

The Chapel Ministry



Ruth

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*S*avoring the *S*upremacy of *G*od
*S*tudying the *W*ord of *G*od
*S*haping the *P*eople of *G*od
*S*preaching the *G*ospel of *G*od

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Introduction

Approaching Ruth

Resources

The following have been very helpful in understanding and applying Ruth.

Webb, Barry G. *Five Festal Garments*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2000.

Nettleton, David. *Provision and Providence*. Des Plaines: Regular Baptist Press, 1975.

Futility – Of There and Again

Ruth 1

Message Overview

Aim To show the chastening hand of God in bitter providences.

- Agenda**
- To narrate and illuminate episode one.
 - To show the decline and difficulties of disobedience.
 - To warn against bitterness in the midst of bitter providences.
 - To draw out the parallels with Christian chastening.
 - To highlight the problem and salvation of Gentile

- Summary**
- Naomi and her family leave Bethlehem during a famine and go to Moab, where her sons marry.
 - The men all die, leaving Naomi and her daughters-in-law.
 - Naomi heads back home, expressing her concern for Orpah and Ruth and receiving a loving and loyal commitment from Ruth.
 - They arrive in Bethlehem with Naomi responding to greeting and exposing her bitterness.

**Discussion
Questions**

Introduction

“In the days when the judges ruled...” What a way to start the book. This short, sweet and simple story of loss and love is set in such collapse, chaos and catastrophe. It was a time of terrible trials, everyone doing what was right in their own eyes, the intervening of God’s judgment and the deliverance by men and women of God. This is the time of Abimelech’s murder of his brothers, the burning of thousands from Shechem in the tower, the driving of a tent peg through Sisera’s temple, nailing him to the tent floor, and Ehud’s ghastly killing of Eglon, the fat. It is the time of Samson and Gideon and Deborah. All this unfolds within generations of the mighty conquest of the land, the heroic leadership of Joshua and Caleb. As Moses predicted, the people soon became casual, carnal and corrupt in the very blessings that came from God and should have caused them to hold fast to God.

We do not know exactly when during the Judges this book unfolds. The author intends only for us to be able to set it generally during its historical time period. He is telling a story, but not a fictional one. This is not, “Once upon a time, many years ago in a far away place.” This is about these people (Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon, Chilion, Orpah and Ruth) who lived in this town (Bethlehem) when there was that famine and they went to Moab and lived for 10 years. It’s almost as though the author is careful that we know this is true.

This is also a very carefully crafted story. It is written in 4 episodes, roughly corresponding to the four chapter breaks. Its opening and closing scenes (Ch. 1 & 4 respectively) surround two inner units (Ch. 3-4). The outer are linear and tell us what unfolds. The two inner follow parallel structures and are the essence, but not the point of the story. The point of the story is at the very end. And like all good readers of good stories, we don’t go there till we get there and enjoy the surprise of arriving there. Can we be like little children who have heard a story a hundred times and yet still can jump at the scary parts and smile at the funny parts and cry at the sad parts and feel a sense of satisfied yearning at the ending parts. Then we say just like we used to when the story was done, “Mommy, read it again, pleeeeaasee...”

And as we shall see, beneath the simple story of loss and love, there are serious troubles and challenging problems and a hard to be imagined glory awaiting the appearing of the grace of God.

Now one word – we have been thinking much as we read and teach the Old Testament about a Christ-centered approach. Now, it may appear to some that I have left that and am just telling the story. Listen, we must come to Christ in the Old Testament when and where the Old Testament actually does. And so we will... and so we will.

[**Note:** *Read the text at each heading.*]

Departure

(v.1-5)

Episode one opens with the departure and all it involves.

In its Cause

(v.1-2)

These brief words establish the initial problem. They tell us the people involved and their place. We are introduced to Elimelech, his wife Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. So here is a somewhat ordinary Jewish family living in the town of Bethlehem during the time of the Judges.

But there arises a problem – a famine. From observing the cycles of decline, judgment, deliverance and blessing in the book Judges, we would conclude that this famine is part of the overall judgment of God on a nation that is in a period of sin. So the larger context of this story is that of God's chastening on disobedient Israel as a nation. Without telling us all the whys and wherefores of their decision, the author tells us that they decide to leave Bethlehem, in fact, to leave the land of Israel altogether.

The irony is not to be missed here: Bethlehem means, a *house of bread* and now it has become a *place of famine*. So they leave. And they go to Moab, which was on the east bank of the Dead Sea. Now this is no easy journey. Just a casual look at the map will tell you that they either had to go north or they had to go south *around* the Dead Sea to get the Moab. This was rough and dangerous territory. Why Moab? We are not told their own reasoning why, just that this is what they did.

In its Consequences

(v.3-5)

But now Naomi's husband dies. The interesting wording here – she is left with her two sons. This being left with and being left without is an important motif in this chapter. They are without food in Bethlehem. She is without her husband, then her two sons. It speaks powerfully of loss.

It seems that Elimelech's death gives urgency to the marriages of Mahlon and Chilion. There is great danger now that the family line will end and the family inheritance lost. So they marry Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. These Hebrew men marry the descendents of the incest between Lot and his older daughter after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Here is a real, eyebrow raising development and problem. Moses had commanded in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 the following:

“No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the Lord forever, because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the

way, when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. But the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam; instead the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loved you. You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever.

So either we are 10 generations after Moses' command or these two men have disobeyed God. To the Jewish ear this would sound like inter-racial marriage would have sounded 25 years ago. And 10 years later, both Mahlon and Chilion are dead. Naomi now has lost her husband, her sons and even in the narrative, her name. She is "the woman" bereft of husband and sons.

Here is the final and most pressing pain and problem of her life now – she will have no children or grandchildren. It is very difficult for us to grasp this. For us children and grandchildren are options. For them, children were a sign of blessing from God and were how the family heritage and land were passed on. Here is her final and most horrible loss.

Dedication

(v.6-18)

The commentators tend to focus on the differing responses by Orpah and Ruth. But this is not the author's intent. The dialog here shows us the dedication of two women, Naomi and Ruth.

We are also introduced to the most prominent word in this episode, *return*. It is the same Hebrew word that is used to represent repentance. Here is the turning point in this episode as Naomi awakens to the place of her helplessness and hopelessness and turns her eyes towards home. While toiling in the fields of Moab, she hears that God has visited His people and has given them food (v.6).

In the Concern of Naomi

(v.6-14)

What a picture this was – these three women, are out on the road headed for Judah. Naomi's daughters-in-law are on the way with her. As they are on the way, Naomi, in love and concern for them as well as out of the seeming futility of her own station in life, turns to them to send them home. She wants them to return.

Her blessing is full of the kindness and grace of a godly woman. She wants them to know the favor of God and to find rest in the home of a future husband from among their own people. She is not turning them away because she does not want to be responsible for them but in order that they might not feel responsible for her. She is releasing them from their obligation to care for her – to protect and provide for her as the widowed mother of their husbands.

What sweet sadness we find in their tearful love. They will not leave her. They will stay with her and go with her and watch over her. They will come with her away from their home to go with her to be with her people. And what tragic concern for them! Why should they stay with her? She is too old have another husband, much less more sons for them to marry. Besides, if so, would they be willing to wait?

In verse 13, Naomi expresses the anguish and bitterness of her soul. These beloved daughters-in-law have suffered because God has chastened her. The loss of their husbands has been at the disciplining hand of God on Naomi. It grieves her that she has been the cause of the sadness and sorrow of their situation.

So Orpah kisses her farewell and heads down the road towards her home. As Naomi observes, Orpah is not just returning home, but she is returning to her gods (v.15). There is more at stake here than just present security, but a personal salvation.

In the Commitment of Ruth

(v.15-18)

Ah, but Ruth – Ruth clings to her. You can see it, can't you? What great love and sacrificial commitment is expressed in these actions and these words.

Here are the words of an endearing commitment to Naomi and an enduring covenant with God. She is not here merely attaching herself to Naomi, but she is swearing allegiance to Yahweh. I do not sense here that this is a new commitment, but rather one that has been settled deep in the soul of a Gentile woman now righteous before God. She has not accepted the God of Israel as a convenience of her marriage, who can not be offhandedly rejected with a return to her old gods. No, if the person she knows and loves is going to land and life and death where Yahweh dwells, then this is where she will go as well.

Yet, here is true love for God and love for neighbor. Ruth is about to leave all she knows, the familiar language and customs of her home and her people for the sake of God and Naomi. Here is a great and grand return. Naomi sees the depth of devotion and determination and says no more.

So they journey from the hills of Moab around the Dead Sea on the road to Bethlehem.

Destitution

(v.19-22)

What a sight this must have been. At least 10 long years have passed. When Naomi left, she left with husband strong and two strapping sons. She left with 3 stalwart men of Israel and returns with a Moabite daughter-in-law. She left a place of deprivation and now returns in state of destitution.

The simple sentence in verse 19, “The whole town was stirred because of them,” sets the stage for the final part of this episode. The word spreads through the town, “Naomi has returned. Naomi has returned.” Particularly among the women the word runs like a summons to gather in greeting.

In the Chastening by her Lord

(v.19-21)

Our author now brings to the front this play on Naomi’s name. Certainly, a Hebrew would have known what her name meant. But the author says it like this. The women gather in greeting say, “Is this Pleasant?” No, this is not Pleasant who has come home, this is Bitter. She who went away Naomi, “pleasant”, now returns home Mara, “bitter”. She who went away full and has now returned home empty, empty of husband, empty of sons and arms empty of grandchildren. But is she really and truly empty? Is that the value she puts in the love and loyalty of Ruth? Or has Ruth become an embarrassment, the final evidence of her entanglement with Moab? (Webb, p.42)

She acknowledges God’s hand in her life. Her loss is God’s chastening. She has admitted that to Orpah and Ruth. Now she admits it to the women. Her loss and destitution, her empty arms are the hard providences of God. It is the Almighty God who has brought this calamity upon her. There is here a tacit confession that they should not have left Israel. Notice the wording, “I went away full and the Lord has brought me back empty.” They went away from God, His place and His people and now God brings her back, chastened and humbled.

And bitter. It is clear that she is struggling with the bitter providences of God. Here is her confession of her bitterness over her losses. Why should she continue to carry the name and thus the reputation of being “pleasant” when God has exposed her? Why should she be rejoiced over when God has testified against her?

There is no bitterness like that of knowing that your sinful choices have brought you the chastening hand of God. How many Christians have gone away full and returned empty? How many of you are struggling with bitterness – God has chastened you and has, through the public circumstances of your life, witnessed against you. What grieving and groaning and grinding in our souls when our present suffering and hardships are the bitter providences of God over the sinful choices in life.

The whole Bible is so clear in warning us about bitterness in the midst of the severity of God’s Fatherly love. Nothing is so pointed and powerful than the words of Hebrews 12:3-9.

³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

¹² Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. ¹⁴ Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; ¹⁶ that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. [ESV]

Beloved, know that the Fatherly love of God is always moving, even in the painful application of the rod, for our good. When we kiss the hand that smites us, that chastening work yields the fruit of righteousness, a harvest of holiness. Thus we can have peace in the midst of bitter providences of God.

But if we resist the grace of God and reject the help of the people of God, then we may end like Esau – full of bitterness and no place of repentance – no way to get back what we have lost.

In the Coming to her Home

(v.22)

So she arrives like this- destitute, broken and bitter. She who went away full has now come home empty. Naomi has come home Mara. Pleasant has returned bitter. And what has she come home with? Husband, sons and grandchildren? No, in a curious emphasis, she returns home with a foreigner named Ruth. Not just any foreigner, but a Moabite at that.

But, she who left in a time of famine now comes home at the time of harvest. Who can tell what will come of people who come home just at harvest.

Conclusion

This is a story about God.

- This has been about the God who was not trusted during a time of hardship, during a famine. He whose promises and provision and power had brought them into this land and sustained them there.
- This has been about the God who was not obeyed in the matter of marrying and giving in marriage. He whose holiness and righteousness demanded separation in marriage and union only with God's people.
- This has been about the God in whom Gentiles may trust and commit their lives to loyal faithfulness, regardless of the cost. He whose grace casts wide and whose glory is most magnified when men and women from all over His world acknowledge Him as Lord and acclaim His worth.
- This has been about the God whose Fatherly love chastens and disciplines, whose hand moves against and smites His people for their good. He whose love is not soft to allow sin or even distracting weights, but whose disciplines move to correct and train.
- This has been about the God whose people should be called pleasant, but whose spirits are often bitter. He whose delight in His elect should call forth from them a solemn joy yet so often is met with deep resentment at the bitter providences.
- This is about the God who brings home His wandering people just in time for harvest.

Faithfulness – Of Grain and Good

Ruth 2

Message Overview

Aim To show how the providence of God is working for His purposes.

- Agenda**
- To encourage resting in the providences of God, whether bitter or sweet.
 - To foster gratitude out of a heart of humility for what God does for us.
 - To emphasize kindness, both in the covenant love of God and as a characteristic response to others.

- Summary**
- The character of Ruth and Boaz is described as Ruth goes out to the fields to glean and in the providence of God, ends up in Boaz's field.
 - Boaz takes the initiative to protect and provide for Ruth.
 - Ruth returns with her gleanings and hope emerges from the story of God's good providence.

Discussion Questions

How often do we recognize and reflect on the providences of God in our lives?

Discuss the relationship between Ruth's humility and her gratitude.

What is the most important lesson you've learned from this episode?

Introduction

Its Setting

First, without making too much of it, I want to point out that in the arrangement of the books in the Hebrew Bible (OT) the Jewish scholars placed Ruth, not where it belongs chronologically, but between Proverbs and Song of Solomon. It is striking then that the Book of Ruth is surrounded by the godly women of Proverbs and Canticles. One could even wonder that the first two episodes of Ruth are tied to the dutiful woman of Proverbs 31 and the last two episodes to the desirable woman of the Song of Solomon.

Sadness and hardness were the dominant themes of Naomi's life, of chapter one. There is famine and moving and a husband's death. There is the marriage of her sons to women of Moab. Then sorrow upon sorrow as her sons also die. God's hand was heavy upon her. While Ruth has avowed her love for Naomi and her loyalty to God, Naomi sinks deeper into her misery. Their return to Bethlehem is greeted with joy, yet all Naomi can do is express her own bitterness over the hard chastening of God. She who went away full (of husband and sons and hope) has come home empty. But she has come home just in time for harvest.

Its Structure

Here is a great example of a visual and verbal structure in Hebrew writing.

- a. – Morning – Ruth's Request to Naomi to go gleaning
 - b. – Morning Hours – Recognition by Boaz
 - c. – Noon – Reciprocal Kindness and Mercy
 - b. – Afternoon Hours – Respect by Boaz
- a. – Evening – Ruth's Report to Naomi about the gleaning

In this episode, the private and public righteousness of Ruth and Boaz is exhibited. We know that these two people are committed to God and His Law in their lives. But there is more than just a bare obedience to God's commands, but an exhibition of how deeply the character of God has been worked by grace into their own hearts.

Now the hard and bitter providences will begin to turn in such an unexpected and exhilarating way that even Naomi will see.

Character

(v.1-7)

Woven through the first portion of this episode is an unveiling of character. We are introduced to Boaz while the character and conduct of Ruth is exhibited. And we are shown, albeit in a subdued way, the character and sovereign hand of God. So the bleakness of the bitter providences are now being turned by an emerging brightness of hopeful provisions.

Of their Persons

Clearly, we are being introduced to Boaz and to Ruth, particularly to the kind of people they are.

Here we find that Boaz is related to Naomi's husband. He is a man of wealth who owns a large farm with many laborers. He is a man who is respected and obeyed by those in his employ. Boaz' first words in the text are a greeting that conveys God's blessing on his field hands. That they respond to him in kind shows us that this is the settled habit of his life arising from a deep Godwardness. The author then is portraying a man of place, position, prosperity who is a relative of Naomi and deeply righteous in God's sight.

Further, we are treated to more insight as to what Ruth is like. We find her to be respectful and in submission to Naomi, requesting permission to go and glean. She is a humble and meek woman as she inquires about gleaning; knowing that she does not have the same rights as the Israelites and is cast upon the generosity and kindness of the owner. She is diligent and hard working. The overseers had observed her to have worked hard all morning, only taking water break. Either this sort of earnest diligence was unusual in gleaners or was unexpected from foreigners.

Of God's Providences

Look at verse 3 –Ruth sets out, links up with the gleaners and just happens to end up in Boaz' field. Now certainly the Bible is not making an argument for chance here. Nor are we to try to read into this some deviousness or decision on Ruth's part. With a deft feel for irony, the author dangles before us the prospect of the sure and wise providence of God. While Ruth in her own mind is picking a field to glean in, God is moving in His mysterious power to bring her to the field of His purpose and provision.

Care**(v.8-16)**

Now Ruth and Boaz are brought face to face. Boaz takes the initiative to declare himself to her. In all that Boaz does here, we have a faithful, godly Jew who not only knows the law, but whose generosity and grace extends himself on behalf of others *even to the point of personal loss*. He addresses her as “my daughter” pointing to the age difference between them. There is a gentle maturity to his words to her and his way with her. But, through this all we also get a sense that his attention on her arises from a growing attachment to her. But it is oh so subtle.

In his Protection**(v.8-9)**

Boaz first concern for Ruth is for her personal safety and physical sustenance. He wants her to stay in his field, near the women reapers. He has exerted his authority and placed her under his protection. So while this gentle pastoral scene of a harvest rich and full, there lurks a menace, a danger, these young men who would see Ruth as fair game. Boaz may anticipate this both because he knows them well and is aware of Ruth as a Moabite, outside the normal protections of Jewish Law.

He also assures her that she is to freely drink of the water that was drawn for reapers, even though she is but a gleaner. There is no mistaking here that his initiative is singling her out for special attention. Come to my field, where you will be safe from harm and thirst. As one writer comments, “All of Boaz’s wealth and godliness begin to turn for Ruth’s welfare.” (Piper, *Under the Wings of God*, 7/8/84 AM, Bethlehem)

In their Perspectives**(v.10-13)**

Ruth’s response is stunning. She is deeply humbled and bows before Boaz in gratitude. Her question expresses her amazement at Boaz’ care and concern. She sees herself as unworthy and undeserving. Her godly humility expresses gratitude at the grace and generosity of others. Why his favor on her, a foreigner? She does not resent her status, but accepts it. She comes, not asserting her rights and becoming resentful when they are not met – she acknowledges her destitute and dependent helplessness. Understanding this about herself, she can genuinely be both surprised and grateful at the unexpected and unsought kindness.

I cannot help but comment here that our own pursuit of self-esteem and assertion of personal rights serves to undermine our amazement and genuine gratitude at the unexpected and undeserved grace and kindness of God. I sense among people

today a curling of the lip in self-pride and self-congratulation *even over our salvation*. It is as though there were something in us, foreigners from a distant land of sin, that we should deserve the grace and kindness of our King. Where are those who are truly humbled by the stunning kindness of God?

Boaz declares that he knows two important things about Ruth. He knows of her commitment to Naomi and all she has done for her. She has left her home and family and comfort for Naomi's sake. And he knows of her casting herself upon God. She has hidden herself in the sheltering wing of Yahweh. Listen to how David develops this thought years later in Psalm 36:7-9.

How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
 The children of mankind take refuge
 in the shadow of your wings.
 They feast on the abundance of your house,
 and you give them drink from the river of your delights.
 For with you is the fountain of life;
 in your light do we see light. [ESV]

Here is both refuge and refreshment. Here is the protection and provision by God. Here is the soul's feasting in the abundance of God and drinking in the flowing river of God's delights. While the situation of her life may be hard, there is refuge and refreshment, defense and delights in God whose wing is over her, whose house is full and whose delights flow like a torrent.

Boaz sees himself as the instrument by which God repays and rewards Ruth. God's blessing, His protection and provision are upon those who, in taking refuge in God give themselves to God's people. Ruth's goodness to Naomi does not put God in debt to her, as though He owed her. Rather, God delights to respond with rich reward to those who see Him as worthy of their trust, as being their refuge. Because she took refuge in God, she could then commit herself to Naomi and leave the security and safety of her home and family. And God delighted to stretch His sheltering wing over her and place Boaz in her life as the bringer and bearer of God's blessing.

In his Provision

(v.14-16)

But it is not enough that Boaz shield her, he will also supply and sustain her. He invites her to join him at lunch, to sit with him and to share in his bounty. She is to come and dip her morsel in his wine. He sits among his reapers with her near enough to pass food to her. And he gives to her roasted grain until she is fully satisfied and has some left over.

Now, God had commanded that the corners of the field be left for gleaning and that reapers should pass over a field twice. What was left in the inefficiency of harvest supplied the wants of the needy. Boaz goes way beyond this. His generosity is still not yet exhausted. He tells the young men among the reapers, to pull out sheaves and leave them for her. The Law forbade Boaz's reapers from returning to collect those "forgotten" sheaves. As a gleaner, Ruth was not allowed to pick the grain that was still standing. She could only pick up what the reapers left. And they are being instructed not to just leave bits and pieces, but rather to strew her path with the riches of his bounty.

Change

What a picture of fullness this is. She gleaned faithfully and diligently until the evening. Then she sits down to process what she has gathered. It turns out to be over ½ a bushel after it has been pounded out.

In their Providences

(v.17-19)

Here is a great turning point in their providences. While Naomi has gone out full and returned home empty. Ruth has gone out in the morning empty and returned in the evening, full. She not only has all that she has gleaned, but she has the left-overs of the roasted grain from lunch. In the midst of great want has come great goodness.

And Naomi recognizes the change in their providence. She inquires as to where and on whose land has she been gleaning? All that she has brought home cannot possibly have come even through the most diligent of mere gleaning. She knows full well that someone has intervened and provided in a special way. Out of the bleakness of her hardship there now comes a dawning brightness of hope and help. She begins to see their circumstances in a new light.

In their Perception

(v.20-23)

Our author records three important statements by Naomi.

SHE ACKNOWLEDGES THE KINDNESS OF GOD AS THE SOURCE OF THEIR BLESSING. Once again this word "kindness" or *hes'ed* is the key. The living and the dead are not forsaken because of the kindness of God. There is a realization that the line and clan of Elimelech may live on through Ruth and the kinsman-redeemer. So Naomi is awakened and out of the death and darkness of her bitterness she rises to life and light and hope. She is not forsaken by God – His chastening

hand and bitter providences have brought them here, where He has greeted them with unexpected kindness and bountiful provisions.

SHE IDENTIFIES BOAZ AS A POTENTIAL KINSMAN-REDEEMER FOR RUTH. Now a kinsman-redeemer in the Old Testament was God's provision for the continuation of a family line in a clan. The *go'el*, usually translated "redeemer" or "next of kin," is one legally responsible for protecting the interests of the family. His main obligation is to buy land that must be sold or buy back land that has already been sold, so as not to let property be alienated from its original line of ownership (cf. Leviticus 25:25; Jeremiah 32:7-10). The book of Ruth extends his duties to providing an heir for a male relative who has died childless. Usually this duty fell to a brother (Deuteronomy 25:5-10), but in the case of Ruth who had no brothers-in-law, a more distant relative was expected to marry her, as Naomi would later reveal in chapter 3. [From, *New Bible Commentary* and *Harper's Bible Commentary*] While this seems like an exceedingly strange thing in our ears, this was God's principle and provision for the Hebrew people under the Law. And Boaz is a kinsman-redeemer for Ruth.

SHE AFFIRMS THE WISDOM OF BOAZ'S PROVISION AND PROTECTION. Ruth tells her that Boaz wants her at his fields near his women where his young men have been charged not to molest her. Naomi encourages her to go back to his fields.

Ruth then returns and gleans in the fields of Boaz through the barley harvest during March and April and the wheat harvest during June and July. This sentence then covers almost five months, and during that time, Naomi and Ruth live together.

What can God do for those who come home just at harvest? He can bring them by His powerful providence to fields of Boaz. There, Boaz, the lord of the harvest and kinsman-redeemer, the bringer of blessing, with Ruth as his partner and worker, becomes the instrument of filling Naomi's emptiness.

And who knows what God can do when wedding feasts are near!

Conclusion

This is a story about God.

- This is a story about the God who is sovereign over all, whose providences are working to serve the pleasures of His will and purposes of His glory.
- This is a story about the God who is full of kindness and mercy, whose love takes the initiative to save His people and to shape them by His character.
- This is a story about the God who is full of care and concern, whose righteousness protects and provides those who find favor with God.
- This is a story about the God who gives hope to the bitter, whose bitter providences are the soil in which anticipation may attach itself to the evidences of His goodness.
- This is a story about the God who delights in His people, whose will is working towards the marriage of His Son.

Finding – Of Maids and Men

Ruth 3

Message Overview

Aim To point people to our Redeemer through Boaz, Ruth's kinsman-redeemer.

- Agenda**
- To see with our inner eye the unfolding romance between Ruth and Boaz.
 - To show the propriety of initiative and planning, while depending on the promises, purposes and providences of God.
 - To reject any notion of sinful scheming or sexual impropriety on the part of Naomi and Ruth.
 - To highlight the godly character and gracious commitments of Ruth and Boaz.

- Summary**
- Naomi and Ruth plan how to present Ruth's case to Boaz.
 - Ruth carries out the plan and waits on Boaz to awaken.
 - Boaz responds to her overture with care, concern and commitment with his money and their marriage.
 - Ruth returns to Naomi full of good news and grain.

Discussion Questions

Discuss the relationship between waiting on God's providential moving in our lives and our planning and acting.

Discuss reactions/responses to Ruth's presenting herself and her claim to Boaz.

Discuss how to read and study a text like this for its subtle analogies and references.

Introduction

What a difference three months of gleaning through harvest can make! From fullness to emptiness and bitterness, God's Fatherly love has directed His severe providences to bring two widows home at harvest. In the midst of destitution and neediness diligence and faithfulness are guided by the hidden providences of God to the fields of a kinsman-redeemer whose godliness and maturity is on grand display. His kindness and generosity provide fullness while his affections begin to attach themselves to the young maid from Moab. Could there be hope that this beautifully humble and honorable lady would accept or maybe even approach him?

How will Naomi's sense of God's purposes and providences turn for their good? There is a breathless sense of hope and trust that moves alongside of delicate planning and discrete execution. She knows that Ruth must present her case to Boaz, but decides to do it in a way to appeal to his gracious affection rather than to his sense of godly duty.

Just a word about the message this morning: I am following the chiasmic structure of the text. What is before you is not an outline in the western sense, but rather a visible and verbal structure designed to bring us to the high point of the episode in verses 10-13.

So, what will these two ladies find when they cast themselves upon the promises of God and work diligently to see them unfold for them? Will the bitter providences complete their turn to sweeter ones still?

Anticipation by Planning

(v.1-5)

The episode opens and closes with *rest*. Naomi sees her responsibility to find a rest for Ruth and expresses her confidence the Boaz will find no rest until he has presented his case. Ruth's final rest depends on the labor of Boaz. This word places trust and work in the right relationship to one another. Trust in God should fuel initiative and effort. There are times to work (v.1) and times to wait (v.18).

Naomi recognizes that Boaz being who he is means that they must present their case. While it is not stated explicitly, it is fairly obvious that they see Boaz's age and maturity as restraining him from making an open overture to Ruth. He is the kinsman-redeemer. They will need to appeal to him to take his role. But it seems that they do not want it to be just a matter of Law, but of love.

Naomi formulates a plan that is designed to present Ruth, not as merely a field hand, but rather as a marriageable maiden. Her plan is that Ruth will go one evening, bathed, perfumed and dressed to highlight her beauty. They know that Boaz is not one to leave his workers in the hard conditions of their labor while he returns to the softness of his home – his practice must have been to rough it in the barns during the harvest. So, when Boaz retires after his evening nightcap, she is to go, lift the blanket off his feet and lay down at his feet. When he awakens and recognizes her, she is to do what he says.

Her plan is interesting in several respects.

- THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF RISK. Without a doubt, both Ruth and Boaz's reputations are at stake here. That this is so is borne out in the story itself.
- THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF TRUST. Ruth is presenting herself in a way and at a time that would make her very vulnerable to evil intentions. Yet, Naomi and Ruth both seem to trust Boaz implicitly. Certainly, he has demonstrated his concern for her purity and moral protection in the orders he gave his young men in chapter 2.
- THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF WISDOM. I am struck by the fact that this allows her to present her own suit to him privately while not exposing him to the pressure or ridicule of his peers. She will come along, at night and simply present herself to him. He can accept her or reject her as he pleases.

Ruth responds to Naomi's plan with consent and commitment. We are left wondering about what she thought. Does she see this as being forward? Or is her own heart beginning to go out to Boaz in response to his kindness and generosity. The ambiguity seems to be a part of the author's intent.

So, how will this plan all work out?

Approach to Boaz**(v.6-7)**

The episode now begins the movements of approach. First, here is Ruth's approach to Boaz (v.6-7) in obeying her mother-in-law and later, her return to Naomi (v.16-17) in reporting to her.

Ruth's obedience is explicit in this text. She did exactly what was planned. The author points to the fact that it is not merely the implementation of a plan, but it is self-conscious and thought-through obedience to Naomi. Success in this enterprise is dependent on following the wisdom and insight of her mother-in-law while trusting in the purposes and providences of God.

She then watches and waits for Boaz to retire for the evening. He has had supper and his evening wine. The idea here is not that Boaz is drunk – he has had his nightcap. I know that for many Christians this sounds exceedingly odd if not outrageous. Some would say, "Ruth is taking advantage of his wickedness to put herself forward. See what alcohol does! It makes us vulnerable to all sorts of sexual temptations." The only problem here is that the Bible does not treat this event that way. There is in fact a sense of romantic delicacy here that is unmistakable.

Ruth slips in very quietly, uncovers his feet and lay down. While I would not recommend this as a Biblical method of courting for single women, there is cultural and personal modesty here. Her humility and submission is hinted at here as she lies, not at his side, but at his feet.

Now, I am sure that some of you are wondering about all this. Do we have here a scheming mother-in-law and a sexual advance by Ruth? Has the story now taken an ominous turn for evil? I think not. What unfolds here arises from:

- The recognition of Boaz's status as kinsman-redeemer;
- The evidence of both Boaz's attention and discretion;
- The difficulty of their age difference complicated by their humility;
- The necessity for a declaration of her need and his status,

I wonder if she slept or lay awake waiting.

Awakens in Discovery

(v.8-9)

Boaz's snoring is interrupted by being startled. What do you think? Was Ruth tickling his feet? Or was God awakening him? Just as Ruth happens to land in Boaz's field, Boaz happens to be startled awake just at the darkest hour of midnight. The subtlety of God to startle Boaz to wakefulness is meant to bring a smile of trust to our hearts.

"What is this at his feet?" He rolls over and whoops, there is a woman curled underneath his blanket. "Who are you?" is the natural question in the deepest dark of night. He cannot see her face only her form to know she is woman.

What an identification this is.

- Here is my NAME. I am Ruth. I am maid of Moab, a woman whose name you know.
- Here is my NATURE. I am your servant. I am at your disposal to do with as you please trusting your kindness and generosity and godliness.
- Here is my NEED. I am destitute needing your sheltering wings. As I have sought refuge under the protecting and sheltering wings of Yahweh, daring to be satisfied in His delights, so I ask you to be like our God and cover me with you care.
- Here is my NOTIFICATION. You are my kinsman-redeemer. Here is my suit, my plea, my pledge and my case. Will you redeem me with your money and our marriage?

What do you think he will say?

Accepts in Delight

(v.10-13)

What unexpected joy is his! How wonderfully ingrained is his habit of invoking the Lord's blessing!

THERE IS AMAZEMENT. He cannot believe her kindness to approach him, he who is old enough to call her "daughter". She could have had any of the young men who moved through their lives. It is evident that she was prized and possibly pursued. She had her pick among the rich and poor. Yet she would choose him. I am awed by his selflessness and humbleness.

THERE IS ASSURANCE. He allays her fear with kind words of care and commitment. She is not to be afraid, but comforted and content. He will do all that she has asked. He will act as her kinsman-redeemer. He will cover her with the wings of his love and loyalty. He will not send her home in the darkness and danger – she may lie softly and safely at his feet till morning comes.

THERE IS ADMIRATION. He expresses that everyone knows that she is a worthy woman. She is someone to be admired and sought and loved. Though a foreigner, she has earned the respect of everyone in Bethlehem. Her character and conduct have been above reproach. No one will accuse her of wicked motives or means in this.

THERE IS AFFIRMATION. In all this there is a problem. He is not the nearest kinsman. There is another man who has the first opportunity. While he is deeply committed to her both in his affections and his actions, his honesty and integrity requires him to do what is right. The case must be presented to the other redeemer. He will present it himself. And he will so trust the sovereign purposes and sweet providences of God that he will stand ready and glad to submit.

Awakens in Discretion

(v.14-15)

So she sleeps at his feet until the dawn. It was the just coming to light time before the sun has risen enough that people can recognize one another.

HIS PROTECTION OF HER (v.14) – Just as he had in chapter 2, he now moves to protect her, particularly her reputation. It seems to me that the statement here at the end of this verse is made to the foreman who has arrived early for his instructions for the day. The words here are primarily to protect their reputations. They also may be designed to allow him to decide on the timing of his presentation of the case to the nearer redeemer.

HIS PROVISION OF HER (v.15) – Just as we had in chapter 2, Boaz also moves to provide for her. Assuming she does what was common in the day, she takes hem of her cloak, gathers up its corners to make a sack or basket and Boaz fills it with a weeks worth of barley. In other words, she is carrying home 6 days (6 measures) worth of gleaning. It points to the fact of her labor and diligence that will bring to Naomi and Ruth, rest. The rest of the seventh day and the seventh measure.

Approach to Naomi

(v.16-17)

You can just see Naomi standing in the doorway waiting eagerly for Ruth's return. And yes, the immediate question, "How did it go?" Ruth relates all that happened telling of his promise to be their redeemer and the problem of the nearer redeemer.

Then she, probably with a real sense of irony, quotes Boaz directly. "Here are these 6 measures of barley. He told me that I must not return to you, Naomi, empty." Here is the resolution of the end of chapter one. Naomi returned to Bethlehem empty – even though she had

the love and loyalty of Ruth beside her. Now Boaz wants Naomi to remember that the one on whom she placed no value is now the one who will be sure that is no long empty. The giving of the harvest to Naomi is an intimation that Boaz will not only fill her need of food, but may fill her arms with grand-children. Naomi may return to Bethlehem empty, but if Boaz can help it, Ruth will never return to Naomi empty.

Anticipation by Patience

(v.18)

So now, in verse 18, their work and action and doing is done. They have taken initiative under the providence of God, now it is time to be patient and to wait on the providence of God. It is now out of their hands. But note the confidence in Boaz. He will not rest but will settle this matter today. So Ruth has rest being aimed at in the deeds of this episode. Naomi receives rest at home signified by the six days of harvest gain. Ad Boaz will not rest until his work as kinsman-redeemer is done. So here it is. When we go away full and return empty, restoration to fullness comes with someone's redeeming labor and someone's receiving rest.

And who knows what fullness may come when a Redeemer moves on behalf of His beloved?

Conclusion

This is a story about God:

- This is a story about the God who is sovereign over all, whose providences are working to serve the pleasures of His will and purposes of His glory.
- This is a story about the God who provides for His people, whose wisdom ordains a way for those whose heritage in land and family is lost to be restored. He knows that devastation and death are the common lot of fallenness and arranges in His law for the perpetuation of life and property.
- This is a story about the God who reveals Himself, whose revelation is often in models and types and analogies so that we will understand and in understanding, desire and delight in this God.
- This is a story about the God who redeems His people, whose very life was given to pay the price and meet the penalty for their sin. He sent the great Kinsman-Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, our heavenly Boaz, to live a sinless life and die a substitutionary death and rise again in a vindicating resurrection.
- This is a story about the God who plans good for His people, whose glories and treasures and wonders are all laid up for the day when His people all come home, no long empty, but with unimaginable fullness. And that day is called, rest.

Fullness – Of Redemption and Restoration

Ruth 4

Message Overview

- Aim** To show invoke trust in the God whose providences are for our good.
- Agenda**
- To draw out a sense of culmination to all our anticipation in this story.
 - To instill a deep trust in the providential working of God.
 - To show the providence of God in the mundane of life.
 - To highlight the greatest love story in the book of Ruth, that of Ruth for Naomi.
- Summary**
- Boaz presents the case to the nearer kinsman-redeemer who at first accepts then rejects it.
 - Boaz publicly and formally accepts the responsibility for the land and for Ruth.
 - The blessing is pronounced by the elders and the people.
 - God gives them a son who fills the emptiness of Naomi and becomes the grandfather of King David.

Discussion Questions

Tell stories of God's providences in the "ordinary" things of life.

Discuss the way this book was unfolded and preached, particularly over against the normal allegorical method.

Try to get people to see that this story bring us to Christ through David and presents Christ to us through a kinsman-redeemer. However, the Boaz=Jesus, Ruth=church was not as overtly done. The point of the book is *the providence of God*.

Introduction

So we come to the final episode. I know that some of you are new to our tale and some of you have missed an episode or two. So I want to take a moment to set the stage before we come to Episode 4 – Fullness – Of Romance and Redemption

➤ A Structure of the Story

The story is constructed on a common Hebrew literary device known as a chiasmic structure. Rather than a nested outline like we use, it is a series of parallel structures. It was used as both a verbal and a visible framework.

A – Devastation of Naomi’s Family

B – Decisions by Naomi’s Relatives

C – Return in Bitterness and Emptiness

D – Meeting of Ruth and Boaz

C – Presentation in Hope and Fullness

B – Decisions by Ruth’s Redeemers

A – Restoration of Naomi’s Family

➤ A Summary of the Story

From fullness to emptiness and bitterness, God’s Fatherly love has directed His severe providences to bring two widows home at harvest. In the midst of destitution and neediness diligence and faithfulness are guided by the hidden providences of God to the fields of a kinsman-redeemer whose godliness and maturity is on grand display. His kindness and generosity provide fullness while his affections begin to attach themselves to the young maid from Moab.

But the case must be presented to this humble man, so a carefully planned programme is put into motion. In the midst of the night, the maid presents herself and her need to the man, to his great surprise and joy. While there is the problem of a nearer kinsman to redeem, Boaz commits himself to see that all is well. In his great wisdom, he sends Ruth home, her garment full to remind Naomi of a fullness to come through this maid and man.

And so we come to episode four. It is somewhat different in that it has two distinct scenes, each with their own structure. We will tell the story, following that structure.

A Marvelous Redemption

(v.1-12)

The opening scene takes out to the gate of the city of Bethlehem. There the promise of Boaz to redeem his beloved is fulfilled. But of course, the nearer kinsman must have the opportunity to accept or reject this responsibility. As Naomi expected, Boaz sets out that very morning to bring this to a resolution.

The Elders Assembled

(v.1-2)

The scene opens with the gathering the necessary parties. Boaz goes up to the city gates where this sort of official business was conducted. As he is there, *behold* the providence of God for the nearer kinsman wanders by! Boaz greets him and invites him to sit down.

Boaz also gathers 10 of the city leaders (elders) together to make the transaction official. They gather to sit and to adjudicate what is about to transpire. Certainly, there would have been a sense of growing excitement and interest as it is now evident that Boaz is about to do something requiring legal sanction. He has now convened an authoritative tribunal to witness and make official whatever transpires. And from the narrative itself, there is a growing crowd of interested on-lookers.

The Case Presented

(v.3-4)

Boaz makes the formal presentation to the nearer kinsman. Once again, I think his strategy reflects both his humility and integrity. He first presents the land as the essential issue in the transaction. Naomi has returned without a male heir nor any current prospects, so she is going to sell her land. Before it goes on the market, the kinsman-redeemer can buy it. This would keep it in the family generally, generate income for living and protect it for a future buy-back.

He also is clear that this is a formal request with his own interest and stake presented. In essence, Boaz wants to know if the nearer kinsman is going to exercise his option so that Boaz may proceed if he does not. He wants this man to know that this transaction will be formal and final as it will be done before the council of elders and with the witnesses who were standing around.

The Positive Response

(v.4c)

The nearer redeemer affirms his willingness to redeem the land. We are not told whether he is thinking in terms of his obligation before the Lord or his opportunity for his wealth. He does seem to see both as it unfolds. But initially, he is willing to redeem Naomi's land.

It would be very interesting to know how fast Boaz' heart is beating now. People being what they are, I'll bet the crowd is holding their breath.

The Implications Revealed**(v.5)**

Now Boaz plays his trump card. The kinsman-redeemer will not only purchase the land, but he will have a further obligation. Not only is Naomi's inheritance at stake, but so is the family name. The kinsman-redeemer will acquire Ruth, the Moabite with the responsibility to provide for her and to give her children, not in his own name, but rather in the name of Elimelech so that the family name may be preserved.

Here the kinsman-redeemer's second responsibility is brought to the fore. He is obtaining the land to protect it for Naomi's future. And, he will become responsible to father children through Ruth who will not bear his own name, Further, he will be financially liable for Ruth and that child until the child's adulthood.

The Negative Response**(v.6-8)**

This responsibility carries very little opportunity with it quite a bit of risk. Since he is already married he cannot put his natural children's inheritance at risk. I am not sure whether he was concerned about his wife's response to all this, but he is emphatic that he will not accept if it entails acquiring Ruth. Thus, he refuses his own right and assigns it to Boaz. He cannot and so Boaz may.

In order to certify that a person has the authority to act in the matter and understands the finality of what is being decided and affirmed, the person was to remove a sandal as they spoke and to give it to the other person. This sandal then became an attestation to the fact of the transaction. The author notes that this was a tradition in the "olden days". Here is an intimation that the book was written much later in Israel's history.

So, the nearer kinsman removes his sandal and gives it to Boaz while affirming that he is not interested in exercising his first option as the redeemer.

The Case Concluded**(v.9-10)**

Boaz then turns to the council of elders and the crowd standing around and calls on them to be witnesses that he is exercising the right. I imagine that this was not said in a somber, judicial, disinterested tone. This is a shout! This is the beginning of the sweetest providences and unexpected blessings that he could imagine. He has acquired all that belongs to Elimelech. He now holds their property and the responsibility for Naomi.

And Ruth is his as well. All through this episode notice how often Ruth is referred to as *the Moabite*. Imagine what it would be like if every time we referred to Tonya Brunk, we said, "Tonya, the French woman." If we were to do that it would sound not very nice. Except

that her being French in no way compares to Ruth being a Moabite. Yet here he is declaring that he will not only act as the kinsman-redeemer, but he will marry Ruth, *the Moabite*, and perpetuate the name and family of Elimelech. Now you better understand what he is doing here. He is in essence saying that their firstborn son will carry the name and inheritance of another. He will ensure that the name and the inheritance of Elimelech are preserved. Here his love for God in His Law and His love for Ruth intersect with a glad acceptance and affirmation of his standing as the kinsman-redeemer.

The Elders Affirmation

(v.11-12)

All of those around, the elders and the people respond with an affirmation and with a blessing. They will all be witnesses of this great moment, of this great deed of loyalty and love. You can be sure that this story was repeated over and over again down through history. “I was there, that day, you know. I was standing right there on that spot. Boy, you could see it on Boaz’s face when he knew he had won. He was almost beside himself. But you know what a man of dignity he was. Yet we all were thrilled that it had all worked out for him.” This sort of story was repeated over evening fires, generation after generation until in one son or daughter, the Spirit of God moved with sovereign power so that what had been told was put to writing.

But more importantly here is the great hope and blessing that is given to Boaz. There are four major aspects to this blessing.

- The desire for Ruth to be a successful mother (v.11a). Rachel and Leah were the mothers of the tribes of Israel. Having 12 sons would have been an extravagant blessing in their minds. So they long for the same for Ruth and Boaz.
- The exhortation to act worthily in the entire region surrounding Bethlehem (v.11b). This exhortation is grounded in Boaz’s demonstrated godliness, integrity and maturity. May he continue to act worthy of God’s name and character.
- The expectation of fame and reputation in Bethlehem itself (v.11c). The blessing here is that of having a name or renown, of being someone respected and sought out as one who walks with God and is blessed by God.
- The hope for children and family enlargement (v.12). Because of the similarity to the situation of Tamar and Judah where a foreign woman bears a child through a kinsman-redeemer, the blessing here connects them to the history of Israel.

Unquestionably, Ruth is here accepted as one of God’s people in full standing. Although Gentile born, clearly she is connected to the national and family lineage. While the structure here may be a typical covenantal and marriage blessing, surely the content is fitted for reali-

ties of Boaz and Ruth's union. What a glad day it was when with the joy of all the people, the sheltering wing of Yahweh gathered in a maid of Moab under the sheltering wing of her kinsman-redeemer.

A Joyful Restoration

(v.13-18)

This scene now brings the episode and the book to its climatic resolution. I love the understatement of the Bible. After all this hardship, work, hope and planning, the Bible just simply says, "She became his wife." In that rather simple sentence is great love and loyalty, devotion and delight, union and communion.

The Bearing of a Son

(v.13)

So they are married. And God attends their marriage with His divine blessing. Here, our author for the first time, *records* the direct intervention of God. Before, His hard and sweet providences have been subtly alluded to. Now, it is God who gives her conception. It is clear that we are to understand that up till now, with Mahlon, God had withheld her conception. His hidden providences are now made clear. She who was barren now, at this time, in this moment, in this way, bears the son that God has given.

The Blessing upon the Son

(v.14-15)

The women come forward once again to pronounce a blessing. This is (and continues to be) a dramatic device. This is like the chorus in the background of an opera whose singing both comments on the action and carries the theme along. So it is here.

The blessing is announced to Naomi. God has moved on her behalf for the fame of His own reputation. He has advanced His own name through his providences and provision. God has brought this son into her life to bring to completeness her fullness. He will restore and refresh. There is a clever ambiguity here where the intent and blessing of God is wholly mixed with the blessing and bounty of the child. God will restore life and tenderly nourish living in old age through this son.

And there is a rebuke as well. She had not valued Ruth, her love or her loyalty. As one writer put it, "At the beginning of the story Naomi is too consumed by her bitterness to acknowledge Ruth's presence; here she is too satiated by her contentment." (Webb, *Five Festal Garments*, p. 50). Yet Ruth was more to her than seven sons. This Moabite maid, married to her late son, now brings out of the emptiness and loneliness of death and destitution, fullness and love. Yes the son who is being born is amazing – but that ought to pale in comparison to the stunning love of Ruth.

You see, the true love story here is not just Boaz and Ruth. The true love story here, the greatest illustration of love in Ruth is Ruth's love and loyalty for Naomi. While we tingle at the unexpected and humble love of Boaz, I am in awe of Ruth. Now take this the right way – we might be able to love our spouses or our children in this way, but Ruth in this way loves a *mother-in-law*. Here is a selfless, artless, unexpected and fiercely devoted love that gained nothing and gave everything.

The Baby in Naomi's Arms (v.16)

Here is ultimate fullness. Naomi's arms and lap are full of a son. Now we see what has been hinted at through the book. The heart wrenching plight of Naomi is not just death of a husband, loss of her children, poverty in a foreign land and emptiness and bitterness in coming home. She has no heir, no son, no grandchild. And here is the culmination of her fullness – she nurses the child in his infancy who will nourish her in her frailty.

The Naming of the Son (v.17)

The women who rejoiced at the return of Naomi and the redemption of Ruth, now give this child a name. They call him Obed. Here is where, as one author has written, the “unexpected pathway to joy though shattered dreams.” (Larry Crabb) Here is a son who ends barrenness in Ruth and bitterness in Naomi.

The Significance of the Son (v.17b-22)

Why the book Ruth in salvation history? Is this more than just a story about a daughters-in-law, mothers-in-law, love, romance and even intimations of kindred redeemer? O, yes. Here is the significance of the son of Ruth and Boaz. He is the grandfather of David, the King.

Can't you see around the flickering firesides of Israel as this story was first told and later read, the delighted sigh at this sweetest providence and sure provision? Ah, David our greatest King was Obed's grandson. The genealogy here is book ended by the sons of kinsman-redeemers born to Gentile women. From Perez to Obed to David, God is powerfully preserving and protecting His people. If God will do this bring about David, what will He do to bring about the Messiah?. And now that our Messiah Redeemer has come, what will God do to bring about the culmination of His promises and the consummation of our hopes?

God will work in the miracles and in the mundane. thus we come to the fullness of the story of Ruth. God has moved in miracles and amazing exhibitions of His power for His people. And God moves in the unexpected love and loyalty of a Moabite maid to accomplish His purpose. How much of the long years of dutiful diligence will be un-

veiled in glory as the outworking of God's delight in the ordinary of our lives.

We also see, as God is at pains to show throughout the Old Covenant, that His grace is not just for Jews, but for Gentiles as well. Echoing throughout the Old Testament is the constant refrain that "the best is yet to come." The best is yet to come in a full and final sacrifice. The best is yet to come in a high and holy Redeemer. The best is yet to come in the glory of an exalted Ruler. The best is yet to come in grace and gospel to all the people groups. The best is yet to come in a new heavens and a new earth. The best is yet to come to gaze on Jesus' face.

Conclusion

This is a story about God:

- This is a story about the God who is sovereign over all, whose providences are working to serve the pleasures of His will and purposes of His glory.
- This is a story about the God who is to be glorified in everything, whose greatness and gladness give significance to the ordinariness of life. He is ever working to show us His glories in deaths and in births, in hardships and harvests, in hard work and in resting, in love and romance and marriage, in sons and daughters. There is in all these things something and Someone greater than ourselves.
- This is a story about the God of surprises, whose will and power are bent to bring about the man after His own heart, King David, through the unexpected kindness and mercy of a Moabite maid, Ruth.
- This is a story about the God who redeems, whose only beloved Son came as the kinsman-redeemer of His people. He paid the price and penalty for their sin, not with silver or gold or human wealth, but with inestimable treasure of His life in His blood.
- This is a story about the God of wonders, whose plans and purposes are served by His power for good of His people and glory of His Name. He moves through the bitter and sweet providences to transform the emptiness of our sin into the fullness of our salvation.