

## RUTH

***"What star of Messianic truth  
More beautiful than Gentile Ruth?  
In her the Gentiles find a place  
To share the hope of Judah's race;  
Now see from royal David's line  
One hope for Jew and Gentile shine!"***

The Interpreters' Bible gives the following outline of the book of Ruth:

1. Moab (1:1-18)
2. Bethlehem (1:19-22)
3. The Harvest (2:1-23)
4. The Threshing Floor (3:1-18)
5. The Gate (4:1-12)
6. Conclusion (4:13-22)

This outline is about the only conservative part of the commentary on this book. For the rest the interpreter, Louise Pettibone Smith, takes a very liberal stand on the background of the book. There is a strong influence of 'Higher Criticism' to be detected. Keil & Delitsch is more to my taste at this point.

In Sidlow Baxter's book 'Exploring the Book' the more idyllic outline is given:

- Chapter 1. Love's resolve: (Ruth's noble choice)
- Chapter 2. Love's response: (Ruth's lowly service)
- Chapter 3. Love's request: (Ruth's tender appeal)
- Chapter 4. Love's reward" (Ruth's marital joys)

The purpose of the book:

Undoubtedly the last section of the book (4:17-22) is the reason why the book was written and why it was placed in the canon of Scripture.

*Vs.17 "The women living there said, "Naomi has a son." And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David." Vs.22 "Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David." But an even more compelling reason for the inclusion of this book in the whole Bible is found in Matth 1:5,6 "Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, And Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife". It is the inclusion of Ruth in the genealogy of the Messiah, which gives the meaning and content to this book.*

Of course in the Old Testament days this latter truth was still hidden. It was the person of David, who gave reasons for the writing of Ruth, but the promise of the coming of the Messiah is written all over these pages. That was why offspring was so important, as well as the fact that a man's name should be kept alive in his children. The main reason for God's choice of Abraham and the people born from him, Israel, was to introduce the Son of God into the world. The promise to Abraham in Gen 12:3 "... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." had to do with the coming of Jesus. That was why the purity of the Jewish race was so important. See Mal. 2:14,15 - "You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not (the LORD) made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth." The KJV says "that he may seek godly seed". That was the main purpose for maintaining the purity of the Jewish race. That is why the 'levirat's marriage was instituted, as we read in Deut 25:5 -"If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her."

Probably of secondary importance, but yet a point that is clearly made in the book, is the fact that Ruth, as a Moabitess is integrated in the nation of Israel and even becomes an important link in the history of the nation and of the whole world. The curse on the Moabites, of which we read in Deut 23:3 (*No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation*) was cancelled in her

case. This shows that faith can break through concrete walls that were historically erected. It is true that Ruth was a Moabite woman and the curse was addressed to the male members of that nation. But her offspring would have been forbidden to worship God at the tabernacle, had it not been for her faith in Jehovah.

Of the four women mentioned in Matth.1 in Jesus' genealogy, Ruth is the only pure character. The other three had all a record of immoral behavior. She is one of the most shining women in the Old Testament.

### **The time of writing:**

Obviously the book could not have been written before the reign of David. Commentaries that are under the influence of 'Higher Criticism' talk about the post exile period, just a few centuries before the birth of Christ. There are some Aramaic expressions in the book, which should indicate this period. Keil and Delitsch reject this theory. The Aramaic words would indicate at the most that the version we possess is a later edition. People in later centuries, who would find a King James Bible published in our days, could come to the conclusion that this Bible was only written in the twentieth century. There is no reason to believe that the book was not written during the period David reigned.

### **Who wrote it?**

The author is not mentioned. The assumption that Samuel is the author, is nothing more than an assumption. It is even an unlikely one. It is more logical to believe that it was written during the time David was king over the twelve tribes, which was after Samuel's death.

### **Ruth's place in the canon:**

The Jews put the book with the 'Feast Scrolls'. The placement of Ruth following the book of Judges comes from the Septuagint. Since the story takes place during the days of the Judges, this makes sense.

## **ANALYSIS:**

### **1. Moab (1:1-18).**

The story actually begins in Bethlehem in Juda, where there is a famine in the land. Bethlehem means 'house of bread'. It is ironic that there would be a famine in the land which is flowing with milk and honey, in the house of bread. Ephratah means 'fruitful'. The book of Judges shows that such a situation is the result of spiritual decline in the nation. A condensation of this sad story is given in Judges 2:10-22. Some suggest that the story could be placed in the time of Gideon. But we don't know enough to be dogmatic about this. It could have happened during the many periods of disobedience in which Israel fell.

Against this background it is very encouraging to note that Naomi did not lose her faith in God. There is no indication that at any point she stayed away from the service of JHWH.

The background of the actual story is given in a few lines only. The place of origin of Elimelech and Naomi and their two sons Mahlon and Kilion is Bethlehem. They belonged to the tribe of Judah. The reason for the famine is not given. It could be weather or war. We are told that in Abraham's time there was a famine, which caused him to move temporarily to Egypt. In Gen 12:10 we read: "*Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.*" In Abraham's case there was no indication that he sought the Lord's counsel on this point. His going to Egypt was his own initiative. We get the impression that Elimelech went by his own counsel also. Very rarely do we turn to the Lord for advise in times of adversity. We only blame Him for what happens, as Naomi did. As it turns out Elimelech and his two sons die anyhow, although not from hunger. And they died under, what an Israelite would consider the worst conditions, without leaving behind a son to keep his name alive, to give him a share in the promise of the coming of the Messiah.

We gather that the boys were still very young when the family left Bethlehem and that the boys did not marry until after the death of their father. Then they married the two Moabite women, Ruth and Orpa. They lived there for another ten years and then both men died, without leaving any sons. If girls were born in these marriages, they are not mentioned. Sidlow Baxter in his book 'Exploring The Book', refers to Deut.7:3 as a proof that the marriage of Mahlon and Kilion to Moabite girls was forbidden. But in the context of Deut.7:1 Moab is not mentioned as one of the seven nations that God was going to expel or exterminate from Canaan for Israel's benefit.

The Moabites were descendants of Lot. They were the offspring of an incestuous union between Lot and his oldest daughter. During Israel's trek through the desert, the king of Moab invited Balaam to cast a spell on Israel. This turned out to become a blessing to the nation, rather than a curse, although later the Israelites fell into a snare

which Moab put up for them at Balaam's advice. For a while Israel was subject to Moab during the reign of king Eglon. But Eglon was assassinated by Ehud, who became one of the judges and for eighty years there was peace between Israel and Moab. We find this story in Judges 3:12-30. It seems more likely to me to place the book of Ruth in this period than in any other one during the time of the judges. But there is no way of knowing.

The opening phrase *"In the days when the judges ruled.."* is a clear indication that the story was put on paper when the period of the judges was history. Sidlow Baxter remarks pointedly that if the book dated from a post Davidic period it would be a remarkable omission that the names of David's sons, who ascended the throne after him, are not mentioned. It seems safe therefore to suppose that the book was written somewhere during David's reign.

Elimelech meant the trip to Moab as a temporary interruption of their life in Israel. He 'went to live for a while in the country of Moab.' Little did he know that he would never return. James points out how dangerous it is to make long-term plans. In James 4:13-16 we read: 'Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.'

We don't read that Elimelech indulged in such boasting, but he must have told Naomi that their departure was temporary. This kind of sin could have been prevented, had he realized that his time was in God's hand and had he consulted God on the issue. As it was Elimelech and his two sons migrated for good. They went to seek food and they lost their lives. Jesus' words in Matth. 6:25 are very pertinent in this respect: "Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?" And in Deut 8:3 we are reminded by Moses of the reason why God sometimes permits us to be hungry: "He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."

But in His unsearchable way, God created an eternal blessing out of man's disobedience. It is through the hardening of Israel that the fullness of the gentiles is brought in. As Paul says: "Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in." (Rom. 11:25b).

It was in Bethlehem, 'the house of bread', that God would give the bread of life to the world. There in the field of Ephratha would Jesus be born, the One who is the root and the offspring of David. And it was this place that Elimelech and his family left. And when more than ten years later Naomi returned, she blamed God for what had happened to her. In 1:20 she says: "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter."

Moab was situated on the other side of the Dead Sea. Elimelech and his family had to walk around this monument of the sin of the world. They must have been reminded of Lot's history, how he had left the land that God had promised to Abraham and established himself in Sodom. I wonder if they ever drew a parallel between Lot's experience and their own.

We don't know how much time elapsed before the death of Elimelech. A period of ten years is mentioned. The KJV and RSV put this in such a way as if the whole time Naomi spent in Moab was ten years. But the NIV says in 1:4 "They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years," as if the boys married after this period. Evidently the Hebrew leaves this open. The famine in Bethlehem will not have lasted that long and we may suppose that Elimelech would have heard if the situation had changed. But evidently he had established himself well enough that he original plan to return to Bethlehem as soon as possible was never considered seriously again. They had made themselves comfortable.

Yet the spiritual climate in the family must have been such that the two heathen girls Mahlon and Kilion married, came to know who YHWH, the God of Israel was; Ruth even to the point of what we could call conversion. We get the impression though that Naomi may have been the spiritual backbone in the family, more than her husband.

We should not pass over the meaning of the names in this book. As we have already seen, Bethlehem means 'house of bread'. Elimelech is translated 'My God is (my) King.' Naomi means 'pleasantness', later to be changed to Mara 'bitterness'. Mahlon means 'joy' or 'song', and Kilion 'ornament' or 'perfectness'. When the man whose name is 'God is King' dies, 'joy' and 'perfectness' die with him and 'pleasantness' also.

The saddest part of the story is that neither of the boys had a male offspring. They may not have had any children at all. Had there been girls, they would most likely have been mentioned at some point in the story. The name of the family was doomed to die out. And that meant real death for an Israelite.

This brings us to the concept of death and eternal life in Jewish thinking. There are in the Old Testament clear indications of life after death, or at least of a resurrection of the body. In Job 19:25-27 Job says: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes; I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"

And in Isaiah 26:19 we read "But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead." But there seems to be a tendency to express this hope of resurrection in terms of earthly existence. But the fact that a man would have a son who would keep his name alive become more than a symbol of spiritual truth, or maybe people forgot the symbol. So that in Jesus' days the Sadducees became a large party of people who rejected life after death completely. See Acts 23:8 (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.)

But even more important, as we mentioned already above, is that a man who died without having a son, was considered to have lost his part in bringing about the coming of the Messiah.

In vs.6 and 7 we read that Naomi hears about the end of the famine and the three women leave to go 'home', that is Naomi's home. We get the impression though that Ruth and Orpah have come to consider it home also, because of Naomi. This is surely a compliment for Naomi's testimony. It is only after Naomi's insistence that Orpah changes her mind and decides to remain in Moab. From our perspective, Naomi's insistence and Orpah's decision are immoral. But we can understand why Naomi said what she said and why Orpah was finally swayed. Orpah seemingly made the right choice. She could hardly have known any better. Why some people have more insight in spiritual things than others, we don't know. It is true that Naomi blesses both with "May the Lord show kindness to you, as you have shown to the dead and to me". It is also true that the Lord can bless in Moab too. But it was in Israel and to the people of Israel that God had chosen to reveal Himself. "Salvation is from the Jews", as Jesus says in John 4:22. Ruth somehow recognized this, Orpah did not. As God revealed Himself in those days in Israel, so He is now only to be found in Jesus Christ. Acts 4:12 "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Orpah knew when she returned, what she went back to. Among her gods was the god Chemosh. Moab was called the 'people of Chemosh' in Num. 21:29. Chemosh was one of the gods to whom human sacrifice was made. Even if Orpah would give birth to a son in Moab the possibility existed that she would lose him to Chemosh! She was probably too close to her culture to realize that.

It is in this context that the word 'rest' is used for the first time. The NIV uses the word in 1:9, but not in 3:1. There it uses the expression 'find a home for you'. KJV says 'find rest for thee'. The word is used in the sense of protection, as in Deut 25:19 "When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance..." The rest which a husband provides for his wife is an image of the rest God gives to His people. As such it is used in Heb. 3:11 "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" and Heb. 4:1 "Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it." The Hebrew word is 'menuwachach', which Strong's concordance defines as 'repose, consolation (spec. matrimony); hence an abode; -confortable, ease, quiet, rest(-ing place), still.' The same word is used in Ps.95:11, which the writer to the Hebrews quotes.

We live in a dangerous world. For a woman it is even more dangerous than for a man. We shall see in the next chapter that a girl, who did not belong to a man, was up for grabs. When she was married it was the task of her husband to protect her with his life. Ps 91:1 says: "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty." This is portrayed in the book of Ruth.

In her effort to dissuade her daughters-in-law from returning with her, Naomi is quite explicit. She will not be able to produce any more sons, and if she could it would take too long for the girls to wait for them. There is an unspoken suggestion in these words that marrying in Israel would be out of the question. Evidently the memory of the episode in which the Israelites committed sexual immorality with the Moabite girls during a Baal-Peor celebration and Phinehas killing an Israelite man, who brought a Midianite girl into the congregation, was still alive in those days. (See Numbers 25). There is no hint of marriage because of love, such as we know it, which did not mean that love was not present. Naomi's remark about the girls showing kindness to the dead indicates that their marriages had been happy ones. The emphasis is upon the security, the 'rest' that marriage provides. This is quite a different philosophy than our modern concept in which marriage is a framework for self-expression and gratification of the senses. The Old Testament model proved to be considerable more stable.

It seems that Orpah is reluctantly convinced and she returns. At this point the beauty of Ruth's character shows and the real story begins.

We read in vs. 16 and 17 "But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me."

The above words are often used in marriage vows and very appropriately so. We don't know if Ruth herself understood fully what she said. It could be that she chose initially more for the person of Naomi than for

anything else. But the message of the book indicates that God took personally the words 'your people will be my people and your God my God.' It is this confession that brought Ruth in the line of ancestry that led to the coming of the Messiah. There is nothing objectionable to the fact that Ruth was originally more attracted to the person of Naomi than to anything else. She may not have fully understood that it was the fact that JHWH was Naomi's God, which made Naomi so attractive to her. Naomi herself may not have fully grasped this. She blamed God for her ill fate, but this did not mean that she did not know God. The child of God often spreads the odor of Christ without knowing it. (Fortunately!). I was amazed when somebody prayed: "Lord, give me what John Schultz has!" Yet I knew what I had.

There comes a point where the comparison between Chemosh and JHWH becomes so overwhelmingly clear, that we wonder how we could have entertained the thought of staying in Chemosh's camp at all. In I Kings 11:7 Chemosh is called "Chemosh the detestable god of Moab" and in II Kings 23:13 "Chemosh the vile god of Moab". He is put on the same line as "Molech the detestable god of the people of Ammon". These were the gods to which human sacrifices were made.

For the people of Moab and Ammon religion was a complex of fear and guilt. They knew nothing of the peace and joy which we connect with religion and which was exemplified in the household of Elimelech and Naomi.

It is not bad when we set out by following someone's example of fellowship with the Lord until we grow into a personal relationship with God ourselves. This is a normal thing. It only becomes bad when we never outgrow the following-of-people stage. That which is good for a child does not always become an adult. The writer to the Hebrews complains about this in Heb 5:12-14 "In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." Ruth may not have been a mature believer, but she was on the right track. And she was willing to give up her home and her country to go to the place where she knew God could be found.

Generally speaking the people of Israel have done a poor job of being a kingdom of priests, as God wanted them to be according to Ex.19:6. The examples of Jews being a testimony to heathen to the point of bringing them to the knowledge of JHWH, are few and far apart. Two that come to mind are women; the young slave girl who told Naaman about the prophet Elishah in II Kings 5:3 and Naomi here. Jonah can hardly be mentioned as a willing witness to the people of Niniveh.

## 2. Bethlehem (1:19-22).

When Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem, we read "the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?" Ruth is not recognized or accepted at this point. Naomi had obviously changed during her absence of more than ten years. We can read in the amazement of the people either a happy recognition or a being appalled at the fact that a person can age so much in such a period of time. Naomi is full of self pity, maybe more than is called for. Certainly her blaming of YHWH for the misfortune that befell her is less than appropriate. The price she paid for leaving was a heavy one. It is always expensive to leave the place where God has put us. The balance of the time she was gone is emptiness. The years in Moab were lost years. Oswald Chambers points out that Abram left the Lord at a place between Bethel and Ai to go to Egypt (Gen.12:8) and he returned to the same place after the miserable experiences in Egypt. (Gen.13:3,4). He remarks that the Lord always brings us back to the place where we lost Him. In order to continue our spiritual pilgrimage we have to return to the point where we interrupted it.

There is a similarity between Naomi and Job in that they both blame God for what has happened to them. But Naomi has more reason to blame herself than Job did. Job's life was a battlefield between God and Satan. The things he suffered were a result of an eternal controversy in the heavenly places that involved much more than his personal existence. Naomi suffered because she had shared in her husband's disobedience. But instead of saying "I should never have left", she puts the full blame on God. There is no recognition of God's kindness to her in giving her a companion such as Ruth and bringing her back to where she belonged.

The change of name brings out a feature that has been lost completely in our Western civilization. Ruth 1:20 "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter." The meaning of Naomi is 'pleasantness' or 'favor'. Mara means 'bitterness'. Later when the Messiah is about to be born, God will change the name back. The angel Gabriel says to Maria, a name which is related to 'Mara', "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Self pity is a very dangerous commodity. It is a trick out of the devil's bag. All affliction and misery can ultimately be traced to Satan. After he makes us suffer, he comes and adds insult to injury by saying 'you should

feel sorry for yourself.' That is why the apostle Paul advises us in I Thes 5:18 "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Corrie ten Boom tells in the book 'The Hiding Place' how her sister Betty suggested to put this into practice in Ravensbruck and she started to thank the Lord for the fleas in their barracks. The fleas did turn out to be a blessing, since it meant that the guards did not want to come in that place and the women could have their Bible study without being disturbed.

Marge Rupp gave her testimony one year at Pyramid conference, saying that at one point she had felt very lonesome and overburdened and she started pitying herself. When she realized what she was doing, she told the devil to go away and her feeling of dejection left. The antidote for self-pity is praise.

We have to realize that we do not see the whole picture of God's dealing with us. The devil exploits this. Naomi would never have accused the Lord of dealing bitterly with her, if she could have seen her grandson at this point in her life. Like Simeon, she hoped for the fulfillment of God's promise. In Luke 2:25-32 we read: "Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

That is why praising the Lord in adverse circumstances is not an unreasonable requirement. To say that the Lord deals bitterly with us is to throw blame upon God's character and to make Him out for a liar, because we mistrust His Word. Praise brings the fulfillment of the promise much closer.

The time of arrival at Bethlehem is marked as the beginning of the barley harvest. The Unger's Bible Dictionary says: 'The harvest began with the barley and the festival of the Passover and ended with the wheat and the festival of Pentecost.' The barley harvest must have started around Bethlehem about the middle of April. The ordinances regarding the first fruit and the harvest festival are given in Lev.23:9-21. So the core of the story of this book plays between Easter and Pentecost. This leaves a door wide open for spiritual applications.

So Naomi and Ruth arrive for the Passover celebration and the feast of unleavened bread. Most likely this is the first time Naomi celebrates this feast again since her departure for Moab. For Ruth this is the first time ever. They start out at the right place. The passover lamb is slain for them when they arrive in Bethlehem. This is the beginning of all spiritual experience. As God delivered the people of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt and made them into a nation of free persons, and then let them eat the unleavened bread of a clean and holy life, so He does with us, if we put our trust in the blood of the Lamb. This must have been Ruth's first experience of what it meant to live in Bethlehem. Paul describes this in I Cor 5:7-8 "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast; as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth." This is a new life, both for Ruth and for us.

### 3. The Harvest (2:1-23)

It is interesting to see how the author begins this new part of the story with the punch line. Boaz is the key to all that follows. But Ruth has no idea who he is and Naomi has probably not even thought of him. Part of her attitude of bitterness was probably that she had not even considered the question of redemption of what was rightfully hers. Why would she claim anything? There was no offspring to inherit and a marriage for Ruth was not in the picture. That is why this chapter starts with a note of hope in the midst of hopelessness.

There is also an indication in this that the Lord is at work. But the appearance is that things just happen by coincidence. But it is not so that God just throws everything into Ruth's lap, while she sits at home in idleness. Prompted by the need for food, Ruth suggests that she take advantage of the law that permits poor people to glean ears in the field at harvest time. Lev 23:22 states: "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God." Probably the custom was the same in Moab, or Ruth must have been aware of the Mosaic law. We don't know why Naomi had not set out to do some gleaning on her own. The lack of food applied to both. Naomi appears to be old in this story, but it is unlikely that she would have been more than in her middle forties. Probably shame played an important part in her attitude. Here she was, previous proprietor of land and cattle, behaving like a destitute. But Ruth has no such feelings. She has no reputation to lose in Bethlehem. The situation brings out the best in her. Later Boaz' laborers testify: "she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, without resting even for a moment." (ch.2:7)(RSV). There is no text in the Bible that says "God helps those that help

themselves", but it is true that lazy people miss out on a lot of the grace of the Lord. Ruth caught the blessing, because she was where God wanted her to be.

It also shows that for a Christian there is no labor that is beneath him. I remember the beautiful illustration by Gordon Wishart about the pastor at a retreat where chores were divided up among the participants. He considered himself too important to accept the job of cleaning 'swivel buckets' (part of the septic system). But during one of the meetings the Lord convicted him of his pride. He came to the altar, crying: "I will empty the swill buckets, I will empty the swill buckets!" Of course the best example is found in the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ. "He humbled himself and became obedient to death; even death on a cross!" (Phil.2:7). After washing the disciples feet, we read: "When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" He asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.'" (John 13:12-14)

Ruth did not consider the work of gleaning ears to be beneath her. By coincidence she finds herself in the field of Boaz. Looking back upon my life, I am amazed to see how major turning points looked like insignificant coincidences at the moment I lived through them. Very rarely does the Lord let us see angels or hear voices from heaven to guide us. If we are obedient, He simply leads us along the way of every day happenings. If Ruth would have made a turn to the left, instead of to the right, or the other way around, she would never have met Boaz, would never have married him, David would not have been born and the Messiah would not have been the Son of David. It proves how dangerous life is, unless we follow the advice in Prov 3:5,6 "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." Life is determined by little choices, or at least by choices that seem to be little to us.

Enter Boaz. No details are given about him. Evidently he was not too young anymore. At least that is what we deduct from ch.3:10 where Boaz says: "You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor." He may have been in his forties, but we do not know. Most likely he was married. It would have been improbable for a rich landowner to stay single so long. He could be a widower. We will have to look at the problem of Ruth probably being his second wife, when we get to the marriage.

Boaz is immediately impressed by Ruth. The testimony of his foreman has no doubt contributed to that, but it is obvious that he liked the girl from the very beginning, as he gives specific instructions to his laborer as to how she has to be treated. He specifically asks her not to go to someone else's field, but to stay in his. He tells her about the instructions he has given to the laborers not to 'touch' her and he offers the refreshments to her that are there for the crew.

This gives us some insight into what kind of people were working on the field. The NIV says: "I have told the men not to touch you." The KJV preserves the typical Hebrew construction: "have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee?" The RSV puts it much more realistically and probably closer to the truth, by saying: "Have I not charged the young men not to molest you?" The book of Judges paints us some rough scenes of how men treated women. And the preservation of Ruth's purity, even in the harvest field with people all around, was no forgone conclusion. Sexual harassment is no modern phenomena. Men may live in a dangerous world, the danger is much greater for women. The fact that the Mosaic law deals with rape, (Deut.22:23-29) evidently was not much of a deterrent in those days. Boaz's protection of Ruth is a perfect image of the protection God gives to those who go to Him to be protected against all attacks upon our person and our honor, both men and women.

Yet it does happen that Christian women are raped. An example is that of Carol Allen, an Alliance missionary in the Philippines, who was taken hostage in 1992 by Moslems. She gave a moving testimony during a seminar in Colorado Springs of the experience, in which she told how the Lord enabled her to forgive the man, even while he was doing it. Sometimes God lets us pass through experiences of that kind, the most humiliating of all, so that we get closer to the sufferings of Christ, who was dishonored to the highest degree, when He was crucified naked and mocked. But these experiences are exceptions. Generally speaking we can say, that God covers us, when we come to Him for protection. He does not expose us, except when there is no other way to victory.

So Ruth may not only glean to obtain food for Naomi and for herself, but she can also do it safely. Nobody is more amazed about this than Ruth herself. We read in vs.10: "At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me; a foreigner?"" She did expect trouble and she was obviously aware of the danger when she suggested to Naomi to go and glean. In her own country the conditions would probably have been much worse. There were no God-fearing Boaz's to protect lonely girls. Also she expected prejudice and discrimination from the side of the Jews towards her, a Moabitess. Her humility is striking. Everybody around her has a high opinion of her, except she. She can only see herself as a foreigner, feeling out of place. She is not aware of the fact that she steals everybody's heart. Or maybe she knows and she had learned how to handle her feelings. She was probably a pretty girl. And as Shakespeare says: "If a woman is but

young and fair, she has the gift to know it!" The indication of true spirituality in a Christian is that he is not aware of his holiness. As Oswald Chambers put it in *Our Utmost for His Highest*: "We want to be conscious saints and unconscious sinners; God makes us conscious sinners and unconscious saints."

Boaz admits that he was told more about Ruth than his foreman had told him. What this man said in vs.6,7 is only a fraction of what Boaz says here. Evidently the word about Ruth had travelled all through Bethlehem and Boaz knew everything about her before she was pointed out to him. The source of all this information must have been Naomi. She may have complained about the bitter way God had dealt with her, but she was not blind to what Ruth had done for her. Also the spiritual side of Ruth's commitment had been emphasized by Naomi. Ruth's words 'Your people will be my people, your God my God' had been repeated every time the story was passed on.

Little did Boaz know that the LORD would answer his prayer through Boaz himself, when he said: "May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge." God often uses the one who prays to answer prayers. When we pray we have to be willing to be the answer.

The way Boaz puts it, that Ruth had taken refuge under the wings of the God of Israel, shows that he had a clear understanding of Israel's task in this world. That makes him one of the most outstanding characters in the Old Testament. Because, as we have seen before, there was very little mission consciousness among God's chosen people. Boaz understanding was probably one of the reasons why he showed so much kindness to Ruth.

Ruth's answer makes more sense in the RSV than in other translations: "Then she said, "You are most gracious to me, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not one of your maidservants." The NIV puts a little too much humility in Ruth's words. Some of the ring of amazement of these words sounds through in Mary's magnificat in Luke 1:26-55. But Mary puts it in a much broader context. What God does with humble women is a universal principle, which is practiced 'from generation to generation'. "He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty."

We have a real problem in that we associate greatness with social standing. God elevates people who have no place in the world's 'Who's Who' to eternal glory and significance. Paul says in I Cor. 1:26-29 -"Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things; and the things that are not; to nullify the things that are, So that no one may boast before him."

We should not make too much out of the 'bread and wine' that was consumed during the mealtime in vs.14, other than that it was everyday common food. It was the daily bread and drink that Jesus took to symbolize the value and depth of His sacrifice on the cross. The fact that daily use makes things common, does not mean that they lose their significance. There is eternal value in ordinary things. The idea that things have to be new and sensational in order to give a thrill, is all in our head. The performing of daily duties may acquire eternal significance if they are done in the Name of the LORD. Boaz handed Ruth some bread and wine, because she had put herself under the protection of the God of Israel. Jesus says in Matt. 10:42 "And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

So Ruth eats her fill and there is something left to share with her mother-in-law. The experience is satisfying, like all blessings that come from the Lord. And we never receive just enough for ourselves. There is enough to share. This doesn't mean that sharing with others should depend on how much we have left over. Sharing is an attitude that does not depend on surplus. There will be surplus, but that doesn't determine sharing. Sharing starts with an act of the will. The mention of the leftover in vs.14 suggests that Ruth thought of Naomi, while she was eating.

At Boaz' orders Ruth receives some help from the reapers in that they purposely drop some grain. So at the end of the day she turns out to have an impressive amount of barley. She thrashes it out on the field, probably using some of the equipment that is at hand and carries back to town one epha, approximately half a bushel. Naomi immediately recognizes the LORD's hand in the fact that Ruth met Boaz. In vs.20 we read her reaction: "The LORD bless him! Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers."

No reason is given as to why Naomi herself did not initiate the process of having her possessions redeemed. Probably the fact that it would have involved Ruth has something to do with this. It is true that as an elderly widow it would have been useless for her to get land back that she would not be able to cultivate. It could be that according to the custom of that time the widow could not take the initiative. But when Ruth comes back with her grain and her story, Naomi sees as in a flash the whole scheme. The mention of 'the living and the dead' indicates what she has in mind.

Here the first time the word 'kinsman-redeemer' comes up. The Hebrew word is 'gawal'. The law on redemption of possessions is found in Lev.25:23-55. Evidently Elimelech had sold everything he had before he left for Moab, otherwise it would have been impossible for any relative to buy it back.

Naomi does not immediately come up with the plan to pursue the redemption question, or at least does not talk about it at this point. For the rest of the chapter we find Ruth in Boaz' field and Naomi at home, turning things over in her mind. This can have taken as long as seven weeks, being the period between Passover and Pentecost. However in chapter 3 we hear that Boaz is winnowing barley, which he probably did somewhere in the middle at the end of the barley harvest and before the beginning of the wheat harvest.

#### 4. The Threshing Floor. (3:1-18)

At the beginning of the third chapter Naomi has finished her scheme, if we may call it that. It is full of good intentions and it is legal, although there is the problem that Ruth is a Moabite and that by this she may have been excluded from the privilege of becoming a member of God's chosen people. But seeing how well Boaz treats Ruth and suspecting that there may be feelings of love, she gambles for a favorable outcome.

The key word in these verses is 'manowach', which is related to 'menuwachah', the word that was used in 1:9, meaning 'rest'. The NIV says: "My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for?" The KJV sticks to the original "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?" As we have seen, the idea is security through marriage. Naomi was not completely unselfish in her desire to seek the best for her daughter-in-law. She knew that the first boy, born of Ruth's marriage would carry her son's name.

The NIV classifies Ruth as one of Boaz' servant girls in vs.2. The KJV and RSV say only that Ruth was with his servant girls and that seems a more logical translation. It does not appear that Ruth actually worked for Boaz. All she did was glean ears on his field.

Naomi explains her plan to Ruth. There is something awkward or maybe even wrong in this. A man should ask a girl in marriage, not the other way around. For Ruth to go and propose to Boaz is highly irregular. But there was more involved than just marriage. It was to be a levirate marriage, that is Boaz is to replace Mahlon. The law prescribing this is found in Deut. 25:5,6 "If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel." In a case like that the woman could evidently take the initiative.

The other thing that should bother us, as New Testament Christians, is that Boaz was most likely a married man. In the law on the levirate marriage there is no stipulation that the brother, who marries his sister-in-law should be single. This is a sanctioned part of Old Testament polygamy. And polygamy was clearly not God's intent for man when He created him. Gen. 2:24 says: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." This leaves no place for polygamy. Polygamy was an accommodation to the sinful condition of man. The first known polygamist in the Bible was Lamech. "Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah." (Gen.4:19).

But then the levirate marriage was an accommodation to the concept that a man's name should be kept alive in his male offspring. There is no indication that this concept is divinely inspired. This may be the answer to the question. The ancient philosophy is an immature view of eternal life, linked to the expectation of the fulfillment of God's promise regarding the coming of the Messiah. It was too early in the development of God's revelation to explain everything, so God left it that way for the time being.

We could argue that the relationship with Christ and the church is in a sense polygamous. So is the message of the book The Song of Songs, which foreshadows this relationship. God sees all of humanity as one single being. Sin is never condoned in the Scripture, but God's approach to our condition is very pragmatic. "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." (Matth.19:12 KJV) Finally it can be said that Naomi's plan puts Ruth in a situation that we would consider less than proper. Sidlow Baxter thinks that in the culture of that time there was nothing improper in Ruth's behavior. But in that case why does Boaz say: "Don't let it be known that a woman came to the threshing floor"? (3:14.) I believe that Naomi did compromise Ruth's virtue at least in appearance in creating such a situation, although no improper act took place. We get the impression that Boaz was alone on the threshing floor, but that could hardly have been the case, at least not at the beginning of the evening. He was probably alone when Ruth approached him. But he would not have feasted by himself. And obviously the occasion is the feast at the end of the barley harvest. Boaz must have been slightly intoxicated, which is probably the reason he did not return home, but looked for a place close by to sleep it off. According to the archaeologists the concubine of an Eastern monarch would enter her master's bed at the foot and wiggle her way up. This seems to be Ruth's position at the

feet of Boaz. Even without words, Boaz would have understood what Ruth's intention was. Evidently she acted out in a symbolic way what she wished Boaz to do for her in a permanent relationship, that is take her under his wings.

The description of Boaz's reaction in the middle of the night is comical and vivid. It takes Boaz a while to wake up from a heavy sleep and he is startled when he turns around in his bed and he realizes that he is not alone. It is too dark to see who the person at his feet is. Ruth asks for protection, explaining that Boaz is the kinsman-redeemer. Again the word 'gawal' is used here.

Now it becomes evident why Boaz had never initiated the process himself. First of all he is not the first in line. There is a closer 'gawal', according to vs.12. We are not told who he is and what the actual family relationship is. In 4:3 when Boaz faces this man he calls Elimelech 'our brother', but the term will have been used in a larger sense. It could be however that Boaz and Elimelech were brothers or cousins.

Secondly, Boaz was under the impression that Ruth would not have been willing to submit to the custom of redemption by him, because it would involve marriage to an older man. He presumed that she, being young, would have preferred a young husband. When he realizes that Ruth thinks of Naomi, more than of herself, he becomes enthused and waxes eloquent. Why he calls this Ruth's kindness, which is greater than her first one, is not clear. Probably because it involves himself. There is obviously a feeling of love on his side. In the first instance Ruth left her home and country and relatives to start a completely new life. She loved Naomi, but in the process she saved herself. Now she works on Naomi's rehabilitation and she finds rest, 'menuchwah' for herself.

So Ruth stays there till dawn and leaves before it gets light. "Don't let it be known that a woman came to the threshing floor." Boaz doesn't want to get any rumors started and he wants to avoid the resemblance of evil. And she goes home with her shawl full of barley. All she has so far is the promise of redemption. She lives between Passover and Pentecost.

## 5. The Gate (4:1-12)

The scene at the gate takes place the next morning. In vs.13 of chapter 3 Boaz had promised to settle the matter that very day. We find ourselves here at a typical Oriental situation. The city gate was the place where public business was transacted. The picture is rustic and unhurried. Boaz just goes and sits down, waiting for somebody to pass. When the anonymous redeemer comes along, Boaz calls him over and makes him sit down and then he calls for ten witnesses, which are readily available also. The scene plays itself. If the first redeemer would have been out of town everybody would have known this, so there was no need to send invitations. It seemed to be out of the question that the man would not pass through the city gate. Bethlehem was too small a town for this not to happen.

There are some points in the business transaction that are hard for us to follow, since the customs of the time are not the same as in modern times. Of course, everybody knew the situation. Most of what Boaz explains is redundant. The only new and unknown point is the marriage with Ruth. The fact that she had made herself available the night before, was still a secret. By making the matter public Boaz is in danger of losing Ruth. He takes that risk because he wants to play by the rules.

We were under the impression that Elimelech had sold his land before he left for Bethlehem. But here it is presented as if Naomi is selling it. It could be that the Year of Jubilee had taken place in the meantime, which would have reverted the property back to Naomi. All this is hard to follow from the distance that separates us. The first redeemer offers immediately to buy, until he hears that it is a package deal and marriage with Ruth is in the package. Here again the reason for his refusal 'I might endanger my own estate,' is not explained. It could be that the man had no sons himself. In marrying Ruth the first son would bear Mahlon's name and this man's whole property would eventually be transferred to Elimelech's part of the family. It could be that the man had objections to marrying a Moabitess.

The matter of the taking off of the shoe, or sandal is interesting. There is some resemblance between the law regarding the Levirate marriage, given in Deut. 25, in which we read what a widow should do, if her brother-in-law would refuse to marry her, and what happens here. We read in Deut 25:9 -"His brother's widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, take off one of his sandals, spit in his face and say, "This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother's family line." Here it is the man who turns down the marriage with Ruth, who takes off his sandal. Ruth is not even there to spit in his face. If there is a hint of insult at all, it has worn pretty thin. The man who refuses initiates the insult himself. We get the impression, however that the taking off of the sandal has a different significance here. It seems to affirm a transaction, not an insult. It could be remotely related to what we read in Deut.25, in which case the ritual would have lost its significance over the years. Even here, in the book of Ruth, the meaning has to be explained. Evidently at the time of writing this was no longer practised.

Sidlow Baxter elaborates on the significance of the fact that the kinsman first is not able or willing to redeem. I agree that we can see in Boaz a type of Christ. He is our 'gawal', our redeemer. But I don't think we can see too much in the man, who turned down the deal. He is no type of Satan, or of humanity in its failed efforts to redeem itself.

Even Boaz's act of redemption is only a vague image of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The price Boaz paid to acquire Ruth does not compare to the shedding of the life blood of Jesus. However, as said before, Boaz's act brings out that God is the God of both Jews and heathen. The Gospel is for all.

In vs.9,10 Boaz declares openly, before ten witnesses that he is redeeming Naomi's property and marrying Ruth. The witnesses confirm the legality of the transaction. Their reaction is very interesting. They bless him with the words: "May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. Through the offspring the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah."

Rachel bore Jacob two sons and Lea five sons and one daughter. The other five children were the offspring of the two slave girls, Bilha and Zilpah. This fact is conveniently overlooked in the blessing. As far as family happiness is concerned, there was very little that could be translated into a blessing. The elders' blessing for Boaz is more directed toward quantity than to quality. Also in the case of Tamar, who bore Perez to Judah, no mention is made of the fact that the birth was the result of a incestuous union. The tribe of Judah had little to be proud of in their family-tree. But you don't mention those things when you pronounce a blessing. It does make the blessing a mixed one though.

It could be that they purposely pronounced a blessing that was ambiguous in order to make Boaz understand that they could not prevent him from marrying a Moabitess, but that they did not approve of it. But maybe I am seeing too much in this. Anyhow, in spite of the fact that Judah's history is wrought with human guilt, the Lord turned it into a blessing. As we said before, both Tamar and Ruth appear in the genealogy of Jesus in Matt.1:3,5.

Boaz marries Ruth. It is Pentecost, the harvest feast. It is the feast that foreshadows the fulfillment of God's blessing to Abraham. God had told Abraham in Gen.12:3 -"all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." And the apostle Paul says in Gal.3:14 -"He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit." The birth of Obed signifies new life for the family, that was doomed to die out and it forges the link to the fulfillment of the promise of the coming of the Messiah.

In vs.13 it says that the LORD enabled Ruth to conceive. It is true of course that all conception comes from God. But it seems that the way it is put, indicates that Ruth had no children from her former marriage, because she was barren. No further children are mentioned. So probably the birth of Obed was the result of God's special intervention. The name Obed means 'serving'.

When Obed is born the women of Bethlehem praise the LORD and mention three things or three persons, for which Naomi has reason to be grateful. It says in vs.14,15 "The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth."

The first is Boaz, the 'gawal', the second is Ruth, who loves her and is better than seven sons, and the third is Obed, the newborn baby. The sequence shows the unusual spiritual insight of the women of Bethlehem.

First of all, they recognize the supernatural in the events. This is the LORD's doing. Then they praise Boaz, who did not just do his duties as a family member, but who showed compassion and love in a way that went beyond the call of duty. "May he become famous throughout Israel!" is a testimony to the fact that every Israelite should be like Boaz. They make Naomi understand that she has no reason to be bitter. She is not dead, nor is her family. The Lord has renewed her life and has given her security for her old age. The last remark is an interesting observation. Obviously Naomi had been nervous about her old age. There would be nobody who would take care of her, when she could no longer care for herself. The LORD has given her someone in her son-in-law. There is no reason for Gods children to worry about old age. The Almighty God is the best life-insurance we can have.

Especially the praise these women have for Ruth shows their penetrating insight. They tell Naomi that there are more important things than the continuation of the family name. Within the framework of that time, this seems to me a testimony of extraordinary depth. It equals David's exclamation in Ps.63:3 -"Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you." Within the context of the blessing it is implied that Ruth's love comes from the LORD. It is more than just human affection. As Christians we know that there is a love that gives more significance to life than life itself. Naomi had no reason to be bitter, even before the LORD brought about a change in her circumstances. Ruth, who loved her better than seven sons, was with her ever since she arrived at Bethlehem. Naomi should have counted her blessings at that point.

They downplay the importance of the continuation of Mahlon's name, by saying about Boaz that Ruth has given a child to him. They never mention Mahlon's name. As a matter of fact, we see that in the genealogy that ends the book, the child is counted a Boaz' son, not as Mahlon's.

Naomi takes it upon herself to care for the baby, although physically she is not even related to him. The LORD knew what kind of medicine she needed to be healed of her depression. The joy of holding this tiny infant made her realize that she had not lived in vain. As Ps 8:1 says: "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger." The enemy that tried to break Naomi and kill her, has been silenced by this mighty act of God's redemption. A redemption that eventually would embrace the whole world through the other baby from Bethlehem that would be born from this baby.

The women of Bethlehem demonstrate their prophetic insight in giving to the baby the name Obed, which means 'serving'. Obed was the link between fallen man and he Who "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."(Matth.20:28).

The book ends with the genealogy, which we also find in I Chron.2:5-15. Nine names are mentioned from Perez to David, which would span a period of three- to four hundred years. It is quite possible, or even probable that names have been omitted. In Matthew's genealogy it is mentioned that Boaz's mother was Rahab. This would put Boaz among the first generation to be born in Canaan. We get the impression however that Israel was well established when the story of Ruth commences. It is doubtful that at those early times it would have been possible for an Israelite like Elimelech to go to Moab and live there peacefully. This seems the more reason to believe that several names have been omitted in these genealogies.

It should also be observed that, in spite of the theme of redemption and preservation of the name of Mahlon, that runs through the book, all genealogies mark Obed as the son of Boaz, not of Mahlon. In a certain sense this proves that the story doesn't prove what it says it proves! As we have seen, there are several indications that the maintaining of a deceased mans name is more a human tradition than a divine ordinance. The levirate marriage was evidently an accommodation to this human philosophy, that saw in the continuation of a mans physical life on earth, through his son, an expression of eternity. The reality of eternal life seems to have been very vague at that time and sometimes completely misunderstood.

The deepest message of the book Ruth may be that there is more to redemption and eternal life than meets the eye. The story points in the direction of David. We know that the one of ultimate importance is not David, but the Son of David. The prophet Ezekiel calls the Messiah 'David' when he says in Ezek.34:23,24 "I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken." And also in Ezek.37:24,25 "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived. They and their children and their childrens' children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever."

Ruth was the grandmother of the Son of David, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hazlehurst, GA.,USA. April 22, 1993.