

RUTH

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The book of Ruth is about friendship, the protection of a widow under Levite law, gives a picture of the Lord Jesus as the kinsman-redeemer.

What follows below is a brief sketch of this book.

Ruth was a Moabitess and the great grandmother of King David. Her mother-in-law was Naomi who was married to Elimelech and they had two sons, Mahlon who married Ruth and Chilion who married Orpah.

They were an Israelite family but because of a famine, this family moved from Bethlehem to Moab but, sadly, Mahlon and his brother both died. Elimelech also died.

Eventually, Naomi and Ruth moved to Bethlehem and Ruth gleaned in a field belonging to Boaz who was a close relative of Elimelech. By the law of the Levites, a kinsman was obliged to marry Ruth the widow of Mahlon but Boaz was second in line.

The Levite law was that if a man in Israel died without leaving his wife a son then it was the duty of the nearest relative of the deceased man to marry the widow of his deceased son and to have a child with her and the refusal to do so was a disgrace.

Noami sent Ruth to the threshing floor at night and was told to lay at Boaz's feet. In chapter 3, we learn of Ruth accepting the protection of Boaz, her kinsman. It seems that Naomi did not know about a nearer kinsman or may be she did, but did not like him but Boaz knew him and, in chapter 4, Boaz discusses matters with him in the presence of ten elders of the town. He says that Naomi is to sell land that belonged to Elimelech but, he said to this other man, I suggest you buy it and the reply was, I will redeem it. Boaz continued, If you redeem it, you also gain Ruth. The man protested and said, Then I cannot redeem it for it will affect my own property and estate.

Boaz married Ruth and they had a son whom they called Obed, who was the father of Jesse who, in turn, was the father of David.

In Boaz, we have the kinsman redeemer who is a picture and foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus. He is the ultimate kinsman -redeemer who will take a bride, the church. Christ is the Heavenly Bridegroom and the Bride is called the Lamb's wife. The Lord Jesus was hailed as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world and the church is made up of all who have trusted in the Lord Jesus as Saviour and have everlasting life. The church is sometimes called the Body of Christ, the People of God and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. As Henry Durbanville said of Christians in his book entitled, The best is yet to be.

The often quoted verse in Ruth comes from chapter 1 verse 16 where Ruth says to Naomi, ' Entreat me not to leave thee for I will go whither thou goest and there I will lodge Thy people shall be my people and thy god, my god.''. Naomi had previously encouraged Ruth to return to her own people. In saying this, Ruth displayed her affection and loyalty and made an oath invoking the Lord's judgement if she failed to fulfil it.

Naomi and Ruth had grief in common and, in one sense, were alone. Ruth was going to a different land and culture. It was a step of faith. She loved Naomi dearly and I suspect wanted to look after her but that care was mutual..There was a loving bond there.

There is so much tenderness here and this is admirable. How much more is there in the tenderness of the Lord Jesus. How much more the love of the Lord Jesus for His own. The greatest of the prophets reminds us that the People of God are loved with an everlasting love.

It passeth knowledge, that dear love of Thine,
My Jesus, Saviour, yet this soul of mine
Would of Thy love, in all its breadth and length,
Its height and depth, its everlasting strength,
Know more and more.

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