

## RUTH

### Introduction:

To. The book of Ruth does not speak of wars and military victories, nor of miracles, but of the affliction and then comfort of a humble daughter of God named Naomi, and tells the precious story of her daughter-in-law named Ruth.

B. It is another example of God's providence (1 Sam. 2:7,8), similar to the providence demonstrated in the book of Esther, although the circumstances are very different.

The conversion of Ruth, a foreigner (Moabite) reminds us that through the centuries many Gentiles became proselytes to the true religion, and makes us think of the future conversion of the Gentiles to the gospel.

D. But the most significant detail of the book is that by the providence of God, Ruth, a foreigner (Gentile), is included among the ancestors of Jesus Christ (4:17-22), thus demonstrating the great interest that God has always had in the Gentiles, although Israel has been His chosen people.

**1:1 -- "the judges."** This story occurred during the time of the judges, when "each one did what seemed right" (Judges 21:25). There was much injustice, barbarity, immorality and idolatry, but in the most wicked societies people of great piety arise, such as Naomi, Ruth and Boaz.

-- "**Hunger... Bethlehem**" (house of bread). It indicates that they were under punishment because of their transgressions against God (Lev. 26:19,20). The land flowing with milk and honey becomes a land of hunger when its inhabitants turn away from God.

**1:2 -- "Mahlon,"** husband of Ruth (4:10). 1:6 -- "The Lord had visited his people to give them bread." God "visits" with help (Gen. 2:1; Ps. 65:9; 106:4; Jer. 29:10; Luc. 1:68; Luc. 19:44); so we must do (James 1:27; Matt. 25:36).

**1:8-14 -- "Go, go back."** Didn't Naomi want to convert them? Didn't she want to take them to the land of Israel to know Jehovah? No doubt she loved them very much and would have liked them very much if they had both gone with her. But it was very important that they calculate expenses. It would not be easy to go to a foreign land where they were unaware of the customs and culture of the people, and where they themselves might be despised. If they were going to get discouraged afterwards, it was better that they did it at once, before leaving their land and their people. Orpah did return.

Naomi's words remind us of Jesus' teachings regarding what it costs us to be His disciples (Matt. 8:19,20; 19:22; Luc. 14; 25-33; etc.). It is much better to calculate expenses before committing. "It is better that you do not promise, and not that you promise and do not fulfill" (Eccles. 5:5).

**V. 9 -- "Rest... husband."** 3:1 "My daughter, shall I not seek a home (rest) for you, that it may be well with you?" The word translated "home" is the word "rest." In God's plan the woman finds her "rest" as wife and mother (1 Tim. 2:15; 5:14). But the woman must be very patient in selecting a husband, because in many homes there is more torment than rest. Every woman must imitate Ruth's patience, humility, and integrity to have a true "rest" in her home.

**1:15 -- When Orpah said goodbye,** Naomi says to Ruth, "Behold, your sister-in-law has turned to her people and her gods; turn after her." But in Ruth there was another spirit (Num. 14:24). She was subjected to all tests. If anything had made him desist from his firmness, it would have been Orpah's decision; but Ruth passed the test. It was well resolved (v. 18). She had her convictions, and she had the courage to support them.

**1:16,17 -- One of the most moving texts in the Bible** is the expression of Ruth's great loyalty to Naomi and to God. This mother-in-law was of another race and another religion, a religion not appropriate in the eyes of the Moabites. In a few seconds we can read this text, but how difficult to appreciate the difficulty of this decision, and the beauty of this loyalty!

These words are sometimes quoted at wedding services to express devotion among the bride and groom, and they are indeed very appropriate words. And not only for engaged couples, but also for siblings, parents and children in the family, and for brothers in Christ. It was not only an expression of the lips, but of the heart, as the subsequent story of his life clearly confirms.

**1:20 -- "Mara" (bitterness).** The name "Naomi" means "affable," but because of her life experiences prefer to be called "mara," but her faithfulness to God and Ruth's loyalty erased her bitterness. God has taken away the bitterness of many lives with His wonderful provisions. Such examples should encourage us to always hope on God and put all our trust in Him and His teachings.

**2:1,2 -- "I pray that you will let me go into the field, and I will gather ears."** Ruth had many very admirable qualities. One of them was her humility (willing to work in the harvest) and another was her industry ("she is from morning until now, without resting even for a moment", v. 7).

Lev. 19:9,10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-22 are texts that explain the very benevolent law that gave the poor and strangers opportunity to work. Providing the opportunity to work is a thousand

times better than charity. The poorest can maintain their sense of worth and dignity if they can work to earn their bread. Work is a great blessing from God. Adam worked tending the Garden of Eden before falling into sin (Gen. 2:15); The work fits in the paradise and contributes to their happiness.

Ruth realized this law and wanted to take advantage of it. She was willing to work in the harvest, like a poor man who collected leftover ears. All who sincerely want to work must be willing to work in the fields, or anywhere where they can earn their daily bread. If there were such a provision in everyone, there would not be so much unemployment.

**2:4-15 -- Now Boaz's noble character is demonstrated.** He was an exemplary man in Israel. In v. 4 we see his nobility and humility in his dealings with the reapers. Then he made ample provision for Ruth: in v. 8, he tells her not to work in another field, that there in his field she had secure employment; she would be with Boaz's maids for protection; in v. 9 I leave orders with the servants not to disturb her (or embarrass her, v. 15; or rebuke her, v. 16); I could confidently eat and drink with them. Why so many favors? Because of Ruth's good reputation for having left her parents and her land to come with her mother-in-law to an unknown village.

In v. 12, the expression "under whose wings you have come to take refuge" indicates God's protection (Gen. 15:1; Ps. 36:7; 57:1; 91:4), and was also used with regard to the protection of proselytes to the true religion.

**2:19,20 -- Now Naomi takes advantage of another very important law (Deut. 25:5,**

"When brothers dwell together, and one of them dies, and has no son, the wife of the dead shall not marry a strange man outside; her brother-in-law will come to her, and take her for his wife, and make kinship with her.") Such was the case with Ruth: her husband, Mahlon, died childless; now his wife, Ruth, should not marry another strange man. It was up to the brother-in-law, or the next of kin, to take Ruth for a wife so that the name of Mahlon would not perish, nor that his inheritance would be lost.

God made very special promises to Abraham, earthly as well as spiritual promises. He promised him a nation and a land. Therefore there were very special laws that guaranteed the preservation of the name, family, and property of each Israelite. This is one of them.

This means that Ruth, with Naomi's help, had the full right under the law of Moses to seek another husband among her husband's closest brothers or relatives who would raise up offspring on behalf of the deceased. It is very important to understand this before forming an opinion about the way Ruth approached Boaz. What she did was done with all discretion and

modesty, and with the full support of the law. This is confirmed by the reaction of Boaz, a great man of God.

**3:1-5 -- Naomi understood the law and intended to take advantage of the provision made in she for Ruth.** Naomi was a prudent woman and there is nothing of deceit or dishonesty in the plan she proposed. Ruth was also a very modest woman, and she accepted Naomi's advice and obeyed her in everything.

**3:6-18 -- This behavior of Ruth** surprises us because we have no such laws or customs now. Confirmation that Ruth's conduct was chaste and acceptable is seen in Boaz's reaction. There was no word of censure, but only words of praise.

He says that 'you have done your last goodness better than the first, not going in search of the young, whether poor or rich' (v.10). The first kindness was the kindness she used to Naomi, leaving her land and kinship to accompany her. This "last kindness" is Ruth's willingness to fulfill God's law regarding her first husband, lest his name and inheritance be lost.

It is likely that Ruth was a beautiful and desirable woman. What Boaz says indicates that she could surely have found a husband among the young men.

V. 14, there was no sin in what Ruth did, but there are people who judge according to appearance (Jn. 7:24) and not according to truth; That is why to be discreet, and not to give the enemy occasion to blaspheme, Boaz said, "Let it not be known that a woman came to the threshing floor."

**4:1 -- Boaz, always correct and lawful in his behavior,** "went up to the door" (seat of government), gathered the legal number of men to judge the case, and presented it to them. And the fact was that there was another relative closer to Mahlon than Boaz (3:12) who should comply with this law.

**4:3,4 -- Boaz explains the case to the other relative.** Land is available, and the other relative wanted it ("I will redeem").

**4:5 -- But the matter was twofold:** Mahlon left land that should be redeemed in his name; and he also left a wife: "On the same day that you buy the lands from Naomi, you must also take Ruth the Moabite, wife of the deceased, that you may restore the name of the dead man to his possession."

**4:6 -- He answered, "I cannot redeem for myself, lest I damage my inheritance."** Then he recognized that if he married Ruth it would be to raise up offspring for Mahlon, and that the land he redeemed would be the possession not of his own, but of the family of the deceased.

He didn't want to invest money in such an arrangement. In his selfishness and materialism he lost the great blessing of having Ruth for a wife.

According to the law (Deut. 25:9) the sister-in-law (in this case Ruth) had the right to remove his shoe and spit in his face, saying, "So shall it be done to the man who will not build his brother's house." This denotes the seriousness of the case in God's eyes. The text does not say that Ruth spat in his face, but she did take off his shoe indicating that he did not have the right to step on that land.

**4:10 repeats the purpose of the law:** "I take for my wife Ruth the Moabite, wife of Mahlon, to restore the name of the deceased upon his inheritance, so that the name of the dead should not be erased from among his brothers and from the gate of his place." The firstborn of Ruth and Boaz (Obed, v. 17) succeeded "in the name" of the deceased, "that the name of the deceased may not be blotted out of Israel" (Deut. 25:6).

**4:17-21 -- The ancestors of Jesus Christ.** The name of this moabite will be remembered forever. Her great loyalty to Naomi and her faithfulness to God were amply rewarded. Naomi and Ruth diligently turned to two important laws of God, and were greatly rewarded. God's laws are good, they are for the welfare and happiness of His people (Deut. 6:24). Ruth, then, was David's great-grandmother from whose offspring the Christ came.

Ruth, the Moabite, what an unlikely candidate for this great honor! Gentile women were kept in a very low position in society. They were mistreated and abused, and for this reason there was no lack of Gentile women who became proselytes to the religion of Jews to enjoy a higher and more respectful position. True female deliverance came with the gospel, Gal. 3:28.

*[Wayne Partain, December 1, 2022, translated from Spanish with Microsoft Word]*