up and look at what that means a little more. Perhaps we could suggest that this is a study of looking at an illustration of the cost and nature of sacrificial love.

**Verse 15 – “And she said, “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.”**” – This is the third attempt that Naomi makes to try to persuade Ruth to stay in Moab. Persuasive arguments – look Orpah has gone so you have a relation that you are close to – you would be with your own people, culture, society, family, friends – you could soon settle back into your own religion and follow the gods of your people which would bring a level of security for her life – strange that one, but I guess it shows us that in all likelihood Naomi knew or perhaps believed that originally the 2 girls had converted to Judaism not because of faith but because of convenience and obedience to win marriage to their Jewish husbands. (As we saw last week from Deuteronomy 23:3 the law of acceptance into the assembly for Moabites was strict because of the background troubles from previous generations – the only way for them to be accepted was for them to convert completely and to surrender all Moabite identity – Orpah certainly was not prepared to do this but Ruth?)

Matthew Henry makes an interesting comparison between Orpah and Ruth as an analogy for the different responses to Christ - Orpah loved Naomi - but in the end her love was not enough for her to abandon her past life to follow Naomi - How like so many in the church through the ages - they claim to love Christ - but the reality is that their love is not enough to for them to abandon their previous life. We see this so much today, don't we? Unlike Ruth - who was prepared to leave everything behind her and follow, not knowing what was ahead for her, but nevertheless, willing to make the commitment that actually meant her risking everything because her love for Naomi was so real and genuine. There has to be a challenge in this for each one of us – are we willing to risk everything for the sake of Christ and our love for Him?

**Verse 16 – “But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.”** – This – This is a lovely expression of loyalty – quite comfortable words – words that would warm our hearts to hear if we were Naomi, but we think this without having a full grasp of the time, the situation and the potential of these words. Like so many parts of Scripture, we are in danger of looking at the words through the spectacles of 21<sup>st</sup> century western experience – “oh isn't this sweet!” No – this is not sweet – this is awesome and fearful – for Ruth this is incredibly courageous – this is totally sacrificial. We touched on this a little last week – but we need to be sure that we understand what this level of loyalty really means for Ruth if we are to understand what the lessons are for us for today.

**“Where you go I will go”** What is that a commitment to? We do not know the specific place of their departure, nor does this passage give the route, South of the Dead Sea and up the west side via Hebron or up the east through Edom and across the north of the Dead Sea, but the likelihood is that this journey is about 75 miles give or take – walking over rough – even mountainous terrain! Probably a journey of about 10 days. If they were going up the west side of the Dead Sea they would have been travelling through the rough mountainous regions of the Negev, a journey, much of which was part of the journey of Abraham back in **Genesis 13** where he returned from Egypt, the region that Lot had rejected when given the choice, because it was not attractive as anyone's habitation or as a place to care for flocks and herds, wild countryside. Whichever way they travelled, they were virtually unprotected with who knows what risks around every corner! – We do not know if there are any companions travelling with them or if they join a travelling band of some sort but it is probably unlikely that there would be frequent caravans of travellers going on that journey. Travelling with what possessions they had – but I guess that to travel with much would be to increase the risk of attack.



All this to travel into a land that may be tolerant of Naomi as a returning Jewish widow, but would be likely to treat Ruth as an outcaste – a foreigner not to be trusted and potentially considered to be of little or no worth – someone’s widow who had fallen on hard times, from this almost forgotten family that ran away when times got tough! Ruth commits to go where Naomi goes!

“To lodge where you lodge” – there are 2 aspects to this – there is the journey and the temporary lodging involved during that – which was probably not likely to be any comfort at all, there is no “Travelodge” – can we even begin to imagine what this might mean? Wayside inns, rare as hen’s teeth, were not safe places for anyone – that is why the Apostles used to stay in the homes of the brethren (see many examples, Acts 9 Peter at the home of Simon the tanner; 17 Paul at the home of Jason, remember Paul at Lydia’s and Philip’s and Justus, Apollos at Aquilla’s – look at 2 John and his comments to the ladies over her welcome – lots of examples). So what then? Sleeping under the stars? Sleeping in the home of an occasional good heart? I don’t know because the Bible doesn’t give us details, but let’s not imagine comfort and safety because there was unlikely to be any on this journey. But the second aspect was about where Naomi and Ruth would live back in Bethlehem. This too was an unknown – what or where would be their home once they arrived? There would be no guarantees to look forward to as Elimelech had sold up and emigrated – what was there to go back to? Probably nothing!

“Your people will be my people” – Ruth is giving up her family, her background, her home land, her heritage, her culture, everything – to go to a strange place that she does not know, into a community that she is not part of, in a culture and language that is not her own natural culture and language, with a willingness to give up all that has been her life of many years, for a completely unknown future and destiny.

“And your God my God” – to follow obediently the religious views of her husband for her marriage is one thing, and as we can see from Orpah’s leaving, can be of a matter of convenience, but that isn’t enough to give the sort of confidence needed to make this kind of commitment – to place your entire future and faith in a God that, you have been told about by your Mother-in-law. One whom she has made clear is a God who punishes His disobedient children in such a severe way as with Naomi’s husband Elimelech, by death and destitution – not only that, Naomi would, along with the family, have lived out the laws of the Jewish faith with her Daughters-in-law as well – all 613 of them – restrictive and purposeful and totally alien to any Moabite – for Ruth, there has to have been more behind her decision than just “a convenient conversion for the purpose of marriage”. However, we cannot see much evidence of any worthwhile example shown to Ruth of the absolute trust and faith that was required in this God by the men of the family. Yet Ruth – this Moabite – who had grown up knowing only a pagan god of her culture was – for her there has to have been a real faith, a real conversion that comes from the genuine change of heart that can only be carried out by God Himself (Jeremiah 36:26) – causing a change in her that so endowed her with faith in the true God that she would face anything and go anywhere with Naomi under the hand and eye of this God to serve Him and to serve her Mother-in-law. Ruth was indeed a Gentile member of the elect of God!

Verse 17-18 – “Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.” 18 And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.” – So Ruth has made these life changing choices to remain with Naomi, but here she goes even further.

“Where you die I will die” – Ruth is not just committing to change or adventure, she is committing sacrificially to live and die for Naomi and never to leave her. Her commitment is so complete that she says that she will even be buried where Naomi is buried - often when people moved to another land, they would request that their bodies/bones should be returned to the land of their fathers for burial - a mark of their lasting link and yearning for their homeland - we see this with both Jacob (Genesis 50:5), carried out by Joseph; and also we see it later in the same chapter, (Genesis 50:24-25) when Joseph was coming to the end of his life in Egypt - he asked that his bones be taken to the promised Land for burial – a wish that was carried out by Moses at the exodus.

Notice the words that Ruth uses – she actually invokes the curse of God upon herself if she leaves Naomi! This is no idle promise. This is no temporary relationship that will exist for a season – there is no “divorce” here – this is just about as serious as it gets. This level of love and commitment is not a sentimental wishy-washy emotional thing – this is a “deal with the tough times” kind of love – a face anything kind of love.

Is it any wonder that at this point Naomi stops pressing Ruth? She sees her absolute commitment and she says no more. Interestingly this passage leads Rabbinic tradition to apply a rule to every one of the gentiles who would wish to proselyte and become Jews. Following the example of the action of Naomi, it has become a standard within the Jewish faith that a potential proselyte must be actively discouraged 3 times before their conversion to Judaism is allowed to be accepted, just as we see in this passage that Naomi sought to discourage Ruth 3 times, but then she accepted her decision as a true conversion and commitment. This is no sentimental emotion!

As I said earlier – This has to be a challenge for each of us – what are we willing to risk for the sake of our love for Christ? Are we only prepared to go so far with our commitment? What, if anything, is the obstacle that is standing in the way of our progress in our walk with Christ...?

**Verse 19 – “So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, “Is this Naomi?””** – Again this is one of those verses that though briefly read, it covers a massive event in the lives of these women, and a period of time covering this journey that we can easily miss the significance of, as we have already seen earlier. These 12 words of this verse equalling an unbelievable journey that takes these two people from the country of Moab to the country of Israel, to the town of the family of Elimelech - Bethlehem in Judah. And the whole town was stirred. Notice the word “stirred” – it is not necessarily about rejoicing – there may have been joy shown by some folks at their return, it is not easy to determine what exactly is meant by the word “stirred” – certainly the community is disturbed in some unspecified way. 10 years had passed and the remnants of the family that had run away at the time of the famine have now returned, having no doubt been judged by their peers and having clearly been judge by their God. And the question from the local women - **“Is this Naomi?”** - is it any wonder that they see such a difference in her after Naomi’s 10 plus years away from her home town in the country of Moab with all that has happened, it is my guess that time and the events of the last ten years had taken their toll on Naomi in every way.

### Study 5

#### Ruth 1:19-22

So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, "Is this Naomi?"

20 She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

21 I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?"

22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab.

And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Last time we included **verse 19** in our review of the previous 4 verses as we considered Ruth's sacrifice for faithfulness to Naomi and to God. We talked about the challenges that Ruth faced and the willingness that was in her to face up to and deal with every obstacle that was before her, in order to be able to be faithful in the things that she had come to value in her life, namely her conversion to the God of the Jewish faith and her love of Naomi.

**The exercise and challenge from last time:**

As we considered Ruth's challenges last time, I challenged each one of us to consider, over the days ahead, whether there were any obstacles in place in our lives that were a blockage to our progress as we walked with the Lord – I suggested that we pray into this individually, asking God to reveal anything that we needed to deal with, and then to consider our response to the Lord over these things, just as Ruth had considered the things that were facing her – things that she set aside because of her willingness to be obedient to the Lord.

Any issues arising from that prayerful consideration was for you to deal with personally between you and the Lord, not for us to discuss at this session - so don't worry - I am not going to ask you about that. **However, I have become aware that as I sent you off to consider the matter, I should perhaps have given slightly clearer guidance as to how to do this.**

When I talk about praying and asking God to reveal areas that our progress is being hindered because of any obstacles that stand in the way – things that we are dealing with wrongly – I was not suggesting that we should seek some mystical guidance or supernaturally revealed understanding, I didn't mean any Charismatic idea of "hearing words from God"

It is not about that, neither is it about whether we **feel** that we are in the right place – we need to recognise that "the heart is desperately wicked above all things" (**Jeremiah 17:9**) – Scripture makes that clear and so we cannot rely on our "heart" (or in other words our feelings or our emotions) to guide us. Our hearts will usually convince us that there is nothing wrong – our emotions will normally approve of us and our choices in every situation, even if we are completely wrong – and that is the problem.

No – The point is about us using our God given brain and what SHOULD BE our ever increasing knowledge of the Word of God, to test the situation of our lives.

As we meet together and study the Scriptures; and as we individually learn how to read and study the Scriptures on our own – using good resources such as Study Bibles, commentaries and good preaching, and through sharing together as brothers and sisters in Christ, we personally develop a greater awareness of the will and the mind of the Lord as He has revealed it in Scripture.

One of the things that we can easily become confused about today, is the question of the source of our thoughts, as we consider matters relating to our Christian walk. Many churches today would teach that much of what comes into our minds is what they believe to be "words of knowledge" – some kind of supernatural or prophetic revelation, God speaking today – this is not supported by Scripture – God has revealed all that He has chosen to reveal to us through His complete, all sufficient, and infallible Word, the Bible, and through His Son – the manifestation of Himself in human form (**Hebrews 1:2**).

Now-a-days – through the work of the Holy Spirit – God in us – He gives to His true children an ever increasing desire to study His revealed Word in Scripture and through our walking closer with Him in our daily lives and through prayer, in order for us to develop our minds and thought patterns in line with the deepening exposure to the Word of God and the deepening personal relationship with Him. These things change us, so that we should be becoming ever more in tune with the Lord. We are – ever so slowly – developing **the mind of Christ**.

**Developing the mind of Christ** is about exactly that – exposing ourselves to Scripture, developing prayer life, and an ever closer interaction with brothers and sisters in Christ who, like us, are seriously studying Scripture and developing their prayer life. Through this means we begin to have – not just “good ideas” – but “Godly ideas” – and the Lord places into our hearts a desire to want to do things that are honouring to Him. The computer world uses the term GIGO – garbage in, garbage out – but for us in our Christian walk – the more of the “good stuff” that we are exposing ourselves to, the more the Holy Spirit within us can bring to our minds good teaching, biblical ethics, words of Scripture and the will and the mind of God revealed through these things.

So – it is not about mystical “words” being revealed – but about our developing understanding bringing our brains into line with what we study and recognise to be God’s will.

One more point on this matter – some of us think in words – some think in pictures – we are all different – if we have a mind that thinks verbally the often the things we have learned will become illustrated in our minds by stories, allegories, examples and the like. However, if our minds tend to work more artistically, then often the concepts that we learn become more easily understood in our mind in picture form. These things are often expressed in the Charismatic churches as being things “given prophetically” – once again this suggests God adding today – no – we are to add nothing ([Revelation 22:18](#)) – they are simply the way that our minds process thought – but the principle of GIGO applies to us as well as to computer – so we need to be actively managing what goes into our minds, as well as ensuring that it is the truth of Scripture and not the whimsical wishes of our nature are the things to which we pay attention.

Now – about this specific exercise to review our lives to see if there are any obstacles to our progress because of our unwillingness to be obedient. How can we honestly begin to discover the answer to this?

The basis is to consider, perhaps, the following questions of ourselves:

- How do our choices and behaviour of our daily life stack up against Scripture – the revealed Word of God – in the different areas of our life – relationships with others – responses toward others – routines of our lives – rational behind the choices we make – how do these things stack up by comparison to the Word of God?
- Are there any areas in our lives and our circumstances that the Bible speaks into, where we have made a decision to handle a particular particular situation in our own way rather than handling it as the Bible would indicate is the right and God intended way?
- Are we rationalising a wrong personal choice on the basis that it is, at least, in our own view of the current circumstances, a choice that seems to be expedient or logical?

**We need to understand that what would seem to be the most logical or sensible choice, which is not in line with a Biblical perspective, is a wrong choice, make no mistake, there are no exceptions to this.** The time to be honest with ourselves is right now.

It would be very easy for us to dismiss this and say that we know of no issue – and it may be right that there is nothing right now – but the reason that I asked us to take time out to prayerfully consider the matter is to encourage each of us to think a little more deeply and challenge ourselves, and not to just carry on doing things the same as we always do without some serious consideration.

I wanted to challenge us to quietly and personally consider – to ask ourselves some serious questions – to pray into the issue – to apply a “Scriptural measuring rod” to our situation and then deal with anything that we become aware of before The Lord - so please - in the days ahead - continue with that exercise - it is part of the sanctifying work that we are called to just as much as dealing with sin in our lives is part of that work ([Philippians 2:12](#)).

That said then, this week we are going to start with the verse that we concluded with last week, just to keep the context right and to check that we have covered the importance of the meaning of this verse in the context of the next few verses.

**Verse 19 - "So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, "Is this Naomi?""** - We made the observations about the physical changes in the appearance of Naomi, to those who saw her for the first time in over 10 years, considering all that she had been through and the passing of the intervening years, but I am guessing that there was a difference in the countenance of Naomi too.

Her change in circumstances had brought with them tremendous sadness and the realisation of the truth of direct involvement of God in the life of His people - not just in the broadest sense - the people of God at large - but also in the personal sense – the sense of “God and me” – “God and my family” - I am guessing that this was something of a discovery for Naomi, as she faced the fact that the hand of God had brought direct judgement onto her family during these past 10 years. Perhaps too there was a sense of awe and worship that had previously been lacking - of course there is speculation in this - but I do believe that it is reasonable speculation - clearly there were visible changes - but there must also have been changes in her attitude to have encouraged her to make this brave move of returning to the place that she had left over 10 years before even though she did not know how she would be received and what the outcome might be for her.

**Verse 20 - "She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me." -** In response to the observations and questions of the women of the town of Bethlehem, she makes this statement. When we were considering the meaning of names, Naomi meant "pleasant", but here we see the comment from Naomi that she should perhaps not be referred to in terms of the "pleasant" meaning of her name, but rather should be described as Mara - Mara means "bitter". (Incidentally - I did not mention it at the time when we looked at meanings - but the name Orpah means "stubborn", whereas the name Ruth means "friendship")

Notice also though that she goes on to say that **"the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me."** The word used here is the word **"Shaddai"**; this is not that unusual a word that is used in Scripture, but it does have a particular connotation about it that shows us something about Naomi's thoughts. The word Shaddai does more than simply acknowledge that God is God and has judged laying the responsibility for that judgement at the hand of God. This echo earlier references to the use of the word "Shaddai" in Genesis where it was used by both Abram and Joseph and also by Job in the book of Job - in all of these the indication is that the speakers were primarily recognising the power and the Sovereignty of God - saying not only that He is God, but also that "He who holds all things and chooses all things and He is the One upon whom we can rely even though we do not understand", so perhaps in her choice of this word it is not just about a resignation of Naomi to her fate, but rather it is about her stating that even though her experiences have been bad and the judgements seem severe, yet she trusts that God, that God is not simply just in His action as He has a right to be - but also is the Almighty Shaddai who has all things in His hands for His divine purpose, to fulfil a plan that is outside of Naomi's knowledge or understanding and may or may not remain outside depending upon God's will. Indicating that she is in bitter circumstances - yes - but it is all in the providence of God and she trusts Him.

Amazing faith - how do we stack up against that sort of confidence? - Discuss

**Verse 21 - "I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?"** - Again, this confirms that Naomi has a full

awareness of the sovereignty of God in all circumstances - not just the situations of well-being and answered prayer but also in the calamities of life and the circumstances that are less pleasant. Again we see the use of the word Shaddai and again the inference that God has His divine purpose and Naomi seems to be indicating that despite all her pain, she can rest in that knowledge of the providential hand of the Almighty Shaddai God bringing about aspects His purpose, through the events of her life.

**Verse 22 - "So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest."** - The first scene is resolved - the Moabite journeying is over – the tragedies of that period of their lives is now over – the new scene is set. Naomi and Ruth are now in Bethlehem and at the mercy of their great need and their even greater God. They are depending upon Him - unlike the situation 10 years before - we knew from the report heard in the fields of Moab back in verse 6, that there was food in the region - and here it's confirmed, for as the text tells us the time of their arrival is the time of the beginning of the barley harvest, so there is food to be had - but as we have already said - these women are without support and have returned with no means of providing for their well-being - they are in poverty - so they are numbered among the needy for whom God had made provision in His rules of farming as we shall see next time, but the fact that there is food is almost a "brightening of the sky" over the life of Naomi and Ruth - as though this comes at the end of the chapter of pain, showing a glimmer of bright hope for the new dawning in her life. There is hope at the end of this chapter that has not appeared throughout the first chapter - where that hope leads - we shall see in the future studies...

## Study 6

### Ruth 2:1-4

Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

- 2 And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."
- 3 So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech.
- 4 And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you!" And they answered, "The LORD bless you."

As we ended our last study, we saw that the first chapter had been a section of just 22 verses that had covered not only a period of over 10 years, but also it had covered a period of time in which this particular family – the wife and children of the man Elimelech, had, under his leadership, acted in disobedience to God. At a time of great need in the community, they had run away from their responsibilities to support and minister to those among whom God had placed them, in order to find something that they considered would give them a better hope for their personal well-being.

As a result of this disobedience, they had experienced consequences of sorrow and increasing hardship – the discipline and judgement of God – they had suffered a decline in their fortunes – the death of Elimelech and later the death of both of his sons, Mahlon and Chilion who had continued to follow the path that their father had started even after his death. This led to a situation of decline in which the widows are finally reduced to poverty. Naomi certainly shared in the consequences, but her life is preserved as the Lord had purpose for her. One daughter-in-law, Orpah, left, leaving just Naomi and Ruth facing an unknown future as Naomi faced the need for her to return to the land of her people and her past and to the land of Elimelech's family.

The last words of that short chapter, that cover such a long and sad chapter of their lives, we saw that glimmer of hope, one which tells us that when they arrived back in Bethlehem it was at the beginning of the barley harvest. Can we suggest that as Naomi acted in obedience to the Lord, so the outlook for their future began to change? So we come to the beginning of this second chapter of this narrative of their lives – the two women are back where the Lord wants them, with that glimmer of hope on the horizon, the hope that now things may be changing.

**Verse 1 – "Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz."**  
 – Here we are introduced to a main character of the book, Boaz, in this very simple verse that once again has considerably more behind it than we might at first think. It is after all, just a statement of a piece of information – it is not a record of any event or action or choice – it just tells us that Elimelech had a relation of significance. But actually, if we look we will see that it does a great deal more than that by these simple words.

This verse in the King James Bible describes this man Boaz as "a mighty man of wealth", which tends to get a little lost in our modern translations, that is not to say that they are wrong because the word used and translated "wealth" in the King James could also be interpreted as meaning "valour" or "courage" so the modern translations have opted for "a worthy man" and so reflect a wider band of possible meaning. However, in other uses of the word it generally tends to mean both wealthy and courageous, so there is no doubt that he is "**worthy**".

A relative of Elimelech – of the household of Judah of the Ephrathites of Bethlehem, as we have already discovered, an aristocratic family, but unlike his kinsman who disregarded his civic responsibility and ran away when the famine hit, Boaz was **“a worthy man”** who stayed and, as we shall discover, was honourable towards and therefore respected by the people of the area, for his faithfulness in the involvement with the suffering community, since he has gained this reputation as being **“worthy”**.

As we think about what is said in the text, it shows us the contrast between the two men:

1. Elimelech, a man of less than honourable motives and behaviour, a man who did not make his choices based on Godly wisdom and motivation – he came to nothing and was judged by the Lord.
2. Whereas Boaz, a man of honour and courage, a man who sought to live his life in obedience and made his choices based on the law and the providence of God and lived by Godly motivation, is, by his choices in the face of hardship – he is visibly proven to be faithful, to both the Lord, and to those in the community who depend upon him, in this faithfulness we see that he is blessed by the Lord and his wealth and reputation are further enhanced among the people of the nation of God.

There is a principle here that we need to grasp:

1. We can build our activity and choices on our own agenda, with no application of Godly wisdom or motivation, and even if we belatedly ask for God to bless our choices, it makes no difference to the consequences – God will fulfil His plan even if we are disobedient – but the likelihood is that we will have a rougher path to follow as He carries out His plan.
2. Alternatively, we can place God’s agenda and His Word and His purpose before us – then make our choices based on Godly wisdom, being faithful to that understanding of His will through the application of Godly motivation and again God will fulfil His plans, but in this situation, we will experience the blessings of being in His will and so will be more likely to be the beneficiaries of His good favour.

***CAVIAT: There are exceptions – God may have particular purpose – see Acts 27-28 the shipwreck of Paul.***

Finally, there is a vital point made in this verse too – one that will become more important to us as we see the role that Boaz will have as the picture unfolds. Boaz was of the clan of Elimelech, one of Naomi’s late husband’s **“kinsman by blood”** – that’s important as we will discover in due course as the narrative unfolds.

**Verse 2 – “And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor.” And she said to her, “Go, my daughter.””** – This again confirms what we assumed earlier, that these 2 women have no means of support. They are destitute, and even more tragically, no-one has come to their aid from among the families of the town that was so “stirred” by the return of these wanderers. So Ruth sets about trying to do whatever work she can to supply what they need, by asking Naomi to allow her to go into the fields to “glean”. A word that we often use today to mean attempting to understand or overhear, to gather what is being said by someone who is talking to some else and not to us – “eavesdropping”. But in this context the word means what it was supposed to – picking up ripened sheaves and grain that has not been gathered by the harvesters (see **Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:19-22**).

There is a real sense in this that the mighty have fallen – the established family that should have been supporting the poorer members of the community, are themselves reduced to poverty and humiliated by their circumstances to the point of gathering that which is left lying on the ground for the needy, to keep them from starvation.



The fields would not have been separated by walls or hedges – this would be open ground a massive cultivated area of land outside of the town, which would be owned by the various landowning families. They would each tend and harvest their own portion of that land – it would possibly be separated by a trench or a marker or similar – so Ruth is noting here, that there may be one of the land owners who has been generous in allowing a greater quantity of the available gleanings that they have left for the poorer people of the community, by holding faithfully to the instructions of God and ensuring that his harvesters do not return to go over the ground again to gather up that which is missed. It might even be that she may be allowed to keep going back and she may perhaps even be looked on favourably by one of the owners and so be able to gather as much as the two women need to provide for the winter.

Also in this verse it is interesting to see that Ruth acknowledges the authority of her Mother-in-law Naomi in asking her permission to go into the fields to do this. It is likely that this is because she would not wish to act in a way that might embarrass Naomi within her community, by taking this public action that declares their poverty, without her permission. Naomi, however, is not prideful so does not seem to be worrying about being embarrassed, therefore she is willing to allow Ruth to go.

In this verse we see that Ruth doesn't stand on her pride either. Remember that she was from a good Moabite family and married into a good Israelite family, but now she has an aging mother-in-law whom she loves and she acknowledges that the two of them are in poverty, so Ruth immediately shows that she is willing to accept this responsibility and to humbly step out and do whatever needs to be done in order to improve their circumstances. No waiting on others to solve the problems – no pretence – Instead there is a willing humility that acknowledges their need and is prepared to graft – to go into the fields – admitting their situation before the eyes of the community and to work hard – taking the opportunity that is provided by the laws of God in the provision, the one that is made available specifically for those who are poor. This is a wonderful display of the servant heart of Ruth who so willingly humbles herself by not just doing the thing that she sees as necessary, but by requesting Naomi's permission and approval to do what she must for their well-being for the immediate future.

**Verse 3 – “So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech.”** – In this verse we pick up the connection that was made in verse 1 – Boaz.

As I said earlier, the fields were not bound by hedges, fences or walls, so the field was a large area that included the pieces of land that were owned by a number of different landowning families. Separation was by minor markers only and each families land was respected in accordance with the Jewish law. Therefore when a person went into the fields to glean they would range across the entire area, picking up what they could for their needs from the edges of each owners area and by following the reapers, who were, as we have seen earlier this evening, supposed to be forbidden from going back over the ground to pick up sheaves and grain that they had missed. The gleaners would therefore be able to find sufficient grain to supply their needs to avoid starvation. This was not something done in secret, it was not stealing – it was the social security of the time, so often the gleaners would follow quite closely behind the reapers and if the landowner was a fair and good person, then there would be no problem.

It was during her gleaning of this large area of fields that Ruth came to the tract of land that belonged to Boaz, the man whom she did not yet know personally, but who was a relative of Elimelech.

Tradition suggests that Boaz was either a nephew or a cousin of Elimelech, but we cannot be sure of the relationship.

Tradition also suggests that he would have been considerably older than the young widow Ruth, who is likely to have been in her 40s.

Also tradition suggests that Boaz may have been a widower. This later would seem to be likely, since he was thought to be a member of the ruling group of Jewish leaders, the group that would later come to be called the “Sanhedrin” – by tradition these men were a group of 70 well-respected, married men, from established families, who took on the responsibility for the oversight and well-being of the people.

In this matter of Ruth’s coming onto Boaz’s land, the Hebrew text expresses this in a slightly different way to one that we would understand. The phrase “**she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz**” appears in the Hebrew text in the form of “chanced, chance upon the field...” A strange phrasing to us, but the point that is being made is that Ruth had no idea of either where she was in relation to the various landowners, or who the landowners were – the “coming across” was a matter of pure chance and there was no notion of any preconceived plan. However, as we shall see – there is huge significance in this “chanced, chance” that is all about the providential hand of the Almighty God – Shaddai YHWH – He who has all situations in His hands and guides all circumstances in order to fulfil His perfect will and purpose.

**Verse 4 – “And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, “The LORD be with you!” And they answered, “The LORD bless you.”**” – While Ruth was in the field gleaning, Boaz comes to the field to see his reapers. He has already been described as a “worthy man” and we can begin to see that he was a man of good nature and of honour who shows respect to people in all stations of life. The greeting that he gives to the reapers – servants and slaves who are doing the back-breaking work of harvesting ripe barley from his fields – is a greeting that speaks highly of the character of the man. He invokes a the blessing of YHWH upon these workers – the capital L-O-R-D that he uses in this greeting makes it no common meaningless greeting – this is not a casual “hello” – the people of Israel did not use the name of God lightly, in fact they rarely used it at all for fear of abusing it, so they would normally use alternatives, of which there were several – the tetragrammaton, YHWH, was considered to be holy – so for Boaz to use this name in his greeting was an expression of much sincerity and one that honoured the workers in a very respectful way. As a consequence, the greeting he gives gets a similarly respectful response from his reapers.

Just as an aside, if you think for a moment, how would you spell “Vrbas” or “Srbija”?

I am guessing that for most of you, your mind is going “V-E-R-B-A-S” and “S-E-R-B-I-A”, neither of which are truly accurate. Our European minds always want to place verbs into a word because that is how we have been educated in our language. However, that is not the way in all cultures. It is that fact that has led to some interesting confusions over the generations in the western world – we always want to put verbs “a-e-i-o-u” or perhaps “y” into the words we use to make them work for us.

Because of this – if you take the consonants of the tetragrammaton, YHWH, meaning I AM, (**see Exodus 3:13-15; I AM WHO I AM – the name of God**) was combined with the vowels of the Hebrew word for God, Elohim from its root word Eloah, the vowels “e”, “o” and “a” into the consonants of YHWH (remembering that the “W” and “V” are often crossed over in pronunciation in northern Europe) to form the word Ye’hovah or more frequently Jehovah. That is where the common use of the word Jehovah comes from.

However – back to the things that we see about Boaz in this verse. This way that Boaz interacts with those who are around him begs a question that should challenge us – for sure it challenges me very deeply – what is the quality of our interaction with people? Does it reflect this same respect? We see significant things revealed to us by this simple but warm and affectionate greeting given by Boaz, given to those who perhaps were little more than slaves, and yet they are people, workers to whom Boaz shows great respect, high regard, kindness, civility, good-will and a complete lack of partiality. The way he speaks is with more than just a common civility, and so it displays to us something of the quality of the man, something of his own character.

We need to think about our interaction with people. How do we stack up against this model? I know that for my part I am not always patient and do not always react as I should, and yet I am here to represent Christ in the world. For my part – this is something that I am trying to deal with in confession and repentance and I am very aware of my weakness in this area – which I guess is half the battle – but the battle is not yet won!

How about you?

We all need to consider our lives and consider particularly those areas of our lives where we are weakest and not to defend them, but rather, to face the truth and under God and with the power of the Holy Spirit and prayer, begin to seriously work on them.

### Study 7

#### Ruth 2:5-12

Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" 6 And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.

7 She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.' So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest."

8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. 9 Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn."

10 Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

11 But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. 12 The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!"

After a deep study on just a few verses last week - this week we are looking at a much larger passage - 8 verses - not a record for me, but close to one!

Verses 5-6 - "Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" 6 And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab." – Ruth is known – not in person by Boaz at this stage - but by reputation - notice that in answer to Boaz's question the foremen of the reapers does not tell Boaz about her - he just identifies that "She is the young Moabite woman." That is enough to identify her - Boaz shows later in the text that he knows well enough about Ruth. This is the one who came back with Naomi.

Verse 7 - "She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.' So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest." – The foreman quickly identifies not only who she is, but he is keen to show that she has taken no liberty – what she is doing is the thing that she has asked permission to do – to glean, which is technically her right under Jewish law – but the request is actually a little deeper than just asking if she can glean – gleaning and gathering should be done around the edges of the field and after the reapers have completed their work in the areas of the field in which they are working. When they have gathered up the sheaves and moved on, the gleaners can come into the area to gather what is left. Ruth has asked if she can glean among the sheaves, but this would only to be granted by the owner of the field, so the foreman passes this request on to Boaz for him to make the decision. However, the foreman, when he passes on the request, he does more – in these 2 verses he is actually commending Ruth to Boaz, so by association he is commending her request to him also.

If we look at it a little more closely, then we will see that the foreman of the reapers has shared with Boaz is a very complete piece of information:

The puritan theologians Matthew Henry explains this in his commentary on the passage – there are 5 things that the steward clarifies to his master.

1. She is a stranger – so entitled under God's law to glean
2. She is Naomi's daughter-in-law, thus related to the family of Elimelech through her deceased husband and therefore a distant relative of his master, Boaz's house
3. She is a proselyte as she is a Moabite who has come to dwell in Israel under the law of the Jewish people and in the house of Naomi
4. She is modest and honest, in that she did not glean without first gaining permission to do so
5. She is a diligent and hard working person – poor and in need but deserving of good will for the industry she has shown.

There is no doubt but that the behaviour of Ruth as a person who has become a faithful follower of the Lord, the Almighty God of Israel, has swiftly endeared her to the people that she comes into contact with in her daily activities.

Herein lays a challenge for us: –

- Do we – as followers of the Almighty God – swiftly endear ourselves to the people with whom we come into contact by our good nature?
- Do they see us as worthy of being shown honour because of our honesty, humility, faithfulness and diligence?

So Ruth has gone a little further in her request - she has asked to "glean and gather among the sheaves" and so the foreman has brought that request to Boaz to make his ruling on the request himself.

Verses 8-9 - "Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. 9 Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men

have drawn." - This is the first time that Boaz has spoken to Ruth and immediately we see his worthiness on show - the worthiness that was highlighted in the text last week. His use of the term "my daughter" would seem to confirm that he is of a generation that is older than Ruth, as I mentioned last week.

He not only shows kindness to her personally, by saying to her that she is welcome to, not just glean, but to get into the sheaves and among the reapers and benefit from the greater fruits of her labours by going where the pickings will be so much richer. He also says that she should stay on the land belonging to him to gather sufficient for her needs, and also assures her of the good will of those who work for him as reapers in his field.

1. This invitation to stay on the land that belongs to Boaz would seem to be an invitation to keep coming back to benefit from, not just the barley harvest, but also other future harvests, such things as wheat, corn, olives and grapes, all of which would be normal for a landowner of the standing that Boaz had in the community. So, as the different produce came to that point of development and ripeness for the labourers to do their gathering, Ruth was expected to join with them and gather produce for her own and Naomi's needs.

2. The generosity offered here by Boaz is considerably more than Ruth had asked for and shows us that Boaz is a man who goes the extra mile to care for others.

3. Perhaps it also shows us that Boaz admires Ruth as a young woman whose reputation has already begun to be known.

4. This statement that is made to Ruth about staying in the company with the servants of Boaz, again conveys the level of trust and good-will that existed between the master and servants – Boaz and his employees

1. firstly that he would trust them to provide protection for this stranger

2. and secondly even more significantly, that they would even provide sustenance for her in her toil. Water that the young men would have to draw from the town well and transport to the field.

We saw last week the level of respect shown master to servant and servant to master by the more than casual greeting – in fact the invoking of a prayer of blessing each upon the other – here we see that respect in action in the trust shown by Boaz and the kindness shown by the reapers to Ruth as she works in the field.

This offer of Boaz is no small issue – a lone woman of foreign extraction alone in the fields outside the city among men who are hard workers in the fields – I'm guessing that even here and now many would be too nervous to contemplate that – the fact is that she is in a vulnerable situation, but Ruth knows immediately that this offer is a trustworthy one because Boaz has instructed the young men to keep her safe and Ruth to keep close to his young women – the safest company for her – and Ruth is grateful as we shall see:

Verse 10 – "Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?" – Ruth knows her station in life – she knows that this action by Boaz is more than she should expect and her gratitude is shown in the way that she honours him publically for his generosity.

There are a couple of things that we can find here in the text from looking at the context and looking at the Hebrew background.

There is a kind of play on words in the text that we would not see in translation

1. The root of the word in the Hebrew, translated here as "take notice" is the same as the root of the word for "a foreigner" – what Ruth is saying is in effect – "why would you recognise the un-recognised"; or "why would you notice the un-noticed" – She is again acknowledging that she has no right of favour from Boaz – or anyone else – as a foreigner in the land and she understands that to their eyes she is one who is a stranger – unknown – un-noticed – even unworthy of being known or noticed and so deserves nothing from them. Such humility is hidden in this phrasing.

2. Yet Boaz does recognise and notice – and in this acknowledgement, we see something of the point of the message of the book of Ruth.

1. Grace - undeserved favour
2. Acceptance - a foreigner coming into a place of being received
3. Adoption - no longer treated as an outsider but now brought close and under the provision of the Lord.

This book is about so much more than a Mills and Boon fairy tale of a love story. It is about an illustration of the grace, the acceptance and the adoption by God Himself, of those that He calls to Himself who have no rights and no hope before Him.

**Verse 11 - "But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before."** - Here we can see that although Boaz had not previously met Ruth, he nevertheless did already know of her reputation – he knew of her kindness and faithfulness to Naomi. Are there the beginnings of a deeper admiration coming into the picture, as Boaz commends Ruth for her behaviour? Perhaps there are the beginnings.

**Verse 12 - "The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!"** - Once again we see Boaz invoking a prayer of blessing, only this time it is upon Ruth.

This is a blessing of huge significance, asking the Lord – again Boaz is invoking this blessing with strength by use of the name of YHWH – he requests that YHWH should give to Ruth "a full reward" – more than that – he observes that Ruth has not just come into the land, an immigrant, but that she has "come under the wings of YHWH to find refuge" and in that she should be blessed as one who has been adopted. This would be of huge significance to a proselyte, and particularly to one who has given up so much, paying such a high price, because of her desire to follow her faith in the God of the people of Israel and to worship Him as her God.

This phrase about being gathered under the wings of God, is a phrase that was fairly commonly used – it was said that a foreigner converting to the faith of Israel, in the true God, YHWH, was a person who had "come under His wings", this is reflected several generations later in the Psalms of David that use the term – **Psalm 17:8; Psalm 36:7; and especially in Psalm 91:1-6**, where it goes on to give a couple of Messianic prophecies.

Here in these verses, we see again the concept that we have been seeing and discussing over the last 2 studies - understanding the word "Shaddai" relating to God's providence is relevant yet again in this week's study.

Back in the introduction to the book, I said that the book of Ruth was a book in which we would discover so much more about the providence of God – and as we have seen, it is apparent throughout every aspect of the life of Ruth – and it will continue, because of the special purpose that Ruth has in the events of history, as we shall discover in due course.

We have been learning again that we serve the Almighty God who holds everything in His hands and ordains all things that happen – therefore He can be trusted even in situations which, on the face of it, seem to be adverse.

This “Shaddai YHWH”, Almighty God, can be trusted by those who He has called, who have placed their trust in Him

He is sovereign over the events of the lives of each one of us - in fact, His sovereignty is not limited to His redeemed, He ordains the lives of all and the events of every day for His purpose. It is through the outworking of His unfathomable plan that we learn, we grow, we are challenged, we face trials, we are tested, we have opportunities to serve Him, we have opportunities to witness to our faith, we live, we thrive, we get ill, we recover, we die, and so on - even when evil is done towards us, God uses it for His purpose (see Joseph Genesis 50) - He fulfils His plans – not despite the efforts of the unredeemed – but often through their efforts, many of which are carried out in disobedience to the law of God – We have to grasp that even the evil intent of mankind – even the evil intent of Satan himself, does not thwart the plan of God – Satan can do nothing without God's permission, he is a defeated foe. This generation's fascination with the concept that Satan has power to control, is wrong – he can only do what the Father allows him to do (see the whole book of Job). Almighty God is subject to no-one and His will is foiled by nothing.

The hands of our God are amazing and fearful hands - As was said recently - for those who are unredeemed and therefore are not adopted by the Lord - Hebrews 10:31 "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." But for those who are His through redemption, they are in His hands, held with security and love that should give us such total confidence in His providence

Through this providence of God, the faithful servant can press on with their life in that comforting knowledge that they personally held firmly and lovingly in the hands of the Almighty and nothing can befall them that is not in His divine purpose. See Matthew 6:25-34 – discuss.

### Study 8

#### Ruth 2:13-17

Then she said, "I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants."

14 And at mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain. And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over.

15 When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her.

16 And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her."

17 So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

Last time we saw the first conversation between Boaz and Ruth. We saw the positive support given by Boaz towards Ruth as she asked for permission to do that bit more than simply gleaning at the edge of the fields and following across the rest of the field, only after the harvesters had finished.

Boaz not only agreed but went further, offering her personal protection; and even access to the water that the young men had drawn. But – he does not stop there – the next verses open with Ruth again showing great respect to the person who is rapidly becoming her benefactor.

**Verse 13 – “Then she said, "I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants.”** – Again we see the humility of Ruth as she acknowledges the generosity of Boaz. She is recognising in the last phrase that the mercy and generosity that he has shown her is not to be expected – she is not even one of his female slaves or even his hired workers (the text would indicate that this phrase probably includes both of these categories of people in what Ruth says.

Ruth knows what her rights are under the Jewish law that we looked at previously – and she knows, and we know too, that Boaz has already gone beyond that which is her right, and made additional provision for her – consequently the words expressed in this verse are not that surprising from Ruth. We have already established her gentle gracious spirit and her grateful words and here they are further displayed.

**Verse 14 – “And at mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain. And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over.”** – The generosity of Boaz shines even brighter – but think about this – once again we can see the genuineness of the man – Boaz is there, sitting down with his servants, the reapers – he too is sharing in the provisions that are available – there is no situation of “one rule for the rich and one for the poor” – Boaz is involved with his workers with no pride of position or elevated sense of superiority. Notice the example that Boaz is setting his servants – the text of the Hebrew passage makes it very clear that it is Boaz himself who actually reaches out and takes a handful of the roasted grain and passes it to Ruth in an act of service to her. It is from this place at table with his servants that he sets the tone for the acceptance of Ruth, treating her almost as equal with himself and with the reapers and servants.

**There is more here for us to get hold of too.**

When God gave Israel the law, what He gave was not just rules but He also gave principals and guidance on the attitude of men and women as they learn not only the strict letter of the law, but also look to see the idea behind the law.

**What do I mean?**

In the particular law that we have referred to regarding provision for the poor and the foreigner, that of allowing gleaning to take place. The underlying law that says that a landowner must not harvest right to the edges, and must not go back over the field to pick up that which was missed. What we see is the heart of God to provide sustenance for the poor and needy. The law is not setting a limit on the provision for the poor – it simply teaches that under God the right thing to do is for a provision to be made for their well-being.

Boaz could have been perfectly within the letter of the law by simply allowing Ruth to glean the edges of his fields and he would not have suffered any bad press for stopping there, but as we have already discovered, Boaz is a worthy man; a man of Godly intent and purpose – one whose heart is set on doing what the Lord requires of him, even if it causes him to experience personal discomfort. As we have already seen, he was committed to staying in Bethlehem throughout the time of the famine, unlike Elimelech, his kinsman.



The consequence of that spirit within him, is that he is not limited to doing just what is right and required, but rather, he chooses to go considerably further in that spirit of generosity that is encouraged by the principal of the law and so provides the facility to not just fulfil the basic needs and no more, but actually provides bounty beyond the basics – inviting her to eat, then serving her, then providing as much as Ruth needs for her own sustenance and so much more that she is able to have her fill and to share from her bounty for another (Naomi) to the glory of God.

The example that Boaz sets is an example of a Godly principal for others to see and to apply – it is an example that we should see and that we should be delighted to apply in our own lives in the way that we treat the things that God has given to us.

- Are we people who do as little as we think we must for the sake of satisfying the requirement of the law of God?
  
- Or are we people that, seeing the principal of the law of God and recognising the provision that He has placed in our hands, now reflect His grace and generosity to us, by being people who are gracious and generous towards our brothers and sisters in Christ and particularly to those who are in need?
  
- I am reminded of the words of Christ to the disciples in the Olivet Discourse in [Matthew 24 and 25](#), where in chapter 25 He talks of the separation of the sheep and the goats – like so many passages – this is another one that is often incorrectly read and applied as though it were an unrelated blanket that should be thrown over all people. Look with me at [Matthew 25:31-46](#).
  
- These verses are not verses that we should try to use to suggest that good deeds for the needy will bring heavenly reward, we may think that this is obvious, but tragically there are many who would quote this passage to try and say exactly that.
  
- These verses are talking about being willing to step out and act in ways that will show that we care for those brothers and sisters in Christ who are in need of help – thereby declaring our partnership with them. This is a combination of the principle of showing the world that we who are truly “in Christ” love one another, and also the principle of being unashamed of the Gospel – willing to be seen and counted, as a Christian Brother or Sister, to the ones who are suffering for their faith, even if it personally costs us.
  
- Note the king’s comment in [Matthew 25:40](#) “One of these my brothers” the king is referring to those who would be willing to care for and be identified as those who stand with the people of the king even in times of trial, even if it were to their own cost, or the cost of their personal freedom. It is those who will be rewarded with eternal reward.

- Conversely, those who were unwilling to put their own bounty, circumstances and even freedom on the line for the sake of the brothers of the king will receive their just reward – eternal punishment (or actually – in the Greek wording it says eternal torment, *aionios kolasis*)
- Christ, in this message to the disciples, is saying exactly what Boaz has chosen to do by his natural inclination, that is; to be obedient to the spirit of the law – namely to go beyond the minimum, for the sake of a person who loves the Lord, who, having given up everything she knows for the sake of following the faith that she has come to accept, is therefore, to Boaz, a sister in the faith with him

Incidentally – with this display of godly generosity, warmth and acceptance, being shown by Boaz, why would the servants, who have already received the same generosity themselves from Boaz, hesitate to accept Ruth, when Boaz does not hesitate to accept them?

So Ruth joins them at table and she is able to have her fill “**until she was satisfied**” and more

**Verse 15 – “When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. 16 And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her.”**” – Once again Boaz confirms the right that he has given to Ruth to glean where she wills – even among the sheaves, confirming that the reapers must not rebuke her or reproach her.

This matter of allowing her to “glean among the sheaves” – as we’ve previously seen, the normal practice would be to prevent the poor and foreigner gleaning among the sheaves, because the temptation would be too great for the gleaners – who are by their very nature people in need. They would be likely to be overcome by the ease with which they could reach into the sheaves, stealing some of the previously harvested grain stalks from the bundles that the workers had gathered. To place this temptation in front of people who are in need, who you know little about, would be both unwise and unacceptable.

So it could be said then that there is a twofold view held by preventing these folk from gleaning among the sheaves

1. It protects the owners harvest
2. It separates the poor of the community from the temptation to steal

Boaz has determined that neither of these are relevant however in the case of Ruth – he is making it clear that he trusts her implicitly not to violate the freedom that he has given her, to go where the grain will be more plentiful.

However – now we see that, in a greater reflection of the very spirit of generosity that we’ve just been looking at, he goes even further, telling the reapers to intentionally leave extra stalks on the ground for her to pick up, by pulling barley out of the harvested sheaves and leaving it on the field for Ruth to have.

Interestingly, Boaz is not given to the excessive act of public generosity that would remove from Ruth the requirement to work – he could have simply instructed his foreman to take a generous amount of grain bearing stalks and give them to Ruth, but he doesn’t do that. What he does is to ensure that her diligent work reaps good reward, by ensuring that where she goes to gather is well endowed with the stalks that would be her prize.

There is another principle at work here, one that we see in [2 Thessalonians 3:6-12](#).

The idea of a person expecting to have something for nothing is never encouraged in Scripture. There is an expectation that those who are capable of working to provide for their needs and the needs of their family, should do so and not expect to live off of the efforts of other people.

Boaz is encouraging the work ethic. This is generosity of even greater measure, for sure – but it is generosity that does not “spoil the child” but rather it ensures her self-respect and rewards her for her effort.

**Verse 17 – “So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.”** – I’ll answer the question about an ephah in a moment, but first:

Again what we see is Ruth’s diligence, just so we know – even now when Ruth has won such favour from Boaz –she still works incredibly hard and gathers as much as she will need for her and Naomi for the time ahead. Her willing commitment to work is rewarded by the bountiful providence of the Lord, through both the actions of Boaz and the provision of God through this faithful servant – this man Boaz as well as through the obedience of the servants of Boaz, who respect his will and carry out his requirement with the grain for Ruth.

The book is a display of God’s providence along with many, many other biblical principles.

Now to that question – what is an ephah?

It is just over 21 litres by volume so if you imagine it would be about the equivalent of 40 old fashioned milk bottles full of thrashed grain gleaned in one day.

Another way to consider the quantity would be to consider it by weight – on this basis 1 ephah would be equivalent to approximately 30 pounds weight of barley (think of it in terms of about 15 bags of flour).

This would be plenty of grain to make more than enough bread for Ruth and Naomi for the day ahead and several days ahead, and we know that Ruth will be back in the fields tomorrow, because we already know that she is a hard-working, diligent and faithful individual.

Amen

### [Study 9](#)

#### [Ruth 2:18-23](#)

And she took it up and went into the city. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied.

19 And her mother-in-law said to her, "Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz."

20 And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed by the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!" Naomi also said to her, "The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers."

21 And Ruth the Moabite said, "Besides, he said to me, 'You shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.'"

22 And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted."

23 So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Last time we were together looking at the text of Ruth, our discussion ranged across a number of different subjects. It is fascinating to me that this book – while at first glance it might seem to be a good story with an interesting plot – when we study this book at the depth that we are looking at it together, the issues raised and the challenges that the Lord brings to us, are so much more than we might expect.

The Word of God, we are assured, will not go out, but that it will accomplish the purpose that God intended – the promise of [Isaiah 55:11](#) is – I am sure – being fulfilled week by week in our studies. To the praise of His glorious name!

Today's verses, as we come to the end of this second chapter, are more about a rounding off of the things we have already seen. So let's work through them and see what the Lord reveals to us and consider what the study has brought to my attention for our discussion.

**Verse 18 – "And she took it up and went into the city. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied."** – As we have come to expect – Ruth continues with open hands to share all that she has with Naomi, even the food that she brought home from her sharing in the "field meal" with Boaz and the harvesters.

We must not miss that Ruth was gleaning for the supply of both of their needs and her bounty would have delighted Naomi well enough, but Ruth not only fulfilled her obligation, she went further, she also brought back sustenance to share from her mid-day meal that had been provided by her new benefactor Boaz. This additional sharing – I am guessing – would have done more than just please Naomi, it is my opinion that this would have stirred her emotions because of the display of loving loyalty of Ruth towards her.

**Verses 19-20 – "And her mother-in-law said to her, "Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz." And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed by the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!" Naomi also said to her, "The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers.""** – Naomi declares a word of blessing on the as yet unidentified benefactor. The amount of the gleanings that Ruth lay before Naomi – 30 pounds of beaten out barley grain – would be far more that could be expected from the normal day's toil, so Naomi would immediately realise that something unusual had happened to benefit them in this way. She asks Ruth to fill in the facts relating to who the benefactor was and where she had been carrying out the activity of the day.

Once Ruth identifies the man as Boaz, the penny drops with Naomi. Her comment of more specific blessing, invoking the name of YHWH once again, expressed this time towards Boaz, is important – **"May he be blessed by the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!"** – The point that Naomi is making is seen in the type of

blessing which is like the one we saw with Boaz earlier in the chapter when he blessed his workers - it is not just a casual blessing but is much more. It expresses Naomi's delight at the generosity of Boaz.

Naomi does not leave it there though – she then goes further with her comment, and related to the blessing she makes an observation to Ruth that recognises that Boaz has shown a willingness to have some involvement in the responsibilities that were accepted under God's law within the nation of Israel, for those who were close within the family to provide support to the widow of a deceased relative. Remember – no government help was available as we have previously discussed.

She then goes even further, she points out, in the phrase that she uses, something even more significant – Naomi is observing that Boaz is remembering his dead kinsman – Elimelech and his 2 sons Mahlon and Chilion and is also supporting his living relatives, Naomi and her daughter-in-law, hence **"The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers."** – This word "redeemer" has already arisen and has massive meaning in the text and in the nation of Israel. The description that Naomi give to Ruth in this verse is that the man is a "close relative" – this is another way of saying "Kinsman Redeemer".

We have already flagged up the term "kinsman redeemer" – this is not complex – it refers to a relation who is close enough to the dead person to take up the responsibility of standing in the place of the deceased relative to initially provide succour for the widow and family and to redeem – buy back or take possession of – any lost or neglected estates – so that they can be restored and passed on to the heirs of the dead man and so kept within the family.

Let's just move aside from the text for a moment to look at this term and to see one of the things that this book is displaying.

We have already seen many lessons and discussion points coming out of the verses that we have studied together. Things that we see presented as examples that we need to take on board for ourselves as we walk with the Lord. However, this side issue is not directly about us, but about one of the overall pictures that the book of Ruth is presenting to us for us to understand.

**This term "kinsman redeemer" is pointing us to Christ.** In fact – the whole book of Ruth is showing us a picture of Christ and His work on behalf of His bride – the church.

**The church – God's people chosen before the foundation of the world – have been estranged from Him – but through our Kinsman Redeemer we are restored to relationship with Him to the praise of His glorious name.**

**Now** – before we move on I want us to consider the situation that has been painted over the first 2 chapters:

As we have seen, this family have been disobedient to God – they are part of His chosen race – but have wandered off on their own agenda and in so doing have brought disaster upon themselves. This is a picture of the waywardness of mankind in general, but in particular a picture of the people who God chose before the foundation of the world to be His children.

When God's children act in disobedience to Him, ignoring or rejecting His call on their lives, we can be certain that their action will not be ignored by God – He is not a failure and He never leaves those who are truly His children to be destroyed (**John 6:37 and 44**), praise God, but rather, He acts as a good father should act, by bringing loving but firm discipline into their lives – He does this with one aim only – the aim of their restoration.

As we have seen so many times already God renews the heart – regenerates the being and gives us faith to trust Christ for salvation, which He then provides through His grace for the, as yet unredeemed, person whom He has chosen. He often brings them in by allowing calamity or difficult circumstances into their life, so that as He changes their heart, they are willing and even desperate to turn to Him.

But He also brings discipline in the form of calamity or difficult circumstances into the lives of those who are already His children, His followers who are acting in disobedience (see [1st Corinthians 11:29-32](#)). This discipline is the outworking of His love as a father to His children – it is for the purpose of their restoration into a right relationship with the Father. [Read Hebrews 12:5-11](#).

In today's world we use many sayings that have come from history – but in many cases the reason behind that saying has become lost or distorted over time.

One of these is the often used saying in building or architecture “the devil is in the detail”, which has come to mean that you need to plan right down into the little details or you will be likely to come unstuck and end up with a problem.

However – what I am about to share with you, approaches this saying from a different perspective – an accurate and original understanding of the saying – the Devil – that is Satan – gets into the smaller details of teaching – he twists them – in some cases only just slightly, but in other cases quite significantly – and the result of the twisted understanding becomes the normal way the text is taught. Underneath that altered understanding of the truth is a hidden reality that causes people to miss important – even in some cases vital – information that God has revealed for our growth.

Because the devil has got into the small stuff – the detail – the truth that prevents us from falling into sin – that truth becomes hidden, so the devil has won the victory of sending people into the fog of error that further separates them from God and the narrow path that we are called to walk upon in our Christian life.

This is why it is so important that we take on the nature of the Berean people ([Acts 17:10-12](#)) – we need be diligent in order to make sure that we are not being deceived by wrong teaching in the detail.

We tend to think that we only need to worry about “the big stuff” – but believe me – the Devil has got into the detail!

**In this context then, let's look for a moment at the situation relating to the attitude of the world towards discipline; and as a development of this influence, the way we understand how suffering misfortune in our lives –this is a subject that is usually taught wrongly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century church.**

**Let me explain:**

In the world, the absolute nonsense of our culture, is that it has come to look on firm but loving discipline as something that should be condemned. As a consequence this led to the development of a generation of parents who were afraid to discipline their children for fear of being labelled cruel.

Following on from that we now have a second generation of parents, many of whom have almost completely lacked the example of good discipline in their own lives.

The result of this is that they do not know how to discipline their children correctly.

This now leads us to the third generation of children, who are growing up and will suffer more and more as they grow, because of an increasing lack of the ability to apply self-discipline in their lives because of this complete loss of the principle of good direction and example.

The passage in [Hebrews 12:5-11](#) that we have read, makes it clear that, to fail to discipline is to fail to show love.

The whole point of discipline is to bring loving correction and restoration to the errant child – in just the same way as with the Lord bringing His disciplining hand to bear upon His children – they suffer “light affliction” for a short time in order to bring them to repentance and restoration to the Lord. So, by His children knowing the principle and the

purpose of discipline, correctly taught, and understanding the point of the work that God is doing, they turned back to Him and into the full benefit of that relationship of love.

However – there has been not just weak teaching, but in most cases what we hear is wrong teaching, over this matter in our churches, because people do not like the idea of the discipline of the Lord – this wrong teaching has led to serious error and an even more serious breakdown in understanding.

Think about the way that the churches today put illness and unfortunate circumstances down to the fall, or the work of Satan.

They do not like the idea that such things could be by the will of God for His purpose – if you try making that point, most people who call themselves Christians will dispute with you – they talk as though God in a way that proves that they believe that God is not in control of the work of Satan, but rather Satan foils the Lord’s intentions.

In teaching this they badly hinder the process of the sanctification of true believers, because instead of people recognising the disciplining hand of the Lord, they have come to believe that Satan is responsible for these adverse circumstances and that we should be able to overcome them by prayers of faith – trusting that God will answer our prayers because we “ask in His name!”; saying “ask and it will be given” or “ask and expect that your prayer will be answered” and then when nothing happens the statements get worse “you need more faith” taking more and more Bible texts out of context.

The result of this bad teaching and bad application of the principle of a prayer of faith, is that the person becomes more and more frustrated and disheartened with their situation, because in many if not most cases they get no resolution.

Therefore they end up believing that they are second class Christians who are “not enjoying the blessings of God” because they lack something experientially, instead of seeing the truth that the hand of discipline is perhaps being currently applied because of some sin in their lives and it is God’s will that through discipline they will turn in obedience and will be returned to that place of restoration to experience the blessings of His love.

So the person simply does not take time to consider what it is that the Lord is trying to teach them, because they don’t realise that He is trying to teach them anything.

Sadly – in this scenario, it is more than likely that because they are true children – if they are in fact true – this lack of attention, will cause the discipline to continue, or even become more painful, until they start to listen to the Lord and pay attention to His call for their obedience.

In the end they will be brought to correction, even if the Lord has to pull them out of the situation that they are in – possibly through very difficult experiences – God does not fail in His purpose – He will do what He needs to do to bring His chosen back to obedience and to the place of good fellowship with Him – He has promised that He will do this.

The fact is that those people who sail through life – who are often the ones giving the bad advice and misquoting scripture – and who in this ridiculous situation outlined above, would seem to be “the blessed ones for whom nothing goes wrong”, may very possibly be the ones referred to in Hebrews as those who are without discipline because they are themselves “illegitimate” – not true children.

The whole thing has been turned on its head by bad teaching in the churches because the devil has got into the detail.

Discuss.....

**Back to the text**

Although we have already observed that Naomi and Ruth were poor, it is not the case that they had no possessions – there was land – but the land that remained had been neglected for so long that it could not support them in this time of great personal need. We will see this confirmed later in the text in chapter 4, but we won't leapfrog there yet – that will come up when we get there.

Verses 21-23 – “And Ruth the Moabite said, “Besides, he said to me, ‘You shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.’” – As this chapter draws to a close we see Ruth reporting the rest of the information about Boaz’s care for her well-being and provision for her and Naomi’s needs through the remainder of the harvest season

Verse – 22 – “And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted.”” – Naomi’s response is as we would expect – to confirm that the advice of Boaz is correct and that Ruth should avail herself of the care that he had provided for her. Notice again the use of the loving term “my daughter” – there is no separation of ethnicity, culture or relationship between these two women, Naomi is as a mother to Ruth and she as a daughter to Naomi.

Verse 23 – “So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests. And she lived with her mother-in-law.” – The chapter concludes with a confirmation of Ruth fulfilling the invitation that Boaz extended to her to remain in his fields and glean throughout the upcoming harvests too.

In preparation for what comes next we see this final note in Chapter 2, that Ruth lived with Naomi. It is an accepted situation that has become the norm for these two ever since Ruth came into the family and perhaps it could continue - this is a situation that has pleased both the women up to this point in time, but from what we already know about Naomi, we can conclude that she is looking forward on behalf of Ruth and as we begin to move into the next chapter, we will see that Naomi’s thoughts are for Ruth’s future well-being and security and not just for her own present needs.



## Study 10

### Ruth 3:1-5

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?"

2 Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.

3 Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do." 5 And she replied, "All that you say I will do."

Last time – we covered the last few verses of chapter 2, but we also considered the complexity of the issue of God’s discipline, and we looked at the error that is taught in so many churches that causes misunderstanding, often leading to damage and delay in the process of sanctification and can even bring greater discipline – a tough subject and one that, having discussed it at the Elders Meeting, I will be raising again from the pulpit in one of the weeks ahead, to ensure a wide grasp of both the risk and the truth.

As we ended the evening I hinted that Naomi had such care for Ruth, that she would be unlikely to be content in the situation where her future was not secure, even if it was a situation that ensured Naomi’s own comfort. Let’s look at the text then, of the first verses of Chapter 3.

**Verse 1 – “Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?" – What does this mean? We have had this phrase before in the book of Ruth – look back to [chapter 1:9](#) “The LORD grant that you may find rest...”**

Naomi is by now an elderly woman and has no intention or likelihood of remarriage – she is – for her part – content with that situation for herself, but she is not content with that situation for her young widowed daughter-in-law Ruth – for Ruth she wants better security and hope for future happiness.

This therefore, is Naomi looking for the right way to lead Ruth towards finding a new husband.

The ideal situation that could be found for Ruth would be to bring into the picture a person who would have the right to bring greatest benefit to Ruth through the laws and customs of the Jewish people. Of course – it must be said then, that what Naomi is doing is to direct Ruth right at the beginning of this chapter, of the right process for securing her future. That is to correctly involve the nearest person in the family who would be able to invoke the rules of the levirate law that we have previously looked at together. We will have another look at that law in a moment just to refresh our memories.

The situation was that neither Elimelech, Ruth’s father-in-law, nor Mahlon and Chilion, Ruth’s husband and brother-in-law respectively, had any living direct siblings who were available or eligible to fulfil the responsibility within that law.

As a result of there being no siblings, the opportunity falls to the next nearest of the kinsmen for him to consider his situation and, if he is willing, accept the responsibility of – “kinsman redeemer” – as we have already discussed.

So here we begin the first steps as Naomi advises Ruth of her intention to seek this “rest” for Ruth.

Verse 2 – “Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.” – As we saw in the last chapter – Naomi identifies Boaz as a kinsman and now she goes back to this issue to show the possible opening that is available to Ruth, as she tells her about the whereabouts of Boaz this very night!

Naomi is referring back to this Jewish law that she raise with Ruth and Orpah back in Moab – the thing which she stated she would not be able to provide – see 1:11 – Naomi had no other sons nor any hope of further sons – so no son would be available to be identified as a potential levir, (let’s look back and remind ourselves of the subject – [Deuteronomy 25:5-9 – the rule relating to levirate marriage](#).) Now – back home in Bethlehem – there may be the opportunity for such a match for Ruth. It is with this in her mind that Naomi raises the subject of the whereabouts of Boaz.

Just to clarify the situation:

- The levir is the brother who marries the deceased’s widow for her protection and to continue the family line.
- Whereas the kinsman redeemer is the member of the family who steps up to redeem property that has been sold or become forfeit because a family member has fallen on hard times ([see Leviticus 25:25](#)).
- This later situation may include land and/or livestock, but it can also include slaves or servants of the person who has fallen on hard times, or even the person themselves, because, in extreme situation a person may sell themselves into slavery to pay a debt. So the kinsman redeemer may even purchase the release of his family member.

Last week I showed something of the Messianic picture of the book of Ruth – here again we see this same thing – consider [Romans 6:5-11](#) – the fact of our being dead in our sins – having become slaves of sin, but being redeemed by Christ we are set free from the slavery of sin. The redemption of those in slavery, was bought by the One who is our Redeemer – Jesus paid the full cost – He was the One who called out to us and to the Father, the word that means – “it is paid in full” – “*Tetallisti*”, the cry from the cross – translated “It is finished” – He, and He alone bought our freedom from the slavery of sin.

*Incidentally, just as an aside – does anyone know the cost of compensation that a man had to pay for a slave who has been killed? [Exodus 21:32](#); if a slave is killed, then the loss is covered by the price of 30 pieces of silver.*

Verse 3 – “Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do.” – Naomi has the responsibility – even though Ruth is a mature person – a woman and a widow – Naomi rightly assumes the responsibility of the parent – it would be correct for her to act in this role for Ruth, and she guides her daughter-in-law, who has come to be referred to by Naomi as “my daughter” ([see 2:22](#) as we saw last week), to attempt to provide for her future. Her purpose is to bring long-term security and “rest” to Ruth (rest as we have seen, being a euphemism for marriage – one that I guess the ladies here would find somewhat contrary and even amusing).

Naomi tells her to wash and dress – this is about Ruth presenting herself to Boaz, in the right way and at the right time – as a person who is available and seeking marriage.

Boaz, being a man of an older generation to Ruth and with his position in the society as a respected leader would be unlikely to make overtures towards Ruth even though there was the kinsman connection that could perhaps bring the rules of kinsman redeemer into the picture, but Naomi wished to take action to break through this reserve that was correctly shown by Boaz, so she encourages Ruth to take the initiative.

NOTE – Up until this time it is very likely that Ruth would have continued to wear the robes of a widow in mourning – she had committed herself to caring for Naomi and being her companion throughout this time of return to Bethlehem and therefore it is likely that she would have chosen to indicate to the people at large that she was not available for marriage. The easiest way to do this would be to continue to wear the clothes of a person in mourning. Naomi is saying –wash and dress in clothes that say the opposite – clothes that are attractive – not flagrant – but clothes that show that she is no longer in mourning and so she is available for possible remarriage.

Naomi tells Ruth not to be too hasty in declaring herself to Boaz, but rather, to hold back on making herself known to him, until he is fed and watered, and content to settle down to sleep. This is not about waiting until he is unguarded or vulnerable, since we have already seen that Boaz is “a worthy man”. If this were not the case then Naomi would never have considered sending Ruth to Boaz and into any potential of danger either to her person or to her reputation.

This is important, because there are those who have suggested that this is Naomi encouraging Ruth to break social etiquette by throwing herself at a man when he is perhaps drunk, so that he will take advantage of her sexually, and then be obliged to put things right. This is not right! That would mean that she is encouraging immoral behaviour in order to force the issue with Boaz, leading Ruth into a vulnerable situation and Boaz into the temptation to sin. That is not what is going on here. Boaz is honourable and a man whose reputation is well known throughout the area – he is not subject to the temptation to drink and become overwhelmed by uncontrollable lust – as we have seen already – he is an honourable man who is trustworthy and true.

Boaz has been faithful and sacrificially generous to the people of the community throughout the recent famine, unlike Elimelech who ran away from his civic responsibility as a community leader (as members of the tribe of Judah of the Ephrathites were in the community) to find a more comfortable life for himself and his family, to his cost; the reputation and standing that Boaz has in the community and among his servants, his slaves, and even those who are casual workers in his fields, is so good that when he came into the fields, they asked that YHWH should pour out His blessing upon Boaz (2:4); considerably more than a simple passing greeting. This is a trustworthy Man who is not going to lose control, or get drunk and neither is he going to take advantage of this young woman Ruth.

Equally – Naomi is not suggesting any impropriety on the part of Ruth – she has known Ruth for many years and she knows her to be an honourable person who can be trusted, faithful and true and a person who, by Naomi’s own teaching, has heard and understood the Jewish law and culture, committing herself to the ways of Naomi’s people and to faith in YHWH and would not act to bring shame upon either herself or Naomi.

So - there is a different motive and also a different practice going on here and one that reflects the honourable nature of all of the people involved

Boaz, having been identified as a kinsman of Elimelech as we have already seen – and having already stepped up to show himself willing to be a provider for both Ruth and Naomi, not to provide charity – but support to enable them to thrive despite their situation, is the focus of Naomi’s plans for her daughter-in-law.

Boaz has already shown himself willing to be a kinsman redeemer in part, and Naomi is seeking one who could restore the estates of Elimelech and perhaps even provide Ruth with the levirate opportunity of remarriage and perhaps even a son to continue the line.

Rabbinic tradition states that at this stage in his life, Boaz has become a widower. Remember what we saw previously, that he was a respected leader of the people – probably part of the ruling group that would come to be known as the

Sanhedrin – although at this stage in the history of Israel the Sanhedrin does not exist, that is much later – generations away yet. However, the principle was put into place back in **Exodus 18** when Jethro, the Father-in-law of Moses, advised him to set men of good standing as leaders to be able to make judgements among the people. If you recall from when we looked at this – the advice was for him to choose men, heads of families, with maturity and experience to be able to make sound judgements for the people so that not all of the work fell on the shoulders of Moses. This body of men were therefore, by tradition, all married men of maturity and standing in the community, so it is reasonable to think that Boaz was both part of the follow-on group that continued in this role over the generations after the Israelites settled in the Promised Land and would therefore have been a married man – but the text shows us that he was not married at this time, so he is available, if he is willing, to be approached on the matter of the future security of Ruth.

Those who were here when we looked at the various blessings that appeared earlier in the text of the book, may recall a phrase that was used in **Ch 2:12, the phrase; “under whose wings you have come to take refuge!”** – used by Boaz himself as a blessing on Ruth referring to the LORD blessing her. A beautiful blessing that was extended to gentiles who became proselytes by converting to Judaism. They were said to “come under the wings of the LORD” for His protection to be upon them.

Culturally, what is being suggested by Naomi, reflects this same picture. Ruth is to go to Boaz and by lifting the sheet from his feet, and laying at his feet – this is to take up the position of a servant, to lie diagonally at the master’s feet – in doing this she is presenting herself to Boaz for his merciful consideration as a relative in need of care – effectively asking Boaz to consider “taking her under his wings” and providing her with the protection of both the levir and the kinsman redeemer. The position of laying at his feet is a place of submission to his authority and to his decision; there is no immoral suggestion being made – this is a question – a very clear and specific question – she is asking Boaz to consider her for the role of wife and as a result, she is to expect Boaz to “tell her what to do” and respect that decision

**Verse 5 – “And she replied, “All that you say I will do.”**” – Ruth is not at all confused by Naomi’s suggestion, she understands fully and is very willing to follow her Mother-in-law’s advice in this. We have already seen that Boaz has shown favour to Ruth and vice versa - Ruth to Boaz by the interaction between them in Boaz’s fields, with the way that he has gone beyond the requirement of the law, even by personally serving Ruth at the field table, to which he had invited her, and she gladly accepted the chance to join him and his workers, so when Naomi makes this suggestion, Ruth considers it to be not at all unreasonable to her, and she is content to pursue the idea of approaching Boaz as Naomi suggests. Next time we’ll see what happens

### [Study 11](#)

#### [Ruth 3:6-13](#)

So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her.

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 grain.  
Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down.

8 At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet!

9 He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer."

10 And he said, "May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. 11 And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman. 12 And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. 13 Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, as the LORD lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning."

Now that we have looked at some of the key issues in quite a bit of detail, and picked up quite a number of side issues as well, where we have developed an understanding of some of the principles that are illustrated for us by the text of this book, I think we may be able to move a little more quickly as we press on into chapter 3 and the rest of the record of how the Lord God has providentially worked out His perfect plan in the lives of Ruth and Boaz and where and how these people fit into the picture of the history of Israel and also the history of the church.

Here we see the response of Boaz to Ruth as she approaches him in humility in order to see if she will find favour in his eyes, such that he will be her kinsman redeemer and perhaps even her levirate groom.

**Verse 6 – “So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her.”** – In obedience to Naomi guidance she willingly sets out on a quest that could be to her advantage – or it could be a disappointment, but she trusts her mother-in-law’s advice and goes to the threshing floor.

**Verse 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 grain. Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down.”** – Last week I made the point that the purpose of Ruth’s delaying her approach until after Boaz had eaten his meal and drink and was ready to settle down for the night, was not about him becoming the worse for drink as some have suggested; yet as this verse describes the situation using the term “his heart was merry”, you’d be forgiven for thinking that was what it was about. The word in the Hebrew however, for merry in this phrase is the word “yatab” pronounced “yaw-tab” which is more accurately translated “to be content” – in other words he is no longer hungry and thirsty from his labours – he is now content and relaxed and ready to sleep. It has been a good harvest this year and as we know there have been lean years behind them, so this year he is content.

Notice a number of things in this first verse of tonight’s study:

1. Boaz is the land owner – a wealthy man who has property and servants and hired hands to do his bidding, but yet he is involved in the work with his employees – providing food for their well-being and involved with the labour as an encourager and at least to some undefined degree, a co-worker. Even here on the threshing floor, he is involved and eats with his servants. Clearly a man of the people.
2. Once the evening’s work is done he eats with them and is glad in his heart. Remember the famine – this is shared joy of fellowship with the servants and those working in the threshing floor.
3. Even after the work is done and the meal is eaten – Boaz does not go off to his comfort of hearth and home, but rather, he beds down at the place of work so that he is ready and available for the next day’s activity. He is not a man of pride who luxuriates in his comforts while others sleep uncomfortably, he is a man of work who respects those who work for him and does not consider them to be beneath him, but considers them as equals – there is no partiality here!

It is after he has gone to sleep that Ruth begins her approach and takes up the position of subservience by laying at his feet.

**Verse 8-9 – “At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! 9 He said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.””**

– After Boaz had slept for a while he disturbs to discover this woman at his feet and he is startled! Perhaps not too surprising – that was not what he would have been expecting on an evening when he had been working hard and was catching a night’s exhausted sleep on a pile of grain at his threshing floor. He does not recognise Ruth and asks who she is.

On the other hand, Ruth is not asleep – she is patiently waiting for her opportunity to share her purpose with Boaz.

Here again we miss something in the translation of the original text. Our translations use the phrase “I am Ruth, your servant” – sounds humble and is okay – but the word that is used is not really best understood by the term “servant” it is better understood as “handmaiden” which says something more than the word servant – what it says is that she is single and available and is submitting herself to his instructions; in context it is used to indicate that Ruth is available, willing and offering to become his wife or be his servant as he chooses. So in response he hears these words from Ruth that are effectively a request for Boaz to marry her.

She goes further - see again how this beautiful phrase is used – **“Spread your wings over your servant...”** – she goes on to say – **“for you are a redeemer.”** Ruth is humbly presenting herself to Boaz and asking for his mercy to be upon her as she offers herself in submission and obedience to him.

This again is a picture of the situation between us and our redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. We must come to Him in humility, recognising our need for His mercy as we submit to Him and coming to Him in obedience. One of the travesties of the “cheap grace gospel” is that it has lost sight of the majesty of the Messiah and our need for redemption, it has become more about adding a benefit to your life, but here we have a clear illustration of the need that we have to come in humility for redemption.

Ruth makes it clear that she is coming to Boaz because she is identifying him, potentially, as “a redeemer” for her. This is the second and confirming statement that makes it even clearer to Boaz exactly why she is coming to him. The term redeemer is the word “goel” which is a reference to the kinsman that should marry the widow - the one who should act as the levir. Ruth believes that Boaz is the nearest kinsman and so the one who is eligible to be approached in this perfectly correct way.

**Verse 10 – “And he said, “May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich.”** – The interesting part in this – to me – is the response of Boaz.

You might think that he may bluster – or deny – or say something to delay any need to act too hastily, but he does none of these things. Instead, he immediately makes a statement of blessing upon Ruth – again it is one of those really sincere blessings that is a call upon YHWH to bless her and by using the term “daughter” he also immediately puts her at ease from any fear that she may have that he might take advantage of the situation or of her.

Boaz is very keen to press these sincere words of blessing upon those with whom he is involved – a mark of the genuine-ness of the man that we have already discovered. But why is he calling for this particular blessing?

The suggestion is that the blessing comes from him for 2 reasons:

- First – he is acknowledging that by pursuing a kinsman redeemer in this way Ruth is showing honour to the memory of her deceased husband. As a younger woman she would most likely have been able to attract younger men who would be willing to take her as their wife, but they were not her kinsmen and so they would not ensure that the property was kept in the family line of Elimelech her father-in-law and Mahlon her dead husband, however, by approaching this man, even though he is of an older generation, she is fulfilling her duty to her dead husband in line with the law and traditions of the Jewish people.
- Secondly - Look at what he says next: **“You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich.”** He is acknowledging the approach of Ruth as a situation OF HER BLESSING HIM!

When I first read that, it occurred to me the complete turn-around from the direction that we might think – we have been viewing things – up to now – from the position of Ruth and Naomi. It has been them in need and seeking solution to that need while trusting God and pressing forward. We have come to look, with the text and with Ruth and Naomi, for the next step that God would take in providing for the well-being of these women – always hoping that God would bring blessing into their lives and perhaps looking for the means – and then comes Boaz – he must be the means!

Yet here we see something else. Here we see that the Lord is using Ruth to bring blessing, providentially, into the life of Boaz – a switch.

Sometimes we tend to become single minded in our focus, but God never is. His focus is multifaceted – He has His hand upon the lives of everyone at the same time and by His providential will and purpose, He is fulfilling the objectives that He has – directing not just one or two people – but every person – sinner or saint. No – we are not puppets, we are the people who influence our destiny and the outcome of daily situations by our decisions, but God is sovereign over every circumstance and outcome and by them He fulfils His purpose. **See Proverbs 16:33.**

So Boaz – far from thinking that he is being ambushed to solve another person’s problem, sees this approach of Ruth as a blessing that God has poured out on his life, when she could perhaps have drawn close to younger men for her future.

Again this confirms that Boaz is probably considerably older than Boaz.

**Verse – 11 – “And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman.”** – Boaz agrees to do as Ruth has asked him – this confirms that Boaz has understood the deal that is going on here. He also confirms that Ruth has a good reputation and is a woman to be respected in the community – therefore this is not an act of charity on his part – as we might think of it – it is rather a situation where Boaz is blessed by a worthy match.

**Verse 12 – “And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I.”** – Remember the levirate law refers first to siblings and then onwards, and the kinsman redeemer rules also apply to the closest eligible relative. We saw in the passage in Deuteronomy that we have been using as our guide regarding the levirate law, that if the closest kinsman was not willing to take up his responsibility, then it was a matter of disgrace that was to be expressed

towards him from those involved, both the Elders of the community and the widow concerned and her family, by the removal of his sandal and a public declaration of his disgrace.

So Boaz, recognising that he is not the nearest relative in this situation, even though he is keen to be in that role, knows that the honourable thing to do, is to first ensure that the nearest kinsman to Ruth and Naomi, has the option to redeem the estate, and act as levirate if he is willing.

Again this proves the worthiness of Boaz. He knows that there is some recoverable residue value to Elimelech's property that could be available for the taking, also he knows that this property comes with the benefit of a young bride whom he respects, but though he is clearly keen to take up the option for himself, he is not going to act in a way that would cheat the nearer kinsman, or ignore the right action under the law, in order to gain these advantages for himself.

**Verse 13 – "Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, as the LORD lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning."** – Instead he makes this promise to Ruth – peace of mind is given to her – Boaz will do all that is required and all that Ruth desires – but he will ensure that all is done correctly. The closer kinsman will be given the opportunity to redeem the estate and provide a home for Ruth, but if he should fail in his responsibility, or for any reason is unable to discharge that responsibility – then Ruth is not to be concerned, because Boaz has promised her that he will redeem – notice – not redeem the estate – but "I will redeem you" – he is making the promise to marry Ruth and take care of her and all that comes with her.

Notice also the kind of promise that Boaz uses to prefix this statement; "as the LORD lives" – this is huge – this particular promise or vow is the most binding vow that an Israelite can make. This exact vow is stated 35 times in the Old Testament by kings, princes, prophets and ordinary people, and in every case it is declared as a binding unbreakable vow before God. This promise to Ruth from a man who she knows to be worthy and honourable, is a vow that is like having a ring on her finger already – she can trust in this commitment – she will have a levirate husband – even if the closer relative does not act or is not in a position to do so, Ruth is assured of that by the promise of Boaz.

Notice too that his promise includes an immediate time commitment – he promises to get right onto the matter in the morning. Therefore he encourages Ruth to lie down and rest in the security of the knowledge that this will be done for her as a matter of urgency, so she no longer needs to be concerned.

## Study 12

### Ruth 3:14-18

So she lay at his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another. And he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."

15 And he said, "Bring the garment you are wearing and hold it out." So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her. Then she went into the city.

16 And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did you fare, my daughter?" Then she told her all that the man had done for her, 17 saying, "These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said to me, 'You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law.'"



18 She replied, "Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today."

Last week we saw the approach of Ruth followed by the assurances of Boaz, that he was willing commit to becoming her redeemer if the revealed "closer relative" was not able or willing to fulfil the role on her behalf. We also discovered that Boaz was one on whom God was showing His great providence, since, although we anticipated that Boaz would become her redeemer, we discovered that Boaz believed himself to be the beneficiary of Ruth's choice to honour the memory of her dead husband – that far from being an obligation or a chore, Boaz considered it a kindness to him that she would be willing to become his bride.

This – if you recall lead us to consider the degree to which Almighty God is sovereign over all the circumstances of men and women to fulfil His perfect plan and that even though we have the opportunity to choose and to make decisions, nevertheless it is God Himself who is the one who is in control of the outcome of those decisions, and His purpose never fails. Rather than, as we might think, just having His hand on a few, those who are in His will, He actually has His hand on every situation and circumstance of mankind constantly, in order to bring His plan to fruition.

So – in this situation, the task that has been in hand has been completed and Ruth rests.

**Verse 14 – "So she lay at his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another. And he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.""** – After last week's study Allan G and I were talking and he raised a point about this "rest" of Ruth. From his own studies – he had discovered that one of the commentators on the text observed that this "rest" reflected the command to; "Be still, and know that I am God" the command of **Psalm 46** – it is worth reading this before we move on as further confirmation of the things we have been considering about the Sovereign LORD God being in control of the outcome of all situations.

Notice – there is no change in Ruth's position – she remains at the feet of Boaz – no variation – she is still holding that position of a servant in submission to the authority of Boaz as her master. There is no relaxing of the custom – but rather there is the confirmation that this situation is right – the maintenance of the ordered distance between them; and in the morning before dawn – before any person can see the individuals involved and recognise them and subsequently bring any doubt upon the integrity of the two people, Ruth arises and leaves.

There is a sound reason for this early departure – yes there is a fairly clear thing to avoid – the possibility of untrue rumours being spread and gossip developing that could perhaps harm the reputation of either Ruth or Boaz – but there is something more – in the Talmud a person is not allowed marry under the rules of the levirate law if he has already had a sexual relationship with the woman, so ensuring that there was no possibility of suspicion, was important not just for their reputations, but also for the outcome of their intentions to marry once the closer redeemer matter had been resolved.

Finally – there is the matter of the closer relative who may wish to redeem and may be willing to marry Ruth – if there is the beginning of a scandal concerning the fidelity of Ruth over her visit to Boaz, then this could be the very thing that might stand in the path of the right and Godly outcome being achieved. So for all these reasons, discretion is the wisest course of action.

Matthew Henry says in his commentary:

*"Note: We must always take care, not only to keep a good conscience, but to keep a good name: either we must not do that which, though innocent, is liable to be misinterpreted, or, if we do, we must not let it be known. We must avoid not only sin, but scandal."*

### **Learning point:**

In **Matthew 18:15-17**, when we see the instructions of the Lord regarding a sinning Brother or Sister, the first instruction is to go quietly, you and him alone, and talk to them about the matter, not to publish it, but to be discrete – the objective is to restore not to destroy. Remember that love covers a multitude of sins (**1 Peter 4:8**). Let's not confuse this with the issue of the reference in **Ephesians 5:11** about exposing the sin – that is talking about dealing with those who are in sin and don't understand, either because they are unredeemed – in darkness – or because they are redeemed but in denial. Either way we must call sin what it is so that the individual is not under any illusions. If having done this there is no change then the matter should be taken further and not hidden.

**Verse 15 – "And he said, "Bring the garment you are wearing and hold it out." So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her. Then she went into the city."** –Six measures is likely to be six "seahs" – a seah is approximately 10 lbs in weight – in this instance therefore this is 6x10 lbs of grain, so this is about 60 pounds of grain – equivalent to 2 ephahs of grain – twice as much as Ruth gleaned when she had worked in the field all day with the foreman pulling out from the sheaves for her – this would be equivalent to Ruth carrying home what would be to us somewhere in the region of 30 x 2lb bags of flour in one load in our cloak. (These Moabite women were made of tough stuff!)

This gift of six measures of barley is a hugely generous gift and the size of the gift is thought to be for a number of reasons.

1. For Ruth to be seen in the streets in the early hours of the morning with no particular purpose would again be likely to cause the possibility of gossip, however, it was known in the community that Ruth was a diligent worker who worked long hours gleaning in the fields for the well-being of Naomi and herself. Therefore the sight of her in the streets of the town in the early hours of the morning with such a massive load of grain would simply cause the observer to assume that she had been gleaning all night and had gathered rich pickings.
2. The second reason can of course simply be put down to the generous nature of Boaz and his expression of that generosity to Ruth.
3. There is a third reason too though – and that is for the assurance of Naomi – that her time of want is at an end – that one way or another the future will be one that holds hope for more than just subsistence living, the arrival of Ruth back home with such a bountiful gift would signify the restoration of a much better standard of living for the time ahead.

There is a somewhat crazy rabbinic tradition that this was not a heavy load – but that what Boaz gave her was not six measures but six grains – they say this for all sorts of convoluted reasons relating to such things as a prophecy of the number of righteous leaders that will rule the land before the Messiah comes, on the one hand, to the number of times Ruth used the word "gaoi" meaning levirate redeemer, within her approach to Boaz at the threshing floor, however all of these are without foundation, because they ignore the Hebrew meaning of the action of Boaz – best translated as "loaded it on her", which comes down to us in many of our English translations as the words "put it on her".

So having been loaded with this offering of grain, Ruth then goes back into the city and back to her home with Naomi.

Verses 16-17 – “And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, “How did you fare, my daughter?” Then she told her all that the man had done for her, 17 saying, “These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said to me, ‘You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law.’” – On Ruth’s return to her home with Naomi, her mother-in-law quite understandably wants to know how Ruth has got on with her approach to Boaz. I say “quite understandably” because she is naturally interested in the outcome for Ruth, but also she is concerned for herself. She can of course see that Ruth is laden with grain – a good sign and an encouragement – but is this gift some kind of closing – a brush off from Boaz – or is it a beginning of something more – a blessing to mark a future and more complete blessing?

Naomi has done all that she can do and now has to trust in the providence of God again for the outcome.

#### **Learning point:**

When we are faced with the challenges of our daily life and of our walk with God we should not just sit in comfort, or even in discomfort, and simply wait to see what God will do – we have a responsibility to do all that we should to progress things – we should look at what is before us – consider what the Lord teaches us from His Word – do as much as we are able in line with His Word – pushing at doors and pressing forward with what is in front of us, and then – having done as much as we are able – we should trust God for the outcome whatever that outcome might be.

God is the bearer of a much greater wisdom than we have, so we must rest on His providential plan being outworked in accordance with that wisdom. So often we get frustrated and we then are at risk of going down the path of trying to manipulate things to get our own way – that is a senseless endeavour and one that will be more likely to lead to our experiencing the discipline of the Lord. Better that we do as much as we can and then trust God with the outcome and be content in that outcome.

With regard to Naomi, we need to remember that the kinsman relationship is through Elimelech and so in reality the kinsman connection is first of all to Naomi and not to Ruth, but because of her love and concern for Ruth, she has chosen to forfeit her own claim to the levirate right and allowed Ruth to take the opportunity that has arisen. This route will be more likely to secure the family’s future, as Ruth is of child bearing age and Naomi is aware that Ruth has made a commitment of love to her that is virtually guaranteed to mean that if Ruth’s future is secure then Naomi’s will be also.

The questions that remain therefore, are:

1. Has Boaz accepted the responsibility for Ruth?
2. Will this arrangement actually be one that will in fact provide for Naomi’s future?

The response comes in the form of the news that Ruth shares with her, and the gift that Boaz has sent. In both cases it is an emphatic yes. However, there is the one unknown matter that has cropped up and needs to be considered – that of the closer kinsman – this needs to be resolved before the future is completely certain. Nevertheless, the news for Naomi is good – one way or another the women will be cared for, and she has reason to rejoice.

This comment about Ruth not going back “empty-handed” to Naomi, stands in opposition to the comment of Naomi in 1:21 where Naomi says that; “I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty” – Naomi is no longer to be empty – the discipline that followed on from the disobedience of Elimelech for which she would not be personally responsible, since she was following her husband, was followed by Naomi choosing, with her sons, to stay in Moab after her husband died, so bringing further discipline on the family. The result was that when she did finally return, she returned empty – however the consequence of disobedience has now been reversed by the providence of God.

This gift of grain that has been given to Ruth and sent to include Naomi, then stands “as a guarantee of the inheritance yet to be revealed”

**Learning point:**

Here again we see the picture of the kinsman redeemer that is a foreshadowing of the work of Christ – as our kinsman redeemer, Christ following His death and resurrection ascended to be with the Father leaving us a guarantee of the inheritance yet to be revealed [see Ephesians 1:13-14](#) – here we see that guarantee in the word “arrhabon” – the guarantee for those who are truly redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who come in to remain in us at the point of our salvation – when we are sealed by Him. This is not something that we have to wait for as a subsequent event – it is immediate – the scripture makes that perfectly clear.

Here in the text in Ruth we see a reflection of this same picture of the “arrhabon” – property given in advance as a guarantee – Boaz gives the grain to Ruth and Naomi – as a guarantee – almost like an engagement ring if you like, an advance gift as a token of the forthcoming marriage of Ruth to Boaz assuming that the closer relative is not willing – likewise the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our glorious inheritance in Christ – the inheritance of an eternity in Glory with Him – the marriage of the Bride to the Lamb – of the true Church to Christ. Our Kinsman Redeemer.

[Verse 18](#) – “She replied, “Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today.” – As the chapter closes we see Naomi again assuring Ruth that Boaz will move quickly and efficiently to sort things out. Naomi has full confidence that he will not loiter over the situation, but will get on o things and resolve the matter quickly for them all. She has already shown that she has a very high regard for the man’s integrity and reliability, so she has no hesitation in encouraging Ruth to relax now and trust Boaz, and wait for the matter to be resolved.

### Study 13

#### Ruth 4:1-8

Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by.

So Boaz said, "Turn aside, friend; sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down. 2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down.

3 Then he said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. 4 So I thought I would tell you of it and say, 'Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.' If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you." And he said, "I will redeem it."

5 Then Boaz said, "The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance."

6 Then the redeemer said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

7 Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. 8 So when the redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself," he drew off his sandal.

We ended the last study with Naomi's assurance to Ruth that she could rest easy for now as she was confident that Boaz would swiftly resolve matters regarding this un-named closer relative and whatever way the matter would be resolved the estate of Elimelech and the future matrimonial state of Ruth would both be sorted out quickly – either the closer relative would accept the responsibility or Boaz himself had guaranteed to be the redeemer.

Boaz has assured Ruth that he would get onto it and get it sorted out that day and Ruth rests in that promise.

Verses 1-2 – "Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, "Turn aside, friend; sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down. 2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down." – True to his promise to Ruth, Boaz is up and onto his task when day breaks. He goes to the city gate and waits for the key players. Why the city gate?

#### **Several reasons:**

1. The city gate was a place of meeting – sometimes there would be a meeting room – something like a town hall at the gate – or at the least an open air gathering place.
2. This is a place of gathering for the Elders of the city so that people who wanted disputes to be settled or to discuss matters with those in authority, knew where they would be found. (See the description of the virtuous wife in Proverbs 31:10-31 and note particularly verse 23; see also Joshua 20:4; 2 Samuel 19:8 )
3. There would be stone benches where the men would sit and talk

4. The passers-by would often rest on these benches either on their way to or from the fields or to and from the place where the threshing floor was situated.

5. Because of the knowledge that Boaz had of the closer relative of Elimelech, it would be reasonable to assume that he knew that this man would be one of these passers-by and he needs get hold of the relative and then draw together a suitable court of Elders to consider the situation.

Boaz, as we have already seen, is an Elder, possibly a chief man of the city, but of course as this involves him personally, he is unable to be the judge of the matter. He therefore needs to call together others to consider the facts and witness the outcome, so as to ensure that the law and traditions are correctly adhered to regarding the matter of the redemption of Elimelech's estate and the marriage of Ruth.

Sure enough – the relative is passing by – another illustration of the providence of God in the matter – and Boaz is able to draw him aside to discuss the subject, but first he needs his court.

Ten men – probably ten because that would make up a complete court under the tradition of the time. Certainly there was a requirement for ten men to be present before a synagogue service could be conducted, so this is considered to be a number that holds authority. The men – Elders of the town – were men to be trusted, are men with authority who can correctly judge that the matter is legally and adequately completed before them as suitable witnesses.

So Boaz, having gathered together the key people to resolve the issue, gets them all to sit down with him and consider the facts.

#### **Learning point:**

I guess that there is a learning point here about being seen to be right in the way we conduct our business before the world. We need to recognise that we are under the spotlight and just as Boaz does in this situation, we need to ensure that we conduct ourselves in a worthy manner when it comes to matters of law and traditions, not bringing our reputation or the reputation of the church and mostly of course the reputation of Christ into question by choosing to act in a questionable way and not being cavalier with the normal rules of acceptable behaviour.

Verses 3-4 – “Then he said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. 4 So I thought I would tell you of it and say, 'Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.' If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you." And he said, "I will redeem it."” – Now the hearing begins.

The first action that Boaz takes is to present the facts regarding the opportunity that exists for this relative, focussing on the benefit of the parcel of land and the opportunity that is available for the closer relative to redeem the land that belonged to Elimelech and making it clear that Boaz himself is the willing second claimant if the first man is unwilling or unable. Very clear and very fair. No deception and no trying to influence the man with other facts – not yet at any rate – just presenting the opportunity for the moment, in order to establish the man's right and his interest.

This is the matter of the kinsman redeemer rights – but it is only those that Boaz discusses at this stage. Sure enough – the man is very willing to add to his own estates by the annexing of this parcel of land from Elimelech and so he expresses that willingness before the court of Elders.

Verse 5 – “Then Boaz said, “The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.”” – Now comes phase 2 – the levirate responsibility.

I just want to spend a minute on this subject relating to Elimelech:

Elimelech was the patriarch of this family – now deceased but nevertheless the family are his heirs and progeny. The traditions of the Israelite people – in common with many other people – was that families should be continued – there should be a line of inheritance if it were at all possible.

Elimelech had property – land – in or around Bethlehem, but that land had been un-worked by him following the departure into Moab. However – while it is possible that it was simply left neglected – it is perhaps more likely that someone in the family somewhere will have worked that land and had some form of income from it – but of course that would have been for his benefit.

When – after the 10 year absence – Naomi came back with no sons to inherit the land it would not be likely to have reverted to her possession, since women did not normally inherit, however, she would have responsibility to ensure – as far as she was able – that either the land, or the benefit from the disposal of the land, passed to Elimelech’s descendants. But of course – in this instance Elimelech had no dependants. A quandary!

Nevertheless – and this is the most significant factor in this issue of levirate marriage – the patriarch, Elimelech had the indisputable right under these traditions and under the law of the people, to have an heir – if it were possible – and of course, in this instance it is possible because although Elimelech’s sons have also died, his daughter-in-law still lives – therefore if his daughter-in-law is to produce a son by the law of levirate marriage, that son is considered to be the grandson of Elimelech and Naomi and so he becomes the rightful heir to Elimelech’s estate, ensuring the continuation of the family line.

This does mean, however, that the man who acts in the place of the levirate husband will have the financial responsibility for the woman and child and any other attached relatives, but though he will have right to the use of any land, he is only holding it in trust for the son who is in reality the rightful owner.

It is in the light of these facts then that the closer relative is then presented with the information about the rest of the responsibility that falls to him should he proceed with the action as kinsman redeemer and redeem the lands of Elimelech. Namely this responsibility for the Moabite widow Ruth and providing a son for the family of Elimelech under the principle of the levirate law. Remember what I have just shared, that this responsibility carries with it not just the addition of a wife, but also this added part of a provision – if possible – of an heir to inherit the estates that will continue the line of Elimelech, yet his would be the responsibility for the continued support of the family. This is a much bigger prospect and a much bigger responsibility and a much smaller financial benefit, or perhaps even an actual financial liability.

Verse 6 – “Then the redeemer said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.”” – Now we see why the name and relationship of this man is not given in scripture – see the first verse from tonight’s study – the term we see in **verse 1** as “friend” is actually translated “such a one” in the KJV – “*ploniy almoniy*” in the Hebrew, which is a term that intentionally conceals the identity of a specific person. The Lord had no purpose in establishing the name of this man – he is one who rejects his responsibility in the face of a situation that may cause him to be disadvantaged. He does not wish to impair his own inheritance – in other words he is afraid that having a son for the family of Elimelech will lead to the reduction of his own estate.

His estate will be reduced by the purchase price of the land – which would be alright if that land was added to the value of the estate, but this levirate responsibility means that the land would pass to this heir of Elimelech and not onto estate for the inheritance of any other children – it may even mean that his personal estate would become divided.

Not only that, but as you can see, the additional responsibility of Ruth, her child to be that he would provide for the line of Elimelech, and possibly even Naomi as well, would be a further financial drain that he would have to absorb.

This is a clear indication that the idea of personal gain is fine with him, but the idea of kindness being extended to others at his cost was beyond what he was prepared to undertake – it would not suit his selfish purpose.

This is an unworthy man, unlike Boaz, and his name is not preserved in the Scriptures, possibly because of this unworthiness.

### **Learning point:**

This man's identity is lost in the far reaches of history because he felt it was more important to hang on to what he had in his life, than to be willing for it to be forfeited for the sake of obedience to the will/law of God.

There is a message in this for us and for today – the Lord Himself says that coming to Him – coming through the narrow gate – is hard and many will strive to enter but few will find it [Luke 13:24](#). The fact is that if we – or anyone – come to Christ wanting salvation, but are unwilling to let go of everything for the sake of being obedient to His command, then we will not find the satisfaction of true salvation. If we come to Christ holding on to our agenda, our desires, our ambitions, our habits, our sins, or even the good things, being unwilling to lay them on the alter before Him then we will not find salvation. The best we will attain is a pointless hope in our own delusions that will lead us into hell.

Therefore, back to the text, in view of this risk, the man immediately rejects this whole idea and would rather not have the land at all with these strings attached, so he forgets the whole thing and passes his right to Boaz right there in that civil court situation before the Elders of the city. Boaz has shown wisdom at every step and his plan to ensure the future well-being of Ruth and Naomi is confirmed by the legal support of the 10 Elders of the city who have been called to witness the decision of the closer relative.

[Verses 7-8](#) – “Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. 8 So when the redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself,” he drew off his sandal.” – Here, the picture here of the drawing off of the sandal appears to be one of a rather quaint tradition of contract exchange in a civil court situation – but the original example that we read was one of public disgrace of the one who turned away from his responsibility under the law. Let's look at it again just to remind ourselves – [Deuteronomy 25:7-10](#).

So we can see that in this situation of the setting aside of the responsibility of the levirate law and kinsman redeemer – there is the shadow of that custom that remains here – but it is clearly not the full custom – the one that shames the man who will not accept his responsibility - this may possibly be an indication of a lessening of the harsh judgement and punishments of the law because of a general decline in the way the law was applied showing a decay that is reflected in the casual influences of the times of the judges – remember the phase that repeats through the period of the judges – [“In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” Judges 21:25](#).

Whether this is the case or not, the matter is concluded by this rather strange, but nevertheless official act that has become the custom of the time, and it is carried out in the public forum at the gate before the Elders of the city therefore it is an action that satisfies those laws and customs, thereby freeing Boaz to move forward with his plan to marry Ruth.



Again we see that same principle at work as we have seen before – our responsibility is to act correctly and trust God for the outcome, knowing that He will fulfil His plan in the right way.

### Study 14

#### Ruth 4:9-12

Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon.

10 Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day."

11 Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, 12 and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman."

Following on from last week's study when we looked at the way that Boaz resolved the issue of Ruth and Naomi's future by bringing the other relative before the customary "civil hearing" of the Elders at the gate – the way is now clear for Boaz to press on and complete his promise to Ruth and become both her kinsman redeemer and her levirate husband.

Last week we looked at the public shame relating to the original treatment given in [Deuteronomy 25:7-10](#) regarding a failure of a man to obey his responsibility under the law, to act as kinsman redeemer and levirate – but I didn't explain about the tradition of why this rather odd behaviour of the sandal being drawn off and handed on to the other person was carried out in this way.

So – before we move on let me just explain that:

Back in [Genesis 13:17](#) and also in [Joshua 1:3](#) we see similar terminology being used both for Abraham and for Joshua – let's just look there.

In both situations the Lord told them that wherever they tread, or walk, or place their foot, **or – in effect – place their sandal**, the Lord will give them the land on which they stand as an inheritance for them to possess.

It is this relationship between the sandal treading on the land and the possession of that land within a particular family that led to this tradition where, the land of a person's right of inheritance, was to pass from one person to another – symbolised by the passing of the sandal which was deemed to have trodden upon the land of possession. Both the sandal and the land being passed to new ownership. The sandal would then be retained as a confirmation of the correct completion of the transaction.

#### **How fascinating is that?**

This un-named closer relative then – in doing what he did as he passed his sandal to Boaz, symbolised that he was passing his own right of inheritance to the land of the family of Elimelech, on to Boaz to take possession of for the future generation

The matter of the public disgrace that was referred to in the passage in Deuteronomy, was something that should be carried out by the rebuked widow as retribution upon the unwilling relation, because he has publically rejected her – but of course in this particular situation, the matter is dealt with before the Elders as a matter of decision between the two male relatives – Boaz and the other man – and so the widow – Ruth – was not directly involved and so does not take action to shame the relative.

Verse 9 – “Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon.” – The confirmation of the first step – his public commitment to buy the estate of Elimelech and his sons, resting it from the care of Naomi, so that he could take responsibility for it, and for its future disposition, as required.

Remember that “the land and all that belonged to Elimelech” was not in the ownership of Naomi, but she is the link to the estates worth – she has been the custodian of the claim to the estate since the death of the men of the family – awaiting, and even actively seeking, the opportunity to establish the male line of inheritance, by the right of levirate marriage. Now that opportunity is here and Boaz is purchasing the estate – not for himself – but for the son that he hopes to bear on behalf of Mahlon to be Elimelech’s grandson.

**There is a possibility that Matthew Henry picks up which is interesting.**

We have said that the land may have been uncultivated and after 10 years it may have become waste ground, or possibly that it had been farmed by a relative who may have just cleared the harvest, so that the ground was again available for disposal, for the benefit of the estate, however, Matthew Henry observes that the land may actually have been sold prior to Elimelech’s family’s departure from Bethlehem.

It may well be that – since they had not anticipated coming back during the time of famine – or maybe even longer – they will have raised as much money for the land as they could get by selling it under the Israelite law. This Israelite law dictates that when land is sold by a family, it has to be released back to the family who sold it after a period of 7x7 years 49 years – so in the 50<sup>th</sup> year on the day of Atonement – see [Leviticus 25:8-17](#), the 50<sup>th</sup> year being the year of jubilee – when any possession is ended, thereafter the land is restored to the family and remains in the family for the future inheritance.

The land of a particular family was important, since it is land that has deemed to be given by God in the distribution of the land, the distribution that is explained in [Joshua Chapter 14](#) carried out by Moses and then Joshua following the taking of the Promised Land, with Joshua leading them, after the exodus from Egypt and the 40 years wandering in the desert.

Under this Jubilee law, any sale of the land would be like the leasehold sale of land or premises today, and would be on a lease for a maximum period of just 50 years, so the cost of redeeming the land would reduce over that 50 years period as the remaining lease value diminished. As the text in Deuteronomy states – the cost of redemption reducing year on year to replace the lost income that would have been produced for the lessee from the harvesting of the crops from the land over the remaining unused years of the lease.

The absence of the family for over 10 years may have meant that, since the land was probably sold this way on a 50 year lease, there would be a cost to Boaz to redeem the land of possibly equivalent to up to 40 years value of crops. A large sum.

On this basis – the statement that Boaz makes concerning the buying of the land from the hand of Naomi, may have involved him in paying for – or “redeeming” the lease from the person to whom it was sold when the family were away. The text does not make this absolutely clear either way – but this would certainly make it easier to understand why

Naomi was unable to consider farming the land on their return to Bethlehem, since she would not have been in a position to redeem the lease herself – therefore, she needed the kinsman redeemer to act on behalf of the family. Enter Boaz.

**Verse 10 – “Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day.”** – Included in this is the very means of that continuing line, Elimelech’s widowed daughter-in-law Ruth, whom Boaz is to marry – by this time we have become aware that this is not a marriage that is only for the convenience and the tradition and law, but also for the delight of both Boaz and Ruth as we have watched, over the last couple of chapters, their admiration for each other grow.

We have seen Ruth speaking of Boaz with respect and honour – perhaps even excitement as she has told Naomi of the developing connection between them. And equally we have read of the great respect and generous concern that Boaz has for Ruth – not just for her as a woman of good reputation, but beyond that – providing food for her as she worked in the fields, supplementing her gleaning by generosity above and beyond the call of duty, ensuring that she was safe and overseeing that safety through his employees.

Then – going beyond these generous behaviours to express the delight that he felt over her “kindness” to him by choosing him as the means of honouring her dead husband and being willing to offer herself to him as a bride rather than going after younger men.

Here again – in this verse – we see Boaz showing his full understanding of his responsibility in this matter and his willingness to fulfil the calling that is upon him, to continue the line of Mahlon and “perpetuate his name”. A real contrast to the unknown relative who was all in favour of personal gain, but quickly lost interest when it looked like he might not benefit, but was facing the potential of considerable personal cost.

#### **Learning point:**

Last week when we looked at the thought processes of the unknown relative. We considered the fact that it is hard to go through the narrow door ([Luke 13:24](#)).

The man was put off because he was unwilling to let go of what he had for the sake of being obedient to God’s law. But this week I want us to consider the obedience of Boaz to that same law of God, and as we do so, let us look together at the passage in the following chapter in Luke – [Luke 14:15-33](#):

This passage considers the issue of the cost of that obedience to the Lord.

#### **Look at what is being said here:**

It is no good to simply say we want to follow Christ – that is said with monotonous regularity by many who have no sense of the true cost of discipleship.

That is the tragedy of a false profession that leads to the situation we have today where, as it has been said, the church worldwide could have as few as 5% of its members who are true Christians heading for glory and the remaining 95% are the deluded, who are still in their sin and heading for eternal judgement.

What a shocking assessment and indictment on church in this generation!

There is a cost to discipleship. As I have said before, when quoting brighter men than I am, **becoming a follower of Jesus Christ costs us nothing – except for every single thing, for every moment, for the rest of our life!**

When we look at these verses in **Luke 14**, it is important to see what the Lord is saying: He is saying that He must be first in our lives – before our possessions (**verse 18 – I have bought a field**), before our work (**verse 19 – I have bought five yoke of oxen**), even before our family (**verse 20 – I have married a wife; and 26 – hate his own parents, wife, children and siblings**); and notice that it is the Lord Himself who says that anyone who stands back from this level of commitment, is not one who will be His disciple – His follower – cannot be one who purchased by His blood and redeemed by His sacrifice – let us not be fooled by the liberal ethos of the age that suggests that you can have salvation without Christ being Lord!

**He does not take 10%, 20% 50% or even 75% - it is 100% or nothing!**

That is the true cost of salvation to us and it is the cost of obedience – anyone not willing will fade into the obscurity of history and face the judgement of God.

The question we all need to consider for ourselves is the same one:

I have often challenged each of us to consider the reality of our faith, but tonight my challenge is to the willingness of each of us to, not just count the cost, but to consider if we are really willing to face that cost of putting the Lord first and being obedient to Him and to His call on our lives, over and above every other call that is upon us from the world – from our possessions – from our work, or even from our family.

In this situation that we have been considering, both Boaz and his relative, took time to consider the cost of obedience to God in this matter, and Boaz – unlike his relative – came to the conclusion that he was willing to pay the price – to accept the cost of commitment.

Back to the text:

Boaz called the Elders to come together as witnesses to the proceedings that he was about to go through with this other man. Now that has now been done there is one final part that he needs them to play, so before them he makes this commitment that we have in these two verses, and having clarified before them the details of his understanding, he again calls them to confirm that they bear witness on his behalf.

**Verse 11-12 – “Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, 12 and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman.””** – The Elders confirm themselves as official witnesses in line with the request of Boaz and then comes this broad and strange statement of blessing from the Elders at the gate. Let’s look at what is being said here:

**“May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel.”** Rachel and Leah – these were the wives of Jacob, who, together with their 2 handmaidens, mothered the 12 sons, plus an unknown number of daughters – the 12 sons became the patriarchs of the 12 tribes of Israel. This then is a blessing that calls upon the Lord to bring about fertility in Ruth and Boaz to the result that there would be the birth of sons. Remember that Ruth was married to Mahlon for up to 10 years (not exactly sure if it was all of the 10 years they were in Moab) and yet with no children; and Boaz is many years older than she is and yet we have no information regarding his having any children either. The provision of children is the primary point of becoming a levirate husband – so this is an important part of the blessing that is given in these verses.

The next part is a blessing of continued worthiness both within his clan – the Judahites from Ephrathah – and within his community – Bethlehem.

Then we get this – “and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah” – what is this referring to?

Judah is one of the sons of Jacob that I mentioned a few moments ago and Tamar bore a son to Judah as a result of the law of levirate marriage, Perez (see 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 2:5). This is an historical reference to Boaz’s own family, as Boaz is a descendant of Judah through Perez. The illustration and blessing that is stated here is a reminder that the fulfilment of this law of levirate marriage, is evidenced in his own family as having been of great benefit in ensuring the continuation of the line for both family and inheritance without which, this particular line down to Boaz himself, would not have existed. It would not have come about and Boaz himself would not have been born.

This is of course important to Boaz and it has importance to all of those involved in this line of the family – but just to leave you with something to anticipate, the real importance of this whole situation is something that we will discover more about later in our studies of the book of Ruth – if you have not already discovered it – but please don’t leapfrog to the end – there is more to find yet.

### Study 15

#### Ruth 4:13-17

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son.

14 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel!

15 He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him."

16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse.

17 And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Last time we were together we saw the conclusion of Boaz resolving the issue of the closer relative and he confirmed that the Elders were content to act as witnesses that he had completed all that was required under the law and traditions of the people for him to settle the issue of the future for Ruth and for Naomi

The Elders and the people of the town – we saw – expressed a blessing on Boaz and upon the union of Boaz and Ruth.

As we considered the issues relating to the action of Boaz – particularly looking at the fact that it was going to cost him personally to fulfil his promise to Ruth – we extended that to look at the cost of obedience – we saw that both Boaz and the other un-named relative had considered the cost of obedience to God in the matter before them, and that the other relative was not willing to undertake that cost and so turned aside – whereas Boaz was willing to undertake the cost.

For us – we considered the cost of obedience to the Lord in following Him and looked at the relevant passage in [Luke 14](#)

Today we move on with the narrative of this history of Boaz and Ruth in what I think is the penultimate study in this series.

**Verse 13 – “So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son.”** – One verse – just a few words – and yet a momentous event in the lives of these 2 people and even 3 people when we consider Naomi is part of this family who will be directly affected by this marriage.

Here we see God’s hand at work fulfilling His divine plan by the completion of this miraculous act in the lives of these 2 people. It is right to consider it as a miraculous event – remember that we considered last time that Ruth – although married for anything up to 10 years to Mahlon – had not born any children to him and neither is there any record of Boaz having fathered any children even though he must have been married previously. The fact that as one of the city leaders and leaders of the people, he had to be a married man in the society of the time. Tradition has it that he had become a widower some time prior to Ruth and Naomi’s return. Yet this conception of a child is said with so much ease; **“And he went in to her, and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son.”** God fulfilled His plan – no indication of any long wait – quite simply they came together and God gave them a son.

This conception was a miracle, but then conception is always the work of God – there has never been the conception of a child except as a miracle by God’s intention – even those children who are conceived through the sinfulness of a man or woman can only produce a child in the womb because God ordains that the elements of this union between this man and woman will result in a child – that is another of those issues that leave us with more questions than answers, but it is fact nevertheless – we do not create a child – God does – and we need to understand that it is a child – not as some abortion clinics would suggest “womb tissue”.

**Verse 14 – “Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel!””** – Notice that the women of the community are not talking to Ruth as we might expect – they are talking to Naomi.

Since the time Elimelech died and then Mahlon and Chilion died, Naomi has been without an heir and without a child to look forward to sharing her later years with. Her hopes have been on the one thing that she has worked towards – that she could perhaps find security and a new life for her precious daughter-in-law Ruth, and maybe through devoting her life to that endeavour she would not only bring joy to Ruth but also bring hope back to her family.

Over the last few months we have talked a lot about the worthiness and faithfulness of Ruth and of Boaz, but perhaps not so much the faithfulness of Naomi

Naomi has been:

- Faithful to her husband in following him to Moab – to a strange land,
- Faithful to her sons in teaching their new wives the way of the Jews, teaching them about God, the laws of the Israelite nation and staying with them in Moab, even after her husband died, despite knowing the loss was at the hand of God, disciplining the family for leaving Israel in the first place,

- Faithful to her son's widows – in seeking their best interests even at cost to herself, encouraging them to find new secure lives in Moab even if it meant being left alone. Orpah left, but Ruth stayed with her, but soon Naomi was again showing faithfulness to Ruth in trying to establish a redeemer for her,
- Faithful to God in choosing to return to Israel, in sacrificially serving her family, in holding true to her faith in God even when she had suffered so much loss because of His hand of judgement upon her family
- Faithful to her family even though the hope of a line was slim – trusting God that He would restore that hope by His own miraculous intervention in the lives of Ruth and Boaz
- And now – at last - Naomi is reaping a reward for that continued faithfulness as God brings blessing to her through blessing Boaz and Ruth with a son.

**The longed for child that perhaps she thought would never be – now is a reality – she is blessed and knows it – the women of the city know it to – so they bless the God who has brought such blessing to her.**

This observation of the women that Naomi has been blessed with a redeemer is completely in line with what we have previously discovered.

Ruth is the one who marries Boaz and the one who bears the child by him, Boaz is her “goel”, her redeemer, and her levirate husband.

#### **Another redeemer:**

However, the child is the “goel” (or redeemer) for Naomi, the child is now the closer relative to Naomi than Boaz, and this child, having been born to fulfil the requirement for the family of Naomi as the continuation of the male line from Elimelech, is seen as Naomi's redeemer.

This grandson to Naomi will carry on the name of her son Mahlon “at the gate” – this does not mean that the child will be called by Mahlon's name – he will carry another name, as we shall see – but it does mean that he is the one who continues the family line, as the one who is considered to have been the son of Mahlon, down through Ruth and Boaz, to inherit the family property.

Boaz was the kinsman redeemer who through his commitment to be obedient to God in this matter of bringing a son to the family through Ruth, has brought this redeemer into being – the one who will eventually bear the inheritance from Elimelech.

The women of the town call for a blessing to be upon this child, that his name might be known – **renowned in all Israel**. As we shall see – that blessing is fulfilled and not just renowned in all Israel, but renowned in all of Christendom.

**Verse 15 - “He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”** – The blessing continues. **“He shall be to you a restorer of life”** – following the death of Elimelech and then Mahlon and Chilion the line of the family was, to all intent and purpose as good as dead – ended – gone from history – but this child restores life to the family which will now continue for future generations.

“A nourisher of your old age” – the ongoing family among the Israelite nation held their aged relatives in high regard and cared for them in old age. The expectation is that this is now possible for Naomi to benefit from, through the birth of this boy, **since it was part of both the tradition and the law** that she should be cared for in her old age

#### The commandments:

The commandment of God that formed part of the moral law of the people that was the first of the laws that came with a promise was the basis of this hope and confidence. **Exodus 20:12 “Honour your father and your mother that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”** Caring for aged parents is commanded and is commended in Scripture; and it is not set aside by the Lord Jesus.

#### Learning point:

As we have previously considered in the Sunday sermons series from the Sermon on the Mount, the law given to Israel comprised three parts; the civil law, the moral law, and the ceremonial law, making a total of 613 laws.

- The civil law was for the people of Israel at that time for the administration of the nation.
- The ceremonial law was specifically for the Israelite nation too – God was their King – they were what is known as a theocracy, so their ceremonial laws related to their service to God as their nation’s LORD and Ruler.
- However, the moral law was different – the moral law is presented to us in the form of the Ten Commandments – and that was not just for Israel at that time in history – 9 out of 10 of the Ten Commandments continue through into the church today, having been confirmed by Jesus (**Matthew 22:36-40 and Mark 10:17-22**); and by the Apostles (**example Romans 13:8-12**); into the church age and this commandment, to honour your father and mother is one of those laws, so we have a responsibility to honour the Lord by honouring His command in this area. **Discuss...**

#### Back to the text:

Then the women continue by observing that Ruth – “**is more to you than seven sons**” – high praise indeed for this Moabite woman from the women of Bethlehem. This is not just because she has given birth to this child, but also because of the way that Ruth has continued to honour her Mother-in-law and the memory of her late husband.

This reference to “seven sons” is not just a random number – seven is the acknowledged in Israel and in Scripture as the number of perfection, so what is being said by these women, is that for Naomi – in having this one woman, Ruth as her daughter-in-law, she has more than the perfect family, even a family that would be seen as ideal, which would be represented by her having 7 sons (**see 1 Samuel 2:5**)

**Verse 16 – “Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse.”** – In this situation it is not likely that the extended family were living together, although it could be the case. It is likely that the child was, after a fashion, given as a gift to Naomi by the Daughter-in-law who loved her and had carried the child from Boaz as the heir for Naomi to the estates of Elimelech. It does not necessarily mean that the child was completely given up into the hands of Naomi, but that in some way Ruth was effectively making Naomi a part-time foster mother of her grandson.

Naomi became the nurse for the child – this is about caring for him, teaching him about the family and the traditions, looking after his needs, by growing him as though he were a child of Mahlon, which he is legally. This does not mean that Ruth gave up her involvement with the child – clearly she would have been needed in the care to some level as



Naomi could not do all that a mother could do in terms of nursing him. Nevertheless, Naomi was probably more of a mother figure for the boy and as he grew he would become increasingly the son of her home, identifying with Mahlon as his “legal father”.

**Verse 17 – “And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.”** – Here is the reveal for the story – Boaz and Ruth were the great-grandparents of David – the David who became King of Israel.

I’m not going to dwell long on this because there is quite a lot that I want to look at next week in relation to this revelation of the heritage, but for now – simply to note the fact of the person who was Ruth’s son was King David’s grandfather.

The women of the town name the child Obed – this was not a normal thing for the town’s women to do – but in this instance this action again reflects purpose and meaning. As we have already discovered from going through the book so far, names at this time were not just a matter of parental preference – no “Bluebell” and “Bubbles” like the silliness of today.

At this time names reflected something of the situation or circumstances of the family or the times, or perhaps of the expectation that those who named the child had regarding the future.

That is why we have such examples in the Old Testament times shown to us in Scripture as:

- The ones we have already seen – Elimelech, Mahlon, Chilion, Naomi and Ruth and the reference that Naomi made to Mara back in **chapter 1:20**
- “Ichabod”, meaning “The Glory has departed” is found in **1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 4:21** – the name that was given to her new-born son by the widowed daughter-in-law of Eli the High Priest – the baby was born after both of Eli’s disobedient sons had been by God and killed in battle, when the people of Israel were defeated and the Ark of the Covenant was captured by the Philistines.
- “Jezreel”, “No Mercy”, and “Not my people”, names given to the children of Hosea in **Hosea 1:1-9**, at around 700 BC, when Israel were facing judgement for their disobedience before the time of the Assyrian and Babylonians exiles.
- The name “Hosea” itself is also an example – it is the same as “Joshua” (**see Numbers 13:8 c/f Joshua 1:1**) – a third form of this name in our translations is “Jesus” – it is the name “Yeshua” and means “Saviour” or “The Saviour of My people”.
- And of course we know about others too such as Peter (the pebble or small chip of rock); and Barnabas (the son of encouragement), both of which we will find in the New Testament among others.
- This can make a fascinating study if you are of a mind – what does your name mean?...

“Obed” means “the serving one” and the reason is that the expectation of the women of the community is that as the boy grew he would serve Naomi and care for her in her old age. This name appears in another form in the name of the prophet “Obediah” which also means serving one but the last part of his name indicates that for him the one he is serving is God, but Obed is not said to be “serving God”, but serving Naomi so he is named simply “Obed” – “the serving one”.

## Study 16

### Ruth 4:18-22

Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron,

19 Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab,

20 Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon,

21 Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed,

22 Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

Last week we ended the narrative of Ruth – just 80 verses to cover the story and the last 5 tonight. I guess it was an expected ending, even if you hadn't read it before – as in all the best stories – the man got the girl in the end and everyone lived happily ever after - perhaps.

Well not quite story book – because this is real life not a story book – nevertheless – the plans of Naomi did prove worthwhile and her hope for the redemption of her family line was satisfied with the marriage of Boaz and Ruth and the birth of their first-born son Obed, who was to become the continuation of the line of Elimelech and Mahlon so that their name was not “blotted out at the gate”.

So this week is the final mopping up of the book of Ruth, covering these last 5 verses – a glimpse at this part of the genealogy of Boaz.

### Genealogies

I am well aware that for the vast majority of Christians, there is an inclination to skip through Bible genealogies, perhaps noting just a few of the names, but because so many of them are hard to pronounce and even harder to remember, these genealogies do not tend to hold the attention of the average person.

I know too that there are people who really struggle with following and understanding family structures and relational links. So as I go through these last verses of the book, I will try not to make the subject too complicated – but I believe that it would be wrong of me to skip over what is here and I don't want any of us to miss some wonderful facts, which are not perhaps immediately clear by just reading the verses and this list of names, but are hidden in the background – behind those names, several of which come up in other contexts.

We need to remember that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God. The verses in **2 Timothy 3:16-17** say that; **"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."**

So we can reasonably assume that even rather difficult passages – like these genealogies – are there for a purpose – so perhaps we can look – just a little more deeply – to see what we can find about the people mentioned and see what if anything we can learn from those discoveries.

To do this, it is my plan in this final study on the book of Ruth to look at these verses and compare them with some other passages in Scripture, to try to bring a few facts into the light, so that we can discover a few “wows” and perhaps a learning point or two.

First though – before we get started I just want to confirm that as we have been following the events of the history of Ruth, what we have been studying is part of the life history of one of the ancestors of Our Precious Lord Jesus Christ – He is referred to as the Son of David because – as we will see during this evening – both His Step-father Joseph, and His Mother Mary, were children from the line of David – King David who was Ruth's great grandson.

**Verse 18 - "Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron"** - We took a brief look at Perez a few weeks ago when we discovered that Perez was the son of a levirate situation between Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar. Reason enough for Boaz to value the concept of the levirate law, as he is a son of that line from Judah, which would not even exist if it were not for this same levirate law.

Okay – we’ve considered Perez already – the product of a levirate situation – but it went wrong at first – Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah, enacted the part of a street prostitute to trap her father-in-law Judah, because he had failed to provide for her and had potentially left her without a redeemer (**Genesis 38:6-29**). As we have seen, this is no minor matter for the people of Israel.

So we have Judah – a person who proved to be unreliable in his duty, and also showed himself to be an immoral man who went to a person he thought to be a prostitute, and we also have Tamar, a woman who was a schemer, who was not afraid to debase herself to get what she considered to be her due.

The line of David – the line of Christ, the Messiah was continued through these two people that demonstrated these failures and sins – Judah and Tamar prove that:

Our sovereign God uses men and women despite their failures and even through their sin and their deceptions and their outrageous behaviour – redeeming their evil for a good outcome and often redeeming them as well in the process, to the satisfaction of His divine purpose.

Even the evil of mankind will never stop God fulfilling His plan to His glory

**Verses 19-20 – “Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, 20 Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon,”** – Here we go with those odd sounding names. Hezron, the son of Perez was the father of Ram – Ram’s son was Amminadab and his son was Nahshon. These names crop up throughout the history of Israel but with nothing of particular note.

Now let’s consider the generation that followed Nahshon – his son.

Nahshon’s son was a man with a slightly less unusual name – although one that we might better attach to Scotland than Israel – Salmon.

Salmon was the father of Boaz. Come to **Matthew 1:5** and we’ll find out who was the mother of Boaz. Salmon’s wife was Rahab

Who is Rahab – look at [Joshua 2:1-21](#) – Rahab was a gentile prostitute who lived in the pagan city of Jericho, who knew that the Israelites would take Jericho so she hid the spies and saved her own life and that of her family by this act of kindness.

The line of David – the line of Christ the Messiah was continued through a gentile prostitute who stood in opposition to her kinsmen and lied to protect the spies from the nomadic tribes of Israel. She became a faithful wife of Salmon.

Our Sovereign God sometimes chooses to redeem even a lying prostitute and use them for His glory

**Verse 21 – “Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed,”** – As we have seen, Ruth was a woman of the line of Moab – the incestuous son of Lot and his daughter.

Also we should be aware that Moab was the nation whose king Balak sought to bring a curse on Israel through the prophet for hire Balaam ([Numbers 22-23](#)) so he could destroy them in battle and because of these two situations, the Moabite race was cursed by God so that no Moabite was allowed to enter into the worshipping assembly of God for 10 generations – as we saw – Ruth was at the very least the 11<sup>th</sup> generation from the curse

**So, the picture so far is this:**

**The line of David – the line of Christ the Messiah – was continued through an unreliable, immoral man – a woman who was willing to deceive to get her own way – a woman who was a retired prostitute and liar and – another woman from the line of an incestuous father-daughter relationship a member of a cursed gentile nation who were previously the enemies of Israel, whom He redeemed to become a faithful wife of Boaz.**

**Verse 22 – “Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.”** – And so the line goes on down – through Obed to Jesse and on down to David

Before Judah we have the deceiver Jacob – and before him the liar and a coward Isaac ([Genesis 26:7](#)) who followed the same deception as his father Abraham who also was a liar and a coward ([Genesis 12:13](#)).

We know about David and his adultery and his scheming in the murder of Uriah the Hittite – the first husband of Bathsheba.

**God uses the evil of men and women for His own good purpose and no failure or sin of mankind will ever prevent the plan of God from being fulfilled.**

The line of Christ is the sacred line that came from Adam through Seth – down through Enoch and Noah, through Shem and on down through Abraham.

Failure and sin of every kind was redeemed by God through the Messiah long before the Messiah was born in this very line

**Who can be redeemed?**

Anyone who God draws to Himself, through His grace, for His purpose, and it is never on the merit of the individual concerned. Liar, deceiver, failure, coward, schemer, prostitute, the cursed, the gentile, the womaniser, the adulterer, the murderer. There is no-one outside of the power of God to redeem and no-one who He cannot use for His glory.

### **Messianic genealogies – some other facts**

The line goes on from David and if we look at 2 passages – one in [Matthew 1:1-16](#); and the other in [Luke 3:23-38](#); we will see 2 different genealogies.

In Matthew we have the genealogy of Joseph the step-father of Jesus, and in Luke the genealogy of Mary the Mother of Jesus. Both Joseph and Mary were offspring of King David in order to fulfil God's plan and in order to ensure that there could be no dispute about the right of King Jesus as the Messiah of the line of King David as rightful heir to the throne of David and the eternal throne of Promise the throne of God

Joseph was a son of the line of Solomon son of David as we see in [Matthew 1:6](#), but this connection was not enough – for 2 reasons – firstly Jesus was not Joseph's natural son – though this is not sufficient reason on its own to disqualify the connection since a Jewish man had the right to appoint his heir and that may not necessarily be his blood relative. It would be fully in order if perhaps he chose to appoint an adopted son as his heir over a son of the natural blood line.

However there was another reason why this line down to Joseph would not suffice on its own: In [Jeremiah 22:13-30](#) we read of an evil king, Coniah, of the line of David down through Solomon, who, although he had children, was to be treated as though he had none – God decreed that he forfeited the right to have any of his offspring on the throne of David.

Coniah is the king Jechoniah named in [Matthew 1:11](#) – the ancestor of Joseph, and he is the reason why the line of Joseph did not remain on the throne. Joseph was not a man who was recognised as king and neither was he known as a deposed rightful king – so although he was a son of the line of David and brought the royal connection down to Jesus, it was not sufficient in and of itself to prove the line and confirm the right for Jesus to be accepted as the rightful heir to David's throne – there needed to be more.

#### **How could that be achieved?**

As we have seen before on many occasions – Christ was to be the seed of the woman ([Genesis 3:15](#)) – therefore, for the true blood line connection to be there, the line through Mary had to be from David also – for without that continued line from David there was no connection of blood.

Mary is not actually referred to in the genealogy of Luke's Gospel because the line only refers to the males and where it is a woman the reference is to her husband rather than her. But it is the case nevertheless, that the Heli mentioned as father of Joseph in verse 23 was actually Mary's father, Joseph's father-in-law.

This blood line from David came through David's son Nathan and down through Mary, and that meant that Jesus was fully the blood relative of David. However – as the right of inheritance of royal line could not pass through the female line in isolation – it was necessary that there was a royal connection through the male line and thus Joseph had to be in the line of David to confirm this.

Each line had to exist and had to be provable for the true identity of the Son of David to be acceptable – it was – it was indisputable – and so when the rulers rejected the Christ – the Son of David the one who had been proven through His birth, which was available in the temple records, and His miracles, that rejection was without excuse ([Matthew 12:23-24](#)).

**The genealogies show us so much and mostly – in this passage through the book of Ruth – they show us that there is no condition of men and women that can ever exclude them from the power of the redemption of God or from being used by the Lord for His beautiful plan of bringing salvation to His chosen**

[“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost”; Luke 19:10](#)

**Who are the lost?**

They are those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life who will be redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, but from their birth until their time of redemption, they are lost and awaiting the restoration of their souls, and it does not matter who they are – or what they have done – or what nation they come from – or what evil they have committed – none of them will be lost.

Those whom He has named before the beginning of the world will be restored through the precious blood of Jesus – redeemed by the providence of God – redeemed whatever situation they have gotten themselves into or where ever they might be geographically

By the providence of God He fulfils His divine purpose and builds the bride for Christ – a bride that is made up of people of every kind and condition of men and women.

God brings His providence to bear redeeming men and women in order to complete His purpose, in just the same way as He brought His providence to bear upon Ruth so that she was redeemed through the grace of God and to the glory of God for His purpose in the line of the Messiah, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen