

## RUTH

had told Ruth to stay at home and await the outcome. She instructed her to learn in this way how the matter would fall. It was more needful for Ruth to put her confidence in Boaz than for her to take any other actions on her part. Naomi believed Boaz to be a man of deep faith, and she must have had faith in God's providence for the outcome of Ruth's association with Boaz.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 3

1. Where was Boaz winnowing grain?
2. Where did Ruth lie down?
3. What did Ruth ask Boaz to do for her?
4. Did Boaz scold Ruth for coming to his threshing floor?
5. What kind of woman did Boaz say all the people in the city knew Ruth to be?
6. Why did Boaz not marry Ruth immediately?
7. In what did Boaz put grain for Ruth?
8. How much grain did Boaz give Ruth?
9. What kind of grain did Boaz give her?
10. How long did Ruth stay with Boaz?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER. 4

Vv. 1- 5 *The near kinsman approached.* Boaz went to the gate of the city and waited for the approach of the man who was a kinsman nearer than he. When he came by, Boaz approached him. The kinsman was ready to redeem the land which had belonged to Elimelech; but when he was reminded of Ruth being Mahlon's widow and his responsibility to marry her, he declined to accept his obligations.

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

- Vv. 6-12 *Boaz married to Ruth.* When the kinsman nearer to Elimelech than Boaz refused to take Ruth as his wife, Boaz called the elders of the city to witness the man's refusal. Boaz then purchased the property himself and stated his intention of marrying Ruth. The men of the city gave Boaz their blessing, praying for Ruth to be like Rachel and Leah, the two wives of Jacob to whom were born the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- Vv. 13-22 *The birth of Obed.* The women of the city rejoiced, especially on behalf of Naomi because she was not left without descendants. Even though she had lost her husband and her two sons in Moab, she lived to have the pleasure of nursing a grandchild. The genealogy of Ruth and Boaz is carried down to David, the second king of Israel. Since it goes no further, we assume it was written in the days of David before the birth of Solomon.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Be not slothful in business (Romans 12:11).* Boaz lived up to the reputation he enjoyed in Naomi's eyes. He went immediately to the gate of the city where the men met to discuss the affairs of the day. Before long he met the man who had the priority in redeeming Elimelech's land. In the presence of ten men of the city, Boaz called to him to get his decision concerning the matter. God's people should ever be as full of alacrity and concern as they go about the work entrusted to them.

2. *They buy the poor for a pair of shoes* (Amos 8:6). The man who was nearer of kin than Boaz seemed quite anxious to have the land which had once belonged to Elimelech, but he was not interested in performing the right of a near kinsman in the matter of raising up children to bear the name of Mahlon. As in the days of Amos, a man was considered of little value; but the people were very much interested in possessions of every other kind.
3. "*Good tidings of great joy*" (Luke 2:10). The women of Bethlehem-judah rejoiced when a son was born to Boaz and Ruth. Their joy was enhanced since Naomi was not left without an heir. From this marriage of Boaz and Ruth came the family of David, the king of Israel who was a man after God's own heart. Every Christian mother and father rejoice at the birth of a child; for they see in their children the prospect of God's work being done among men. Man's greatest joy came when the Son of God was born.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Ruth Marries Boaz 4:1-22

#### *Boaz Redeems the Inheritance 4:1-8*

Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down.

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

3 And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's:

4 And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it.

5 Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.

6 And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it.

7 Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbor: and this was a testimony in Israel.

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

### 1. *Where was the "gate" to the city?* 4:1

The gate was the open space before the city gate. It was the forum of the city, the place where public affairs were discussed. The statement that he went up signified the ideal eminence of the place of justice to which a man went up (see Deuteronomy 17:8). In this instance, ten elders of the city were called to be witnesses of the business in hand. Lot was sitting in the gate of the city of Sodom when the two angels came to him (Genesis 19:1). The husband of the virtuous woman described in the book of Proverbs was "known in the gates when he sitteth among the elders of the land" (Proverbs 31:23). The meeting of Boaz and the other near kinsman was typical of life in Bible times.

2. *Was it customary to take ten men as witnesses?* 4:2

The law stipulated that matters should be decided on the testimony of two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6). A man might be condemned to death at the testimony of this small number of witnesses if the witnesses themselves were the first to lay hands on the accused. More serious matters were taken to the priests and the Levites for decision (Deuteronomy 17:9). God foresaw the day when the people of Israel would need a king and made regulations concerning his installation (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). Evidently the people of Israel had come to the place where they customarily had a council of ten men. Certainly none could say the matter was done "in a corner" when such a large number of people were involved in the decision.

3. *Why had the land been sold?* 4:3

Elimelech and his family were evidently in need. There was a famine in the land. It was so severe that Elimelech had taken his wife and two sons to flee to Moab in order to survive. He would have needed funds for making the journey, and this may have necessitated his surrendering his title to his land. Although he had to give up the land temporarily, it would have returned to his family in the year of jubilee. If there were a kinsman who could redeem it for him, it was the privilege of this man to assist his needy brother. If the man himself came into better times, he also could redeem the land.

4. *Why take Ruth instead of Naomi?* 4:5

Naomi was past the age of raising up children. The whole purpose of the Levirate marriage was to raise up children in the name of a deceased brother who had died without heirs. Boaz naturally married Ruth instead of Naomi, who had earlier indicated she was not considering marriage for herself. She had provoked Orpah and Ruth to deep thought about their plans by asking, "Are there

yet any more sons in my womb?" (Ruth 1:11). Later she said, "I am too old to have an husband" (Ruth 1:12).

5. *Why did the kinsman refuse his obligation?* 4:6

The kinsman was selfish. He said he was afraid to "mar" his own inheritance. What he meant by this is hard to determine. Some suggest he was unwilling to marry a woman who was of foreign extraction. If such were the case, he was prejudiced against the foreign nations. More than likely he was afraid later generations would not be able to make a distinction between children born to him in the name of Mahlon and those born in his own household. In this way, some confusion might arise over title to family property and genealogical data.

6. *What was the origin of the custom of removing the shoe?* 4:7

From the expression "formerly," and also from the description given of the custom in question, it follows that the custom had gone out of use at the time when the book was composed. This custom also existed among the Indians and the ancient Germans. It arose from the fact that fixed property was possessed by treading upon the soil. Taking off the shoe and handing it to another was a symbol of the transfer of a possession or right of ownership (see Deuteronomy 25:9).

7. *Was the law fully carried out?* 4:8

The practice of spitting in the face of one who refused to perform his Levirate duty had evidently ceased. The Law had stipulated that the widow would come to the man in the presence of the elders and loose his shoe from off his foot. She was also instructed to spit in his face and say, "So shall it be done unto the man that will not build up his brother's house" (Deuteronomy 25:9). As a result of this, the man was called in Israel "the house of him that hath his shoe loosed" (Deuteronomy 25:10). In this instance only the shoe was removed and given to

the neighbor. The years intervening between the giving of the Law and the time of Ruth had caused the people to drop the spitting in the face from the practice of the day.

*Boaz Marries Ruth 4:9-12*

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

10 Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day.

11 And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratha, and be famous in Bethlehem:

12 And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman.

8. *How could Naomi have the right to sell Elimelech's property? 4:9*

Property descended through the sons and not through the daughters of the family, but the law relating to the inheritance of the landed property of Israelites who died childless did not determine the time when such a possession should pass to the relatives of the deceased. Sometimes it may have been immediately after the death of the owner. At other times, it may not have been until after the death of the widow who was left behind (see Numbers 27:9 ff.). No doubt the latter rule prevailed at the time, having been

established by custom. Thus the widow remained in possession of the property as long as she lived. For that length of time she had the right to sell the property in case of need. Still, the sale of a field was not an actual sale of the field itself, but simply of the yearly produce until the year of jubilee.

9. *Why did the people pray for Ruth to be like Rachel and Leah?* 4:11

Rachel was the beloved wife of Jacob. She bore two sons to him, Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were given equal status in the house of Israel with the other sons, thus Rachel was the mother of three of the founders of the tribes of Israel. Leah bore six sons to Jacob and all of these became heads of the tribes. One, Levi, was the father of all the priestly family. The handmaids of Rachel and Leah gave birth to the other sons who became the heads of the tribes of Israel. The prayer of the people for Ruth was for her to be like these respected mothers of Israel.

10. *Why did the people wish Boaz to be like Pharez?* 4:12

Pharez was the son of Judah. He was born to Judah by Tamar (Genesis 38:29). The families of Judah were descended through him. Judah became the leading tribe of Israel. When Jacob blessed his sons and prayed for them, he predicted the preeminence which would belong to Judah (Genesis 49:8-12). Since Judah was such a leading tribe and his families were counted through the descendants of Pharez, the people of Bethlehem, a city in Judah, could think of no greater blessing than for Boaz and his family to be like the family of Pharez.

*Ruth Bares a Son* 4:13-17

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son.



14 And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.

15 And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him.

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

17 And the women her neighbors gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

*11. Why was Naomi congratulated? 4:14*

Her family was not extinct. She had suffered severe losses in the deaths of Elimelech, her husband, and Mahlon and Chilion, her two sons. When she came back to Bethlehem, she felt God had dealt harshly with her. She even asked the people not to call her Naomi any more. Now her fortunes were changed. She indeed deserved the name, Naomi. She was blessed and happy. The women of the community prayed for God's richest blessings to be upon Naomi.

*The Ancestry of David 4:18-22*

18 Now these are the generations of Pharez; Pharez begat Hezron,

19 And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab,

20 And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon,

21 And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed,

22 And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.

12. *At what period was this?* 4:20-22

Obed was David's grandfather. If David were born when Jesse was fifty years old and Jesse was born when his father was at a similar age, we would expect this marriage and birth to have occurred at least a century before the time of David. David came to the attention of Israel when he slew Goliath. Later, he became king at the age of thirty. We are fairly certain of his era as beginning around 1010 B.C., thus the events recorded in the book of Ruth must have transpired sometime during the middle of the twelfth century before Christ.

13. *When was the Book of Ruth written, and for what purpose?* 4:22

It was written before Solomon but after David was a popular hero. If Solomon had been born when Ruth was written, it is natural to expect his name would appear in the genealogy. Since his name is not there, we assume the book was written prior to the time of his birth. Samuel did not live to see David on the throne. His death is recorded in I Samuel 25:1, therefore we place the date of writing as somewhere near 1015 B.C. This would have been after David came to national prominence by killing Goliath (I Samuel 17). He was also a man of war who went in and came out from among the Israelites with great dignity. They sang songs celebrating his prominence; and during this time after his anointing by Samuel (I Samuel 16) and before he became king (II Samuel 2), the book must have been written.

14. *What is the significance of the closing verses?* 4:18-22

The genealogy closes with David, an evident proof that the book was intended to give a family picture from the life of the pious ancestors of this great and godly king of Israel. For us the history which points to David acquires a still higher signification from the fact that all members

## RUTH

of the genealogy of David whose names occur here are also found in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. The passage is given by Matthew word for word in the genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1:5, 6a). In view of this, we see this history looks not so much to David as to Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed by all as the Savior and Redeemer of the human race. We learn with what wonderful compassion the Lord raises up the lowly and despised to the greatest glory and majesty.

15. *What state of society under the judges does the book indicate?*

Many of the people were faithful to the Law. They were without central government. Matters such as the redeeming of land by the marrying of widows were handled by the council of men who met in the city gate. All in all, it was a time of peace and prosperity except for the terrible famine which must have been brought on the people by the invasion of the Midianites. They were an agricultural people and took pleasure in the common things of life. Women rejoiced when a healthy child was born to one of their number, and the leaders of the community prayed for rich blessings to be upon husbands and wives whose marriages were consummated in their presence. Certainly, mankind has known cruder eras, and Israel's crying for a king must have been more from selfishness than from actual need.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 4

1. Where did Boaz go to meet the near kinsman?
2. How many men did Boaz call to witness the transaction?
3. In whose name was the property in question?
4. Why did the kinsman refuse to enter into the transaction?

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

5. What article of clothing was exchanged to witness the transaction?
6. Whose wife had Ruth been?
7. Whom did the people wish Ruth to be like?
8. To whose house did they wish the house of Boaz to be like?
9. What was the name of the son born to Boaz and Ruth?
10. In whom did the genealogy of Boaz culminate?