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RUBIES FROM RUTH
An exposition from the book of Ruth

By W. G. Heslop

Zondervan Publishing House
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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To Sarah A. Beardsley,
an elect lady and true friend, this volume is lovely dedicated by the author.

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Part 1
INTRODUCTION

The book of Ruth is the eighth book of the Bible. The number "eight" is the number which
signifies some thing new, a new beginning. Christ arose from the dead on the first day of the week,
which is the eighth day.

Noah was the eighth person (II Peter 2:5), and eight people were saved in the Ark. Jewish boys were circumcised on the eighth day. Christ revealed eight Beatitudes, which marked a definite new order. The book of Ruth also reveals something new and something delightfully different. Had it not been for the so called "little" book of Jude we never would have known that Enoch was a prophet of the Lord. That Enoch was a prophet and that he prophesied of Christ's Second Coming and that the Devil and an archangel contended for the body of Moses, is found only in the book of Jude.

Such little books as Obadiah, Philemon, Jude and Ruth become exceedingly important to us. They are full of fine flour, meat and fatness for the faithful followers of the Son of God. What an incalculable loss to the Church and to the cause of Christ had the book of Ruth been omitted from the sacred canon! The book of Ruth is the book which reveals the calling and consecration of the Gentiles and the marriage of Boaz (the Lord of the harvest) to the redeemed and rejoicing Ruth.

The title of, the book, Ruth, is taken from the name of the Moabitess whom Boaz married, and who became one of the ancestors of Christ the Messiah.

The author of the book was probably Samuel. It bears the stamp of genuineness. On its every page the finger of the Holy Spirit may be found.

The date of the book is uncertain. It records events which happened in the time of the Judges.

The book is sandwiched between the books of Judges and Samuel. The adoption of Ruth into the assembly of God prefigured the future gathering of the Gentiles into the fold of Christ. The Gentile Ruth became the bride of the Jewish-born Boaz, the lord of the harvest.

The book of Ruth consists of less than one hundred verses, and yet it would be impossible to exhaust it during the lifetime of a minister preaching from it every Sunday.

It is a garden enclosed, a mine filled with the rarest and richest gems and rubies, a treasury of illuminating truths.

The book of Ruth is sandwiched between the books of Judges, which speaks of failure, and Samuel, which foreshadows the kingdom of Christ. The book of Genesis is the book of beginnings, setting forth the beginnings of the universe, sin, judgment, man, the Hebrew race from Abraham, the Israelitish race from Jacob and the Jewish race from Judah. Genesis is the book of beginnings.

The book of Exodus is the book of redemption, setting forth redemption by power (the Plagues), blood (Passover), faith (the Exodus) and discipline (Shur, Marah, Elim, Sinai). Exodus is the book of redemption.

The book of Leviticus is the book of worship, setting forth the worship of the redeemed through a priest (Aaron), priests (Aaron's Sons), sacrifices (bulls, goats, lambs, etc.) and the Tabernacle. Leviticus is the book of worship.

Numbers is the book of walk and warfare, setting forth the believer's walk and warfare after he has been redeemed and has become a worshiper of the true and living God. Numbers is the book of walk and warfare.

Deuteronomy is the book of obedience, setting forth the necessity of obedience for all who have been redeemed. It is the spiritual book of the Pentateuch, insisting upon implicit obedience to Jehovah, His Word and His laws. Deuteronomy is the book of obedience.

Joshua is the book of possession, setting forth the exalted privilege of the obedient believer, of entrance into and possession of his inheritance in the land of Canaan. Across the Jordan of death to sin and self the happy and holy, redeemed, worshipful and obedient believer enters the Promised Land and then slowly but surely possesses his possessions. Joshua is the book of possession.

The book of Judges is the book of failure, setting forth the miserable failure of God's people because of sin. Disobedience always brings distress, doubt and death. God raised up deliverers who were each a type of Christ. The book of Judges is a prophetic history of Christendom. Judges is the book of failure.

The book of Samuel is the book of the kingdom, setting forth (1) the united kingdom under Saul, David and Solomon and (2) the beginning of division which ended in the disruption and doom of Israel as a nation. Between the book of failure (Christendom) and the books of the kingdom (Millennium) is the book of Ruth, which sets forth the marriage of Boaz (Christ) and Ruth (the bride).

The message of Genesis is, "Begin with God;" in Exodus, "Be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;" in Leviticus, "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;" in Numbers, "Walk by faith and not by sight, and fight the good fight of faith;" in Deuteronomy, "Keep spiritual and be obedient;" in Joshua, "Enter and possess your inheritance in the Promised Land of full salvation;" in Judges, "When you fail, look to your Deliverer;" in Ruth, "Abandon yourself to your Boaz;" and in Samuel, "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you."

If we begin with God (Genesis), be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb (Exodus) and worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness (Leviticus), and fight the good fight of faith (Numbers), keep spiritual and obedient (Deuteronomy), get sanctified wholly (Joshua), in times of testing, trial and failure look to Christ the Deliverer (Judges), abandon ourselves to our Boaz and His will, Word and work, we shall become His happy bride (Ruth) and at last enter the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Samuel).

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Part 2

THE STORY IN A NUTSHELL

There are only two books of the Bible which bear as their title the name of a woman, and, strangely enough, one was a Gentile (Ruth) and the other a Jew (Esther). Ruth, the Moabitish maiden, by her own choice the handmaid of Boaz, and Esther, the Hebrew captive amid the pomp and pride of a heathen palace, were both a blessing to the world. The kindly character who is the heroine of the book of Ruth has not only distinguished herself by having her name placed at the head of an inspired volume but countless thousands of sweet girl babies have been named after her. The holy influence of this little book, the book of Ruth, has been felt around the world.

The scene is laid in the beautiful little town of Bethlehem-Judah in the land of Canaan. Bethlehem means "the house of bread," and Judah means "praise." The land of Canaan is God's place for God's people, their promised inheritance. Canaan is entered after Egypt has been forsaken, the Law given, worship commenced and Jordan and Jericho overcome. It is the present possession of the people of God, the promise of the Father, the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey, fruit which is unto holiness and the end everlasting life.

A certain man whose name was Elimelech, with his wife Naomi, enjoyed their inheritance in the center of God's will in God's land. The word Elimelech means, "My God is King," and Naomi means "pleasant." Here is a man found in the center of the will of God, with God as his King, living in the house of bread, in the place of praise and with a pleasant wife. They also were Ephrathites, which means "fruitful." They not only enjoyed their Canaan inheritance but they brought forth fruit, they were fruitful in the land. Something, however, went wrong.

They evidently became careless and indifferent in the things of God. They became lean in their souls and sick in their hearts. This is seen from the fact that they named their baby boys Mahlon and Chilion. The word Mahlon means "sick," and Chilion means "pining." What miserable names for sons! Why were they not named Enoch, or Daniel, or Judah, or Asher, or Joseph? The answer is easy: they were named "Sick" and "Pining" because of the condition of Father and Mother whose hearts were sick and pining, and consequently their fruit was sickly and pining. In this weakened condition of soul, Elimelech and Naomi came face to face with a fearful crisis in their lives.

A terrific test and trial came to them for which they were utterly unprepared. "It came to pass . . . that there was a famine in the land." Elimelech and Naomi soon reached the bottom of the flour. Under this test they decided to leave Canaan and go down to Moab, intending only to sojourn there for a little while. Think of it: they left Canaan, the center of the will of God, God's place for God's people, and went DOWN to Moab, to their godless relations and friends. Their plan was to sojourn (v. 1) but they continued there (v. 2). Elimelech and Naomi failed in the test. Turning their back upon God's land, they arrived in Moab, AND CONTINUED THERE. The years swiftly passed, and yet they continued in Moab. Elimelech took sick and died, died in Moab, died outside the will of God, died outside the land of Canaan, died outside of God's place for God's people.

Elimelech and Naomi failed God, went down to Moab, and died there. A grave was dug on the lonely hills of Moab. A funeral procession wended its weary way to the lonely grave. Elimelech was buried in Moab, although his inheritance was Canaan. Naomi, now a widow,

wended her weary way home. "Home" did we say? At least to a house, a clear title for which she may have possessed, but obtained at such a cost. The sorrows of Naomi were just beginning. It is a fearful thing to fail God. Her two boys, Mahlon and Chilion, were Hebrews, and Canaan was their birthright. It was unscriptural for Hebrews to court and marry Moabites, but Mahlon and Chilion took them wives of the women of Moab. Elimelech and Naomi failed God; Elimelech died outside of his inheritance, Naomi became a widow and her two boys were wrongly mated. Years rolled on and one day Mahlon took sick, AND Mahlon died, AND died in Moab. Soon after, Chilion took sick, AND Chilion died, AND died outside of his inheritance. Three graves with three mounds finally marked the spot where the bodies of three Hebrews lay covered with the cold sod of Moab. Three weary, sad and sorrowing widows, with scalding tears plowing furrows down their cheeks, made their way to a house which they once called home, but in which there were now three vacant chairs.

Night after night three pillows were wet with the tears of three weeping widows. Day after day the house seemed more and more dreary, desolate and hopeless. At last, bowed down with grief, Naomi resolved to return to her first love. A wanderer for ten years, she now pined for the Promised Land. Naomi made known her intention to Ruth and Orpah and they too decided to leave Moab and cross over into Canaan's land. Yes, we always take others with us. If we fail God, others will fail God; if we obey God, others will obey God; if we fail, others will fail; if we triumph, others will triumph. Happy day when a person resolves to find again the center of the will of God. Good-bye to the past life, past associations and past pleasures.' Penitent, transformed and triumphant, Naomi arose with her daughters-in-law and departed from Moab. Happy day!

With faces set, they pressed on towards the Promised Land. On the borders of the land, however, Orpah hesitates, turns back and the curtain drops with Orpah going back, back to her idols, BACK to her old life, BACK to her old ways and BACK to her gods.

Nothing more is mentioned about Orpah. Unwilling to pay the price, she goes back to her gods. Three millenniums have passed since Orpah made her decision and one can only wonder what she thinks about it now. Ruth put her will on the side of the will of God and settled to go with Naomi, Naomi's God and the people of God. Ruth took the step of faith, crossed over into the land of Canaan, and found fellowship with a holy God and God's holy people.

Ruth however was not only steadfastly minded to enter the land of grapes and pomegranates, she also desired to help in the harvest field Ruth was eager to serve Boaz, the lord of the harvest, was a good and gracious, loving and lovable, winsome and wealthy, compassionate and kind kinsman. Who would not want to serve such a lord? Who would not wish to help in such a harvest field? Ruth not only left Moab, not only said good-bye to her past, not only forsook the pleasures of Moab, not only possessed her possessions in the land of Canaan, but she found a place of service. Serving, she also found shelter under the wings of the God of Israel. She dipped her morsel in the same dish with Boaz. She became one with the lord of the harvest, and Boaz reached her parched corn. The poor and penniless Ruth now feasts with Boaz the loving lord of the harvest. OH, what a change!

"He reached her parched corn" -- not leeks, onions or garlic, but parched corn, which is Canaan food. No wonder that she did eat and was sufficed. All this, however, was just the

beginning of better days. The lord of the harvest was planning better things for Ruth. Handfuls of purpose were dropped for her, and day after day Ruth gleaned in the field. Our heavenly Boaz is constantly dropping handfuls of purpose for those who are serving in His field. He supplies the needs of those who suffer and serve. The sweets are for the sufferers and servers in the field. The glory is for the gleaners. It is not enough to leave Egypt or Moab; It is not enough to stay out of Jericho and Babylon. We must enter Canaan, possess the land, and help with the harvest. Say not, "There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest," for the fields are white; the harvesters are busy and all are needed.

Ruth, however, was urged on to yet better things. It was fascinating to feast with Boaz. It was glorious beyond words to describe, to serve in his field. It was delightful to dip in the same dish with the Lord of the Harvest. A handful of purpose was wonderful but she pressed on to still better things. Deep down in her heart, she resolved to be his bride. In order, however, to become the bride of Boaz, she was instructed that it was necessary to: (1) keep clean, outwardly, moment by moment, day by day and hour by hour ("Wash thyself therefore"); (2) keep under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It was not enough to enter Canaan; it was not enough to be baptized with the Spirit; she must walk in the light and keep under the precious anointing of the Spirit, "Wash thyself therefore, AND anoint thee." She must also (3) abandon herself unreservedly, completely and implicitly to Boaz. She must learn to trust him fully, and trusting him fully, she would find him wholly true. Ruth triumphed in the test. "She lay at his feet until the morning." This is the true place for the bride of Christ. Serving in the field, finding complete satisfaction in the lord of the harvest, and in faith and obedience abandoning herself to him, "she lay at his feet until the morning." If we would be a part of the bridehood saints, we too must stay at His feet UNTIL THE MORNING, Some of these mornings bright and fair the heavenly Bridegroom shall descend and the beautiful bride shall meet Him in the air.

* * * * *

Part 3 THE EXPOSITION Verse by Verse

The sacred and sublime beauty of this remarkable record cannot be surpassed. This "prose idyl" is so graphic that it grips the reader and holds his interest from beginning to end. Its sublime simplicity and trustful transparency stamp the narrative as a sincere and true record of events between the days when the Judges ruled and the setting up of the kingdom of Israel under Saul. God has never left Himself without a witness and even in the darkest days there have been those, who, like Elimelech, Boaz, Ruth, Simeon, Anna, Zacharias and Elizabeth, have lived near to God and kept the light of holy religion burning brightly.

The book of Ruth lifts the curtain which veils the private and domestic life of Naomi and Ruth. It discloses to us, even in those dark and dreadful days, the piety, integrity, self-sacrificing character and conduct, gentleness and charity of husbands and wives, mother-in-law and daughters-in-law -- all growing and cultivated amid the sickening scenes of war and strife and the abounding abominations of idolatrous worship. God has never left Himself without witnesses.

When Satan was busy corrupting the masses, God also was busy, and in His own way was moving ever forward toward the fulfillment of His own gracious purposes and plans for the race.

* * * * *

CHAPTER 1

"NOW"

The first word of the book of Ruth links the book of Judges to the book of Samuel. Exodus is joined to Genesis by the word "now." Leviticus is linked to Exodus by the word "and." Numbers is merged with Leviticus also by the word "and." Deuteronomy is attached to Numbers by the word "these," and thus the Pentateuch becomes one grand and glorious unit. Joshua is joined to Deuteronomy by the word "now." Judges is also linked to Joshua by the word "now," and Ruth is linked to Judges also by the word "now." The sixty-six volumes which compose the Holy Bible constitute one great, grand and glorious whole. It is impossible to grasp fully the import of any one book without understanding, at least in a measure, the preceding book or books. The treasury of truth known as the Bible has come from God and is a divine unit.

* * *

"IT CAME TO PASS"

There is always something coming to pass when God is around. Stagnation is impossible when God is present. The presence of God saves us from melancholia and monotony.

* * *

"WHEN THE JUDGES RULED"

The book of Ruth opens in the times of the Judges which was a time of anarchy, bolshevism, communism, strife, lawlessness and wickedness, every man doing "that which was right in his own eyes." The closing chapters of the book of Judges set forth in no uncertain terms exactly what happens when God lifts His hand and allows man to go his own way. The times of the Judges was the worst period in the history of the people of God. Each person was a law to himself, and all standards of truth and righteousness were disregarded. The horrible crimes chronicled in the book of Judges were made possible because God had been despised, His Word dishonored, and holiness rejected. Preachers and people alike were selfish and impure. Crime and chaos are always the result of the rejection of God's counsels. Law and order are impossible so long as men do that which is right in their own eyes. In the last analysis, the choice is always between Christ and chaos. To reject Christ and refuse obedience to Him is to invite chaos and ruin. The days of the Judges were dark, dreadful and dreary days. They were exceedingly trying times. Moses and Joshua were dead. Unfaithfulness prevailed and famine followed.

* * *

"IN THE LAND"

To the people of God, the land of Canaan was the land of promise and the place of their rest. That Canaan does not typify heaven is plainly seen from the fact that there was strife, famine, war and even death in Canaan. As Egypt typifies this present evil world, so Canaan typifies the experience of perfect love and perfect rest here and now which is enjoyed by faith.

* * *

"A FAMINE IN THE LAND"

The land to which reference is here made is the land of Canaan. Famine always follows disobedience and unfaithfulness. Famine is possible even in the land of Canaan. Under famine headlines humanity writes its history. There is always a famine in some lands -- either a famine of bread, or of sympathy, or of hope, or of truth and love. Unfaithfulness to God, disobedience to truth, rejection of holiness are always followed by famine. "A famine in the land" -- even the land of Canaan.

A want of bread in the house of bread! The willfulness, wickedness and waywardness of the people of God compelled El-Shaddai to hide His face. As certain as there is a God in the heavens, so certain is it that sorrow and sighing, sickness and want, famine and death follow sin. The famine about which the inspired writer speaks was undoubtedly occasioned by the depredations of the enemies of Israel, who carried off the corn and destroyed the harvest. Israel failed to drive them out and now they must endure the famine.

* * *

"A CERTAIN MAN OF BETHLEHEM-JUDAH"

Bethlehem means "the house of bread." Judah means "praise." Bethlehem-Judah means "the house of bread and the place of praise." To crown Christ as King and live in Canaan is indeed heaven begun on earth.

* * *

"WENT TO SOJOURN"

Under the pressure of a great TEST an ancient and honorable Hebrew family resolved to abandon their inheritance in Canaan and GO DOWN to seek satisfaction in the land of Moab. In looking for a livelihood they lost life, love and liberty. It was not the intention of Elimelech to live, abide or dwell in Moab; he planned only to sojourn there; he never dreamed of continuing there or dying there. The country of Moab was cursed by God and doomed to destruction. Christ is yet again to smite the corners of Moab. The Moabites were especially odious to the Jews. The Moabites had their origin in one of the darkest deeds recorded in Scripture. Ruth, the principal figure of the book, was a Moabitess. Grace, however, triumphs over every difficulty, leaps over

every barrier and jumps every hurdle. The book of Ruth shows the triumph of divine grace despite the most adverse circumstances.

The redeemed, sanctified and rejoicing Ruth was of the country of the miserable Moabites.

* * *

"ELIMELECH DIED"

Elimelech departed from Canaan, went DOWN, and died in Moab. He died among the enemies of God, and was buried outside of his inheritance. Very few people intend to continue in and die in a life of sin and disobedience. There is only one time however to stop sinning, and that time is NOW. Tomorrow is eternity. Unless we intend to die sinning, we should stop sinning now. Elimelech died in Moab.

"Elimelech seems to have been blamable, in removing from the ordinances and people of God. The famine was not so extreme but others could endure it; and he evidently was a person not likely to want the necessities of life." -- Scott.

* * *

"MAHLON AND CHILION"

The two sons of Elimelech represent his fruitfulness in the land of Canaan. Elimelech revealed his spiritual state by naming his first-born "Sick" and his secondborn "Pining." There is a profound meaning to names in the Scriptures. Eve named her second son Abel (vanity) and thus revealed the disappointment and chagrin of her soul over the conduct of Cain. Eve discovered that all was vanity and vexation of spirit long before Solomon was born. The fruit of Elimelech and Naomi was sick and pining. The little foxes that spoiled the vines had done their deadly work. Elimelech began well, but something hindered. What was it? Perhaps we had better ask what hinders us. Elimelech once enjoyed the milk and honey, figs and dates. He did run well and we are left to wonder what hindered him. The doctor and undertaker of Moab reaped the benefit of his backslidings. His compromisings ended in death.

* * *

"THEY TOOK THEM WIVES"

God gave Eve to Adam. This is always God's plan. He who is all-wise always gives that which is good and best. Sin came between man and God, and man began to choose his own ways and follow the sight of his own eyes, "Lamech took unto him two wives." Mahlon and Chilion pursued the same crooked course. "They took them wives," and, contrary to the Word of God, they were wives of Moab. God had definitely prohibited marriage with strangers. Marriage between a believer and an unbeliever is not only inexpedient but is very dangerous. Christ and Belial, light and darkness, sin and holiness are unalterably opposites. All unholy alliances are forbidden. Mahlon compromised with his conscience and trifled with the truth of God. His marriage to the

Moabitish woman constituted a clear violation of the commandment of God (Deut. 23:3). Mahlon and Chilion plainly pursued a path contrary to the commandments of God by taking to themselves the maidens of Moab.

* * *

"RUTH"

The principal figure in this unsurpassed "prose idyl" is Ruth. As a Moabitess she was particularly odious to the Jews. The Moabites had their origin in one of the darkest days and one of the most corrupting crimes of Old Testament history (Gen. 19). A Moabite was interdicted from entering the fellowship of the congregation of God (Deut. 23:3). Grace, however, triumphed over law, leaped every hurdle and bounced over every barrier; and Ruth the Gentile became the bride of Boaz the Jew, the restorer of life to Naomi the backslider. The word "Ruth" means "SATISFIED." While the people of God were forsaking Him, Ruth the Moabitess was seeking Him. While the chosen people were being punished for their perverseness and impurity, Ruth was being blessed for turning to Him. Without the beautiful and rich little book of Ruth, the fact that Ruth was an ancestress of Jesus Christ would have been unrevealed. Here is a sufficient reason for the Holy Spirit inspiring its pages and giving it a place in the sacred canon.

* * *

"MAHLON AND CHILION DIED ALSO"

For an Israelite to be childless and have the family name die out was considered an unspeakable calamity. The once happy and holy family of Elimelech was reduced to three weary, sad and childless widows, and all because Elimelech failed in the test, failed to wait patiently, failed to endure and believe where he was unable to see and feel, failed to keep his spiritual temperature at white heat, failed to keep his heart hot with old-time salvation, failed to walk, wait and work with a single eye to the glory of his Jehovah God.

* * *

"AND THE WOMAN WAS LEFT OF HER HUSBAND"

Woman's heart -- so capable of pleasure and pain- broken by bereavement. Hopes blighted that have but budded. The nest stirred and only the bare thorns and thistles left. Naomi -- a widow. Think of Hannah, the widow of Nain, she by the cross, and Naomi. What desolation and distress sin has caused! What sorrow sin has brought into our world! How many other worlds sin has stained we do not know, but if all the tears shed in our world could be gathered together, what an ocean they would form. If all the pain and heartache could be collected -- what an explosion! "The woman was left of her husband."

* * *

"SHE HEARD THAT THE LORD HAD VISITED HIS PEOPLE"

When the Lord visits US, others will hear about it. Tests may come, but if we hold steady, the Lord will be with us in the tests and take us triumphantly through them. It is far better to die a pauper in the Promised Land than to die a millionaire in Moab. The good news that God had visited His people was heard even in Moab. Some faithful messenger, unknown by name on earth, told the glad tidings that there was bread again in Bethlehem. In all ages and under all circumstances faithful witnesses have made known to a weary world that there is bread in Bethlehem. The poor, desolate and brokenhearted Naomi heard that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread.

* * *

"THEN SHE AROSE"

AFTER the death of her Hebrew husband, AFTER the marriage of her two sons to Moabitish women, AFTER the death and burial of her only sons, AFTER her heart had been broken by bereavement, and AFTER her soul had been crushed by corroding care, THEN she arose that she might return from the country of Moab. Sin always brings sorrow and suffering. Disobedience spells death. Sin, disobedience, willfulness and waywardness, always end in sorrow and death.

* * *

"OUT OF" (1:7)

"Get thee out" was the word of God to Abraham. "Out OF Egypt and INTO Canaan" was the command of God to the children of Israel. Separation always precedes sanctification. This evil world must be given up if heaven is to be gained. The swine troughs and hog pens must be forsaken if we would sit at Father's table and enjoy the sweets of the Savior's love and grace. "The friendship of the world is enmity against God."

* * *

"SHE WENT FORTH OUT"

If you have failed God, left Canaan, and are now outside His will, why not go "forth out?" Cease your wanderings, repent and return to Bethlehem-Judah, the house of bread and place of praise.

* * *

"SHE WENT FORTH OUT OF THE PLACE WHERE SHE WAS"

A decision was made which was sufficiently deep seated to cause her to leave the old place, the old crowd, the old pleasures and follies, and, like the Prodigal Son, start for home. Contrast (1) a wholly sanctified person walking in the light, with his face toward the sun and his

back upon Egypt, the Red Sea, the wilderness and the Jordan, and (2) a poor backslider from Canaan's beautiful land. Again, contrast a (1) happy home and husband, two beautiful baby boys, holy fellowships and pure worship and (2) widowhood, weeping, distressed, husbandless, childless, helpless and hopeless, with a broken, bleeding heart and a bitter spirit. May this be a sufficient warning to us all.

* * *

"GO, RETURN . . . TO . . . MOTHER'S HOUSE"

Naomi, walking by sight instead of faith, never intending to go far in disobedience, only meaning to "sojourn in Moab" but finally settling and dwelling there, allowing her children to marry contrary to the Word of God, blaming God for the sorrows brought upon herself by her own sin, perverting God's order in her own life and ways and now seeking to turn back those who would follow the right way, is a perfect picture of the poor backslider.

* * *

"GO, RETURN EACH TO HER MOTHER'S HOUSE"

Naomi had lost the zeal and fire of old-time Canaan salvation. She had lost her first love and desire to win souls to her God, and here actually encourages two lovely girls to start back to Moab. What a tragedy to get so far away from God and holiness after having once known the truth! Here is an Israelite influencing a Gentile away from God and Canaan. Naomi, once happy and holy but now sorrowing and sad, blames God for her backslidings and influences Orpah to return to her idols and gods -- an Israelite urging a Gentile to go back to the beggarly elements of the world. Instead of inviting them to God and Canaan she now is driving them away.

* * *

"FIND REST, EACH OF YOU IN THE HOUSE OF HER HUSBAND"

What blindness on the part of Naomi! The idea of finding rest and happiness in the house of a heathen husband! The idea of finding rest in marriage to a Moabite! It is indeed surprising how far a backslider may sink into blindness and unbelief.

* * *

"THAT THEY MAY BE YOUR HUSBANDS"

If Naomi had been as concerned about their spiritual rest as she seemed to be about their earthly rest it would have been much better for poor Orpah. Naomi's heart was still concerned about marriage and home and material things. Marriage and home does not necessarily mean happiness. Why not urge the two weary widows to hurry over into Canaan's happy land, instead of fussing about husbands and homes?

* * *

"WHY WILL YE GO WITH ME?"

Naomi intimates that she had no other sons to give them, that she was not with child, that she was too old to marry again and that though she should marry again and have children, yet they could not wait until such sons were of marriageable age.

* * *

"I AM TOO OLD"

There is something very pathetic, persuasive and affecting in the words of Naomi to her daughters-in-law.

First, she intimates that she has nothing to offer them in return for their friendship.

Second, she acknowledges her childless, unfruitful state.

Third, she confesses her hopeless condition.

Fourth, she philosophizes with them against any more delay in seeking husbands for themselves, and,

Fifth, she seems to blame Jehovah God for it all, and begs the lonely girl -- widows to return to their own country and settle among their own kith and kin.

Naomi is both bitter and blind, and this is ever the end of the backslider's trail. Backsliding makes a person old before his time.

"A good woman never grows old. Years may pass over her head, but, if benevolence and virtue dwell in her heart, she is as cheerful as when the spring of life first opened to her view. Who does not respect and love the woman who has passed her days in acts of kindness and mercy -- who has been the friend of man and God -- whose whole life has been a scene of kindness and love, and a devotion to truth? We repeat, such a woman cannot grow old. She will always be fresh and buoyant in spirits, and active in humble deeds of mercy and benevolence."

* * *

ORPAH

The story of Ruth and Orpah is a parable of spiritual life. Both came face to face with the choice between God and gods. Ruth counted all things loss that she might gain Canaan. Having forsaken all, she gained all. Religion without redemption proved too strong for Orpah went back to her relations and to her religion took the advice of Naomi. It was the kind of advice she wanted

and welcomed. If one wishes to return to one's own ways and one's own religion there is al ways some soured Naomi to advise the course which one prefers to pursue.

* * *

"IS GONE BACK"

Naaman was kind, generous and rich, a good husband, an ideal master to his men, considerate of his servants, every inch a nobleman, gentleman, soldier and citizen -- BUT he was a leper. Orpah was a kind and attractive creature, a dutiful and loving daughter-in-law, perfectly womanly and winsome -- BUT she went back to her people and her gods. The difference between mere kindness of manner and sweetness of nature and that unselfish love and self-sacrificing devotion which wins Christ and heaven is most vividly and beautifully depicted in the closing words of verse 14, "But Ruth clave unto her."

* * *

"HER PEOPLE AND HER GODS" (1:15)

Orpah went back to her relation and to her religion. In-laws and out-laws will hinder the progress of the soul on the highway of holiness. Religion without the Holy Ghost, confessions without the blood of Christ, religion without repentance and regeneration have been a stumblingblock in the path of people in all ages.

* * *

"What is there about friendship which made it possible for Henry Clay Trumbull to call it 'the master passion?' Have you in your own life any such relation which you can unreservedly call great? Is anything selfish and exclusive and limited ever great? What does real friendship demand and what does it test?" -- Charlotte H. Adams.

* * *

Orpah started and then td short of the goal posts. She continued for a while but lacked persistence and the will to finish. Like Lot's wife she perished between her Sodom and safety and salvation. She wept but went back to her own ways. Weeping cannot save. Without the will to persevere and pursue we may as well never start on the way to holiness and heaven. One may as well expect to reap a harvest from a bare rock, build a home on the Atlantic Ocean, stop the sun from shining, and expect to keep death out of the palace as expect to arrive in Paradise without patience, purity, persistence and perseverance. The American Indian who sold land for a string of beads was not more foolish than the Orpahs, Esaus and Sauls who sell out for a basin of broth. Better to have the Juggernaut of the Hindus pulverize the body to powder than to sell the soul for either barns, bungalows, or banana splits. The Orpahs and Sapphiras are not all dead.

We have often seen big ships out on the bay, swinging with the tide, and seeming as if they would launch out into the mighty ocean, and yet they do not, indeed they cannot. Down beneath the

water they are anchored. Many people seem at times to sway toward heaven, holiness and God, but they evidently remain anchored to some secret, self-chosen sin. Cain, Achan, Korah, Saul, Orpah, Demas, Ananias and Sapphira are examples and warnings.

* * *

LESSONS FROM ORPAH

I. It is possible to go a long way towards Christianity, and yet not be a Christian. It will not do to be almost, we must be altogether, decided for Christ. II. It is possible to deceive ourselves, and to think that all is right, when in truth all is wrong with our souls. III. Our religion will not profit us at all unless it be characterized by perseverance to the end. No grace, however bright and precious, will take us to heaven without perseverance. -- Hom. Com.

How many part with Christ at this crossway! Like Orpah, they go a furlong or two with Christ, till He goes to take them off from their worldly hopes, and bids them prepare for hardship, and then they fairly kiss and leave Him. -- Gurnall.

* * *

"Away with all mere affection which kisses, but does not cleave to Christ!"

* * *

"GONE BACK.. . UNTO HER GODS"

Evidently both Ruth and Orpah were idolaters. Think of two Hebrew youths marrying godless Moabitish women and dying outside of their promised inheritance! How tragic! How dangerous to marry contrary to the explicit statements of the Scriptures. Orpah wept, but weeping cannot save Orpah kissed her mother in law, but human affection cannot save. Orpah is gone back unto her gods!

* * *

THEY WEPT AGAIN

Orpah and Ruth wept. Together they had hoped and loved, and now together they weep. They have reached the parting of the ways, and unfortunately for Orpah, she kissed and left her mother in law, looked back and was lost. Not far from the kingdom, she nevertheless never entered it, but Ruth clave unto Naomi. Both Orpah and Ruth wept. Both were moved. Orpah, however, had nothing but emotion, which spent itself in tears and embraces, while Ruth had sufficient energy in her emotion to carry her into Canaan (holiness) and into the field of Boaz (service).

There is a religion which may be without emotion, but there is no uplifting power in it. Morality if not touched by emotion is colorless and inglorious.

There is a religion which is nothing but emotion, but, as in the case of Orpah, there is lacking a firm will and a steady persistence and endurance. The purely emotional type is fugitive and volatile and shallow.

There is also a religion filled with emotion and charged with purpose -- pure religion; Bible religion; Ruth's religion and the only religion worthwhile. Religion with nothing but emotion is false and fanatical. Religion without emotion is formal and dead. Religion filled with emotion and fired by a high and holy purpose is divine.

* * *

"RUTH CLAVE UNTO HER"

Ruth's resolution was made in the teeth of tremendous difficulties. Her past was against her. Cradled in a heathen home and schooled in the worship of immoral gods, she was utterly unfit to be a joint heir with the Hebrews. Naomi seemed against her. Naomi's tears and pleadings to return to Moab and find rest was hard to resist. Voices inward and outward urged her to return to Moab. Ruth, however, was a heroine in her own right. Neither height nor depth nor length nor breadth could shake her loose from her love of Naomi and Naomi's God. Again, the future was against her. Self-exiled from home and loved ones, it must have been difficult for her to decide, but she decided -- and decided in favor of Canaan and God.

Orpah, content with a profession of affection, returned to her people and to her gods. The kinsman who failed to follow the law of Moses and failed to fulfill his duty because of self-interest has not even his name mentioned. Ruth, giving up all to follow Naomi's God, rests in the lap of luxury and love and is ever lastingly remembered, blessed and happy.

The word "clave" is a very suggestive word. It is used of the clods of earth which cleave fast together (Job 38:38); of leviathan, the sea monster, the scales of which are joined one to another so that air cannot come between them (Job 41:15-17); of Naaman's leprosy, in judgment cleaving to Gehazi (II Kings 5:27); and of David who followed hard after the Lord (Psalm 63:8). The word "clave" as used in reference to the resolve of Ruth shows intense earnestness. There was no hesitation, no vacillation and no self-seeking. She was blessed with grit, grace and grip. Thank God, the Ruths remain with us.

Naomi left Canaan (holiness) full and came back empty, but, thank God, she came back. Despite her sorrow, despair and disappointment, she came back to her God and to her first love.

* * *

"It has been said, 'There is no test of a man better than the friends he makes.' It is as true to say, 'There is no better test of a man than the friends he breaks.' A man comes to you and says he has had his lesson and means to make a new start. But does he go back to the old set? That is the question. 'Can two walk together except they be agreed?' If you wish your friendships to be like Ruth's, steppingstones to heaven, let them be built like hers -- on Naomi's God." -- Rev. TV. Mackintosh Mackay.

* * *

ELIMELECH is a type of Israel. He was in the land, unfaithful and disobedient, forsaken by Jehovah, and died in disobedience.

NAOMI is a type of Israel in unbelief; she was away from the land and endured sorrow upon sorrow, but was finally restored and happy.

Boaz is a type of Christ as the Lord of the Harvest, Redeemer and Bridegroom.

RUTH is a type of the bride of Christ; a poor, penniless, helpless stranger, she became the happy bride of the lord of the harvest.

ORPAH is a type of the worldling; leaving Moab but halting on the borders of the Promised Land, she finally returned to her own ways and her own gods.

* * *

"RETURN THOU AFTER THY SISTER IN LAW"

What strange advice! Once living in Canaan and enjoying the good things of Bethlehem -- Judah but for ten years mixing with Moabites, Naomi now advises others not to enter Canaan, advises others to follow backsliders and with them go back to their own wicked worldly relations and religions. Strange advice indeed! Behold the influence of a wanderer from the paths of purity! Behold the height of folly to which a person may rise when once he steps from the highway of holiness. Think of it! "Return thou after thy sister in law."

Orpah went back. Ruth also was tempted to halt, hesitate and return to Moab. But what is there in Moab? Idols, graves, sorrow, disappointment, memories of the past, loneliness, despair and death. What is there in Canaan? The house of bread, God's land, God's will, God's people, Boaz, fields for service, grapes, figs, milk, honey, parched corn, fellowship with the lord of the harvest.

Ruth, thank God, resisted the temptation, stood the test; and while Orpah went back, back to her people and back to her gods, Ruth stepped over into Canaan's happy land, the home of God's happy people.

* * *

"WHITHER THOU GOEST, I WILL GO" (1:16)

This is one of the many faith decisions mentioned in the Bible.

"I will go, in the strength of the Lord" was the decision of David as he set out to witness for his Lord (Psalm 71:16).

"I will go" was the response of the Prophet Elisha as he set out with the sons of the prophets to enlarge the college (II Kings 6:3).

"I will go as at other times" was the determination of the trifling and selfish Samson as he raised himself from the lap of the deceitful and deceiving Delilah, not knowing that the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him (Judges 16:20).

"I will go" was the brave decision of the dutiful Deborah as she started to fight the battles of the Lord.

"I will go" was the final answer of Rebekah as she unselfishly risked her all to be the bride of Isaac (Gen. 24:58).

"I will go" was the heartsick decision of the so-called Prodigal Son as he headed for his father's house (Luke 15:18).

"I will go" was the resolve of Ruth as she nestled close to the bosom of Naomi.

* * *

Cursed by the law and with nothing to bring or give to Boaz except herself, Ruth becomes a Gentile fellow heir and finally the bride of Boaz, the lord of the harvest. Completely separated from her former life, religion and friends, unreservedly committing herself to the care and protection of Jehovah, and His people; humble, submissive and full of faith, Ruth renounced all freedom of choice and from henceforth the whole course of her life was determined by another. Having put her hand to the plough she refused to turn back, and finally inherited all things.

* * *

Ruth's vow "was nobly promised, and it was as nobly performed; for the love that inspired the words was not like a thorn blaze which, bright for a moment, dies down into darkness, but rather like the glow of the sun shine, which lasts through all the day." -- William M. Taylor.

* * *

"Ruth's was particularly a filial faithfulness, and as such should be emulated by the young. In her example Ruth eloquently repeats God's command and promise, 'Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.'" -- Rev. Ross C. Houghton, D.D.

* * *

"WHERE THOU LODGEST, I WILL LODGE"

Ruth's resolve is a classic in literature. Her vow has stamped itself indelibly on the heart of the Church. The beauty of its form and the utter devotion of a genuine and self-conquering love have made it a vow which never shall be forgotten so long as God lives. The God of the Bible was to be her God. The holy people of God were to be her people. The Canaan of God and God's people was to be her home. To be in the center of the will of God is to be HOME. Like Ruth, we should resolve to pursue the journey to the end; like Ruth, we should cast our lot with the separated and sanctified people of God; like Ruth, should cleave to the God of the Bible and the God of the Hebrews; like Ruth we should enter God's field and serve; and, like Ruth, we should abandon ourselves to our benign and glorious Boaz and stay at His feet until the morning.

* * *

"THY GOD SHALL BE MY GOD"

"Intreat me not to leave thee . . . for whither thou goest, I will go . . . thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." As an expression of love and loyalty these words cannot be surpassed. Here is supreme devotion. Here is love to the uttermost. The secret, however, of such love and loyalty is kinship in the things of the soul and eternity, "Thy God shall be my God." There can be no true love and no lasting loyalty without this kinship of soul and spirit.

* * *

"THY PEOPLE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE"

Two points are here perfectly plain. Ruth realized that in order to enjoy Canaan and its fruits and possess the land in its fullness she must (1) make the God of Naomi, the God of the Hebrews, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Israel, the God of the Bible, the God of holiness, the holy God of the holy Bible, her one and only, true and living God, and (2) make God's holy people, God's separated people, God's peculiar people, God's persecuted people, her people. Ruth realized that she could not go with a holy God without also going with the holy people of God. She understood that if she would have the God of the Bible as her God she must separate herself from the giddy, giggling, gaudy, godless crowd. The holy people were to be her people, and a holy God, her God. It is impossible to fellowship with God and refuse fellowship with the people of God.

* * *

"THY GOD MY GOD"

The famine had done its worst. Elimelech and his two sons were dead. Ruth was a widow, poor, and, for aught we know to the contrary, all she possessed of earthly goods was the clothes which she wore. It is no disgrace, however, to be honestly poor. Without any arm upon which to lean except that of a widowed mother-in-law, she nevertheless possessed that which money cannot buy. She was modest and virtuous and lovable. Her decision was prompt, firm, determined and final. Her earthly and worldly associations were sacrificed; her mind was made up and her heart was fixed: "Thy God shall be my God."

This is just what each and every wise person should be ready to say. There must be complete DETACHMENT from all worldly friendships and associations and a complete attachment to Jesus Christ. Old relationships with the old crowd must cease and a new relationship must begin, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." There must be a DETACHMENT and a disavowal of the customs, fashions, foibles, ways and methods of Moab, a complete cutting loose from old ties, old ways, old pleasures, and old life conduct and conversation, and there must be a REALIGNMENT of one's self with the people of God as well as with God, and with God as well as with the people of God. We cannot go with a holy God and fellowship with unholy people.

To love God is to love the brethren, unite with them and fellowship with them. Having made her decision, what rich surprises were in store for Ruth. Yes, and there are just as rich and just as wonderful surprises in store for all who will make the God of the Bible their God, and God's holy people their people. Ruth never had cause to regret her decision, and we may be sure that she does not regret it now.

* * *

"WHERE THOU DIEST, WILL I DIE"

Sometimes it is difficult to decide where one man's quality exceeds another. For a long time they seem to be equal, but a critical moment arrives, and at that moment the real quality of the man is determined. Orpah loved Naomi and for a time there seemed to be little difference between Orpah and Ruth, but when the moment of decision arrived, the difference was manifest. Orpah might kiss and weep, but Ruth resolved to live and die in God's country with God's people, and with Naomi.

* * *

"AND THERE WILL I BE BURIED"

Weeping ended for Ruth when her will was surrendered and she resolved to live and die in God's country and be buried among God's people. Ruth's decision to go to Bethlehem (the house of bread) and DWELL in the land of Canaan (rest) terminated her own miseries. Orpah might weep, but from the moment of Ruth's decision neither crying nor sorrow is recorded in connection with Ruth.

Decision itself is exhilarating and refreshing. Some people never know the joys and delights of Holy Ghost religion because they never reach great decisions in favor of God and holiness, come life or death. To settle the question as to one's death and burial is to stop a lot of bawling at the mourner's bench.

* * *

"SHE WAS STEADFASTLY MINDED"

Decisive characters are seldom the subjects of continued despair. Orpah might kiss and weep and Naomi might desire to change her name from "pleasant" to "bitter," but Ruth did not join in the chorus. Ruth had settled the question as to (1) her God; (2) her people; (3) her living; (4) her dying; and (5) her funeral.

"Some girls are built that way," Billy Sunday once said. To win Christ and win heaven one must be steadfastly minded. Something more than mere human or creaturely kindness is essential if we would make heaven our home. We must be steadfastly minded to repent, believe, consecrate and enter Canaan, or we shall fall by the wayside and, like Orpah, go back to the old ways, old friends and old gods.

The heart of Ruth was fixed. She was steadfastly minded. Unlike the double-minded Orpah, she was not unstable in her ways. Forgetting the things behind, Ruth pressed toward the mark for the prize -- "steadfastly minded."

* * *

"We cannot hope to contribute to literature a sentence so exquisite and so thrilling as that into which Ruth poured the full measure of a noble heart, but we can imitate her in devotion -- the brightest jewel in her crown." -- William Jennings Bryan.

* * *

"Ruth puts the whole tribe of daughters-in-law to shame by her consideration of Naomi. I wish we could get the lesson to take root. There is not enough consideration given mothers-in-law. They are the mothers of our wives and our husbands." -- Rev. Len G. Broughton, D.D.

* * *

"IS THIS NAOMI?" (1:19)

The word Naomi means "pleasant." That is what all men and women should be in the land of Canaan. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness."

It is just too bad that so many women are nasty, mean, gossipy, tittle-tattlers. The trouble with many is much deeper than the thyroid gland. It is amazing how unpleasant, contemptible and devilish some women become. In these days of stress and strain, hurry and scurry, hustle and bustle, restlessness and unease, turmoil, and strife, it behooves all girls and women to watch their ways and their words, and make themselves behave and be pleasant. Give God a chance to steady the nerves, talk to the heart, sweeten the disposition and make you a pleasant and pure, wholesome and happy Christian. Refuse to bring disgrace and discredit to the cause of Christ, holiness and the Church by unpleasantness on your part, regardless of how you feel or how others treat you.

The home of Elimelech was hopelessly wrecked; his boys married heathen, godless girls; his wife was made, a widow; his children were made fatherless; and he himself died outside of God's land and God's will.

The funeral procession, the mound-covered grave, a weeping widow and two fatherless boys should warn us against the danger of departing from God or stepping from the path of strict conformity to His holy will.

Ten years in Moab had made its mark on Naomi. Her old-time, old-fashioned Canaan friends were amazed at the change. Moab is the land of bitterness, misery, want and woe. She went out full but was made empty in Moab. Bitter in soul, confused in mind and weary in body she returned to the land of Canaan, and her old friends with whom she had fellowshiped could scarcely believe their own eyes. It is a bitter thing to backslide.

Naomi is therefore an outstanding typical backslider. She never intended to go very far in disobedience (1:1-5); she allowed her children to marry heathen companions, blamed God for her bitter predicament and was partly responsible for the declension of Orpah (1:8-18). Others noticed the change in her appearance and carriage and cried, "Is this Naomi?"

Backsliding brings bitterness, and others notice the change.

Ten years of wandering outside of God's land, God's will and God's ways had evidently aged and somewhat soured the once charming and pleasant Naomi.

The town gossips, watching the wayworn, weary women entering Bethlehem, began a buzz of questions and answers. There was wonder, curiosity, concern and perhaps pity expressed in the words, "Is this Naomi?" Is this the pleasant and popular wife of Elimelech? Is this the mother of Mahlon? Is this aged and weary widow the once happy and winsome wife of the once elegant Elimelech? Is this Naomi? Ah, beloved, ten years of backsliding make a tremendous difference!

* * *

"CALL ME MARA"

"Is this Naomi?" (pleasant). "Call me Mara" (bitter). That is the story in the life of every wanderer from the way of holiness. Moab had evidently made its, marks on the cheeks of the once happy Naomi. "Is this Naomi?" Is this the nimble Naomi who once jumped for joy in the house of the Lord? "Is this Naomi?" "Call me Mara." Bitter indeed is the path of the backslider. The land of backsliding is still a land of bitterness.

Naomi and her steadfastly minded daughter-in-law had pressed their way to Bethlehem. The city was moved about them. The prodigal daughter had returned, but, oh, what a change! Ten years of wandering and backslidings had wrinkled her brow and saddened the face. "Is this Naomi?" they said to one another. "Is this Naomi?" "Is THIS Naomi?" "Is this NAOMI?" Naomi was conscious of their criticism and cried, "Call me not Naomi [pleasant]; call me Mara [bitter]." Yes! it is a bitter thing to depart from God. Unfortunately, like all backsliders who have failed

God, Naomi blamed God for her sorrow and sufferings. Instead of blaming her past backslidings for her present bitteresses she blamed God: "The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." It was not the Almighty at all. It was her own miserable backslidings. It was the result of going her own way. It was the natural consequences of her disobedience. The bitterness about which she complained was brought about through her own backslidings during a period of ten long years; and yet she blamed God. Adam blamed the woman, the woman blamed the serpent and Naomi blamed God.

* * *

"I WENT OUT FULL"

In God's presence there is fullness. No man can stay around where God is, and be empty. Barnabas was full of the Holy Ghost. Stephen was full of faith. Dorcas was full of good works. The seven deacons were full of wisdom. Naomi's own testimony of her past in the land of perfection and plenty was, "I went out full."

Surely she "went out full." She was a dweller in the delightful land of promise. Her home was in Bethlehem, the house of bread. She had a shouting-happy experience for she belonged to Judah (praise). She enjoyed her inheritance and possessed her possessions, and if she had remained true to God, if she had watched and prayed, payed her tithe, read the Bible and regularly attended the worship of Jehovah, she would still have been full. She listened to others however. She was unduly influenced by others and with them forsook the God of her fathers and the land of her fathers for the tall grass and fat cows of Moab. She went out full. Canaan is a good land. Grapes, figs, pomegranates, corn, milk and honey are healthful, nourishing and fattening, but she forsook them all for the flesh pots of Moab. She went out full and, like the Prodigal, she came home a pauper.

* * *

"THE LORD HATH BROUGHT ME HOME AGAIN"

How kind of the Lord! How good and gracious! How tender and true, merciful and mighty! He brought Adam out of the bushes behind which he was hiding. He redeemed Israel with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm. He welcomed the prodigal but penitent son, and He here brings back the penitent daughter Naomi.

Home! What a happy word. Home! Canaan is the homeland of the people of God. Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees to go into Canaan; Jacob found neither peace nor rest outside of the Promised Land. Moses led the people out of Egypt to go into the land of Canaan. Finally Joshua led the people across the Jordan into Canaan's fruitful land. Christ was born in Canaan. Canaan is God's land for God's peopled Canaan is God's will and God's place for God's people. It is HOME. To be in the center and the circle of the will of God is to be at HOME. Holiness is not something alien; it is home. Sanctification is not something extra like syrup on buttered toast; it is HOME. Salvation to the uttermost is the soul's sanctum sanctorum. The Lord brought Naomi

HOME. She never would have seen home again had Jehovah left her alone. No man would ever get back to God and holiness if left to himself.

* * *

"HOME AGAIN EMPTY"

Empty. Home again but empty. How expressive! How instructive! "I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty." "Full . . . empty." Herein is the story of an Old Testament prodigal daughter. Home again but empty. Once full but now empty. Here is the story and the inevitable end of ten years of backslidings -- EMPTY. HOME but EMPTY. HOME again but EMPTY. Full -- that is Canaan. Empty -- that is Moab.

* * *

"I WENT OUT FULL, AND"

Nearness to God is rest, peace, purity and plenty. Distance from God means disappointment, distress, despair and death. To go away from God is to go away from the Supreme Good. To depart from God, to fail to walk in the light, is to depart from both fullness and freedom. Barnabas was full of the Holy Ghost; Stephen was full of faith; Dorcas was full of good works; the Romans were full of goodness; the seven deacons were full of wisdom; the apostles on the Day of Pentecost were full of the Holy Spirit; and Naomi testified to fullness in the fair land of Canaan until she failed God and fainted in the way. Disobedience was followed by departure, distress, disease and death. Trouble upon trouble and sorrow upon sorrow followed the footsteps of Naomi. Neither peace, rest nor hope could be found in Moab. Indeed, there is no rest and no fullness outside of Canaan. Neither faith nor fullness can possibly be obtained in Moab.

Orpah, Ruth and Naomi are three typical or representative women. Orpah started from Moab, but was easily persuaded to go back to her old ways, her old sins and her old worship. She bites at the bait to return, for it is but the expression of her own desires. Like Pliable in Pilgrim's Progress, she started but soon stopped.

Like Demas, she loved this present evil world. Unfortunately the Orpahs, Pliables and Demases are still with us. RUTH was like the limpet which clings to the rock, while Orpah was like a piece of wreckage tossed about by the waves.

* * *

"THE LORD. . . IS . . . AGAINST ME"

Naomi was sadly mistaken. The hand of the Lord had not gone out against her. Her own backslidings had blinded her and made her bitter. Naomi had become sour in her soul. A sour backslider is much worse than a sinner. All backsliders are liable to misunderstand the ways of God, and misjudge the plans of a kindly Providence. The trouble was not with God but with Naomi. The trouble is not in the Church but in us, if we are away from God.

"Great was the surprise of her friends to see her in so altered a condition. She was so broken by her afflictions, and so reduced in circumstances, that they could scarcely believe their own eyes, or think that this was the same person whom they had formerly seen so fresh, and fair, and gay. And so it may be with any one of us. How great a change may a few years make in our condition!" -- Bishop Ashton Oxenden.

* * *

"THE ALMIGHTY HATH AFFLICTED ME" (1:20-21)

The confession of Naomi here is threefold:

1. "The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me;"
2. "The Lord hath testified against me;"
3. "The Almighty hath afflicted me."

All the dealings of God with Naomi were for her own good and His own glory. She was a happy wife and mother in Bethlehem. "She went out full," and the bitterness about which she complains was because of her own backslidings. It is so easy to blame God and other believers for our own backsliding and bitterness. The Lord's chastisement is intended to correct and save, for He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. Naomi's backsliding had partly blinded her as well as made her bitter. It is a fearful thing to fail God.

* * *

"IN THE BEGINNING OF BARLEY HARVEST"

It is always the beginning of better days when backslidings cease and we return to Canaan's happy land. Naomi came home empty but she was in time to help with the harvest. There was yet opportunity for service if she desired to serve. She was empty but in Bethlehem it was the beginning of barley harvest, and better days were about to dawn for the now chastened and humbled Naomi.

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CHAPTER 2

"A KINSMAN"

Boaz was a kinsman, for angels could not redeem. He was mighty, for a redeemer must be strong. He was wealthy, for redemption is costly. He was compassionate, for redemption is of grace. He came from Bethlehem, for the redeemer was to come from the house of bread. Christ was born in Bethlehem. He too was a Kinsman-Redeemer, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh,

human and divine. He was mighty, for in Him was strength. He was wealthy, for He was the Creator of the universe; compassionate and kind, truthful and tender, good and gracious, sympathetic and strong, He loved even unto death. Boaz was a type of Christ as the Bridegroom-Redeemer.

* * *

"A MIGHTY MAN OF WEALTH"

Circumstances neither make nor mar saints. Boaz was loyal to God and to God's truth, notwithstanding, the fact that he was a mighty man of wealth. Destiny is determined by deliberate choices and not by the accident of birth or environment. God is greater than circumstances. Paul may be cribbed, cabined and confined in a prison cell, but he sings like a saint even in the cell. Boaz was a mighty man of wealth but he remained pure, clean, true and winsome in days of desperate wickedness. Whether poor or rich, there is no excuse for sin! Ruth was a woman, a widow, a penniless Moabitish widow, but she stands out in all the grace and grandeur of true womanhood, notwithstanding her poverty. Boaz was a mighty man of wealth but he stands out in the glory and greatness of true manhood, notwithstanding his wealth.

* * *

"LET ME NOW GO . . . AFTER HIM"

Love at first sight. Here is a deep-seated characteristic of the fair and faithful sex. Unable to speak her love, she acts it. Wealth and beauty are marching in the direction of each other. "Strength" (Boaz) and "Affection" (Ruth) are about to come face to face. Oh, that more Ruths would go after our Boaz!

* * *

"LET ME GLEAN. . . EARS OF CORN" (2:2)

This was formerly a very common custom in England. The poor went into the fields and collected the straggling ears of corn. The custom was a carry-over from the old Mosaic code which allowed the poor, the widow and the stranger to partake of that which had been left behind by the reapers.

"When I see Ruth going forth into the fields to glean, I cannot help thinking how important it is that both men and women should be taught to cultivate the capacity of helping themselves." -- Rev. William Landels.

* * *

"HER HAP" (2:3)

World-shaking events often hinge upon apparently insignificant incidents. The sleepless night of a king ends in the salvation of a nation (Esther 6:1). The selling of a slaveboy (Joseph) to the Ishmaelites, turns out to be the salvation of the world. The capture of a little Hebrew unnamed maid ends in the cleansing of a leprous Naaman.

The youthful widow Ruth happens to enter a harvest field, and it ends in a happy marriage, a smiling babe, a great king and at last an Uttermost Savior.

So Boaz took Ruth, and she bare a son, and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David, and David begat Solomon, and finally a Savior is born. How wonderful and glorious are the ways of God.

* * *

"AND HER HAP . . . BOAZ"

She left all, said good-bye to Moab, entered Canaan and her hap happened. Her hap happened to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz. Her hap happened, and he reached her parched corn. Her hap happened, and so Boaz took Ruth. Her hap happened and Obed was born, and David, and Christ! An arrow was shot across the centuries and in due time a bridge spans the chasm and men may now pass from earth to heaven. God watches over His truth and His children and marches on to the ultimate goal, despite men and devils. Elimelech may fail but God never fails. Naomi may fail and become bitter but God never fails.

* * *

BOAZ! RUTH! OBED! JESSE! DAVID! AND CHRIST!

"BOAZ." Against the dark and blighting background of his time, Boaz stands out, not only as a mighty man of wealth, but as a generous, courteous, considerate, sympathetic, compassionate, kind, clean, loving and lovable man, a fitting type of our Heavenly Boaz, the Lord Jesus Christ.

* * *

"THE LORD BE WITH YOU"

Here is presented a very pleasing picture of old-world life. "The Lord be with you," was both a salutation and a prayer. "ADDIO," say the Italians ("To God I commend you!"). "AH-LE-ONG-IS-SIMNIDA," say the Koreans ("Are you in peace?"). "GOOD-BYE," say the English ("God be with you"). Once these expressions meant all that happy and holy hearts wished for each other. "The Lord be with you," said Boaz the employer to the reapers, and the employed answered him, "The Lord bless thee." Thus is set forth the deep religious feeling which prevailed among this good and guileless people.

* * *

"THE LORD BE WITH YOU AND"

Here is a beautiful salutation familiar to all missionaries among Oriental peoples. The gracious condescension of the mighty Boaz is here beautifully revealed. Approaching his servants Boaz speaks first, and in gentle tones says to them, "The Lord be with you." If more masters of men treated their servants as Boaz treated his reapers there would be fewer strikes and less bloodshed. Workmen however are no longer regarded as reapers; they are hands, just hands, that's all! Very little, if any, kindness is shown and if their masters speak to them at all, it is generally in a gruff, cutting, condemning manner. Oh, that more masters would greet their men with "The Lord bless thee" (v. 4). Here is the one and only solution to the vexed problem of capital and labor! Let the masters speak first and show some measure of regard for their men. Let the masters manifest the milk of human kindness and the men would respond with a mighty "God bless you!"

Who would not wish for a return of those simple, primitive, Puritan, old-fashioned times when the master or employer greeted his men or employees with a "GOD BLESS YOU" and when the workers greeted the boss with a "God bless you" on their lips there would be men were men, and women were women, and not hands, noses or heads only. If there were more employers with a "GOD BE WITH THEE." Those were days when more employees with a "God be with thee" in their hearts.

* * *

"WHOSE DAMSEL IS THIS?"

What wonderful condescension! Think of it! The mighty Boaz becomes interested in a poor, penniless, despised, weak, helpless stranger! Marvelous grace! Matchless goodness! Boaz is interested in Ruth!

In the whole galaxy of Scripture pen-pictures there are none more familiar to the devout student, and certainly none more attractive, than the fine figure of Ruth standing amid the corn. Judged by the standards of any age, Ruth is not only pure and sweet as the fields in which she gleaned but she rises to a heroic height of unselfishness, devotion, affection and love. Ruth was a lovely lily of the valley worthy of the redeeming love of the rose of Sharon. The book of Ruth is a unique literary and spiritual gem. There is nothing in human literature so beautiful, so sweet and so sublime.

Thank God for the book of Ruth! Without the book of Ruth we should be ready to concede that all the gentler virtues had disappeared from the earth and that lawlessness and lust were universal. Thank God, the book of Ruth follows the "Judges." This book lifts the curtain which obscures the privacy of domestic life and discloses to us most exquisite views of piety and purity, self-sacrificing love and sanctity, gentleness and goodness growing up amidst the rude scenes of war and the squalor of sin and strife. In those terrible times when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" there were still beautiful lives and bright examples of fidelity to each other and faith in God.

* * *

"THE SERVANT" (2:6)

Abraham's servant was a type of the Holy Spirit and also a type of all the servants of God. Joseph's servant also foreshadowed the office of the Holy Spirit and to a lesser degree the work of all Gospel ministers. The unnamed servant in Ruth is also a type of the Holy Spirit, who speaks not of Himself but of His Master. As the servant of Abraham went to search for a bride for Isaac, so the Holy Spirit is not only calling out a Church but also seeking a bride. As the servant of Joseph was instructed to bring home all the brethren, so the Holy Spirit has charge of the homecoming of all God's saints. The unnamed servant of Abraham, together with the unnamed servant of Joseph and Boaz, beautifully reveals the work of the Holy Spirit in this present dispensation of grace.

* * *

"LET ME GLEAN AND GATHER" (2:7)

Ruth took advantage of a Scriptural provision to stave off want and poverty by gleaning in the harvest field in the wake of the reapers. It was a divinely appointed, humane ordinance that when a farmer was reaping he should leave the GLEANINGS for the poor and the stranger. In case a sheaf had been overlooked or forgotten, it was to be left for the fatherless and the widow. Ruth was a widow, a stranger and poor, and her very sorrow and poverty gave her the right to have the privilege and opportunity to claim her inheritance in the land of Canaan (Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19). Oh, that each of us would press his own claim for his own portion today!

* * *

"SHE CAME, AND HATH CONTINUED"

It is one thing to come; it is another thing to continue. It is one thing to obtain grace and salvation; it is another thing to maintain, to continue, to persevere and endure unto the end. It is one thing to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit; it is another thing to keep under the anointing of the Spirit. We must continue as well as come. We must continue as well as begin. We must walk in the light if we would enjoy the present cleansing from all sin. One sin willfully committed will darken the mind, stain the soul and send even a sinless Adam out of the garden and away from God. One sin unconfessed and unforgiven will open the floodgates of divine wrath upon the soul that commits it. Past penitence cannot and does not atone for present pollution. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

* * *

"ABIDE HERE FAST BY MY MAIDENS"

ABIDE. "Abide in me," Jesus said, and, "If ye abide in me." It is one thing to ENTER; it is another thing to ABIDE. Abide HERE. Here in Canaan. Here in God's land. Here in God's plans and purposes for you. Here in God's will. Here with Boaz. Here with the other Canaan servants and reapers. Here in Bethlehem-Judah, "the house of bread and place of praise." Here. Abide here.

Abide here fast by my maidens." The household of Boaz was separated from all others. They were a separated, peculiar people. Boaz could completely satisfy the Gentile stranger. He here offered her (1) special support; (2) special service; (3) special fellowship; and (4) special protection. ("Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn.")

* * *

"THOU HAST LEFT THY FATHER AND MOTHER"

This is the beginning of Bible salvation (read Gen. 12:1-3). Abraham was told to "get out," and he left his home, his father and his mother and started for Canaan.

Rebekah was given the choice of following Eliezer and becoming the bride of Isaac or staying at home with her father and mother.

* * *

"THOU ART COME UNTO A PEOPLE WHICH THOU KNEWEST NOT HERETOFORE"

Ruth entered Canaan, walked in the light to Bethlehem, became attached and devoted to Boaz and became one with the household and servants of that mighty man of wealth and valor. She had come to CANAAN people, people living in the land of promise, people who were quite different from all other people on the face of the earth, people with different language, different customs, different dress, different habits, different religion, different worship and different songs. She had heard much about them, but she did not know them. We must live with and work with the holy people of God in order to know them. How true it is that only those who are enjoying the Canaan experience really understand the Canaan crowd. The holy people of God are the most misunderstood people on the face of the earth, "a people which thou knewest not heretofore."

* * *

"THE LORD RECOMPENSE . . . REWARD"

Moses had respect unto the recompense of the reward (Hebrews 11). Paul looked forward to reaching the goal and obtaining the prize. For the joy that was set before Him, Christ endured the cross and despised the shame. Boaz assured Ruth of a rich reward from Jehovah God.

* * *

"UNDER WHOSE WINGS THOU ART COME TO TRUST" (2:12)

Malachi prophesied of one to come who would arise with healing in his wings (Mal. 4:2). David prayed that the Lord would HIDE him under the shadow of His wings (Psalm 17:8), and he exhorted saints to put their trust under the shadow of God's wings (Psalm 36:7).

The wings of God are swift to protect saints and punish sinners. To a sinner seeking pardon, God is swift to save and to a saint in need of help, God is swift to deliver. The wings of God are broad wings, for they cover believing Jews and Gentiles alike.

The wings of God are strong wings, for He is mighty to save and strong to deliver. Ruth, the destitute daughter of heathendom, found protection and deliverance under His swift, strong, broad, everlasting wings.

Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer, the wonderful and mighty man of wealth, the friend of the friendless, bestows a blessing on the beautiful Ruth and speaks comfortably to her heart.

"How sure and bountiful are the payments of the Almighty! Who ever came under His wing in vain? Who ever lost anything by trusting in Him? Who ever forsook the Moab of this world for the true Israel and had not cause to rejoice in the change?" -- Bishop Oxenden.

"Under whose wings thou art come to trust." This metaphor is taken from the activities of young fowl which in times of trouble run to their mother to be covered by her wings from danger and also to take shelter from storms, wind and cold. Ruth had not only left Moab (conversion) and entered Canaan (sanctification), but she was seeking to serve in the harvest field, trusting implicitly in the grace and goodness of the lord of the harvest.

* * *

"THOU HAST COMFORTED ME"

How beautiful of Boaz to befriend a young widow worker in his field! Oh, what a cold world this is. How cheerless and comfortless for most of Adam's race. Surely a comforter is needed and, thank God, the Comforter has come. Ruth needed and she found comfort in Boaz, the lord of the harvest.

* * *

"THOU HAST SPOKEN FRIENDLY"

The word friendly means to the heart. "Thou hast spoken to the heart." The heart of Ruth was comforted and blessed. Who can speak to the heart of the ruined Ruths like our Boaz? Who can speak so tenderly, lovingly and comfortingly to the human heart as can the Christ of Calvary? What peace and comfort He imparts!

* * *

"LET ME FIND FAVOR IN THY SIGHT, MY LORD"

"Let me go" (v. 2). "Let me glean" (v. 7). "Let me find favor in thy sight" (v. 13). (1) Every truly converted and saved person will become instantly possessed with new ambitions and new ideals. He will desire to go; (2) he will be glad to glean in the great harvest field waving with golden grain; and (3) he will seek the continued smile and favor of his Lord. Here are three sure evidences of salvation.

* * *

"DIP THY MORSEL IN THE VINEGAR"

Two thousand years before Christ was born, Melchizedek administered the sacrament to Abraham. "He gave him bread and wine" (see Gems from Genesis).

One thousand years later, Boaz breaks bread with Ruth and they partake of the same vinegar (grapes made into wine), thus enjoying together the elements of the bread and wine. No wonder "she was sufficed."

* * *

"HE REACHED HER PARCHED CORN"

Leeks, onions and garlic belong to Egypt. Manna belongs to the wilderness. Corn belongs to Canaan. Ruth entered, possessed and enjoyed the Promised Land because she kept close to the lord of the harvest. He reached her parched corn. If our Boaz wanted us to have some special corn, would He be compelled to ship it to us secondhand or throw it to us? Ruth was near. He reached her parched corn.

Boaz not only comforted and spoke friendly to the heart of Ruth, he not only encouraged her to faithfulness in view of the recompense of the reward, he not only welcomed her into his field and service, but he allowed her to share in a special feast. She sat with Boaz at the same table, ate of the same bread and dipped her morsel in the same dish; and then he climaxed it all by personally reaching her some parched corn. Corn is Canaan food and sticks to the ribs, unlike leeks and onions, which are neither strengthening nor fattening. Corn makes husky Christians, and Boaz "reached her parched corn." Unlike even manna, which of itself is sweet and nourishing but which quickly passes away, corn makes robust, healthy, useful, strong Christians. Husks belong to the hog pen; leeks and onions belong to Egypt; mush and melons belong to Moab; but corn belongs to Canaan.

* * *

"CORN"

To many, Ruth was a foolish girl to leave home, country and friends to go with a poor old woman and start across a desert filled with robbers and jackals, but Ruth eating parched corn in the presence of Boaz proves that the world and worldings have a wrong prospective of life.

Abraham marched out of Ur to become the father of three nations. Rebekah marched out to become the happy bride of the father's well beloved son.

Moses marched out of a palace but into a Paradise.

Ruth marched out of Moab but into the lap of luxury and love.

* * *

"AND SHE WAS SUFFICED"

(1) "Go not to glean in another field" (keep separate); (2) "Abide here fast by my maidens" (stay with the holy people); (3) "Let thine eyes be on the field" (eyes OFF and then ON the Lord's field); (4) "Have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee?" (protection); (5) "When thou art athirst, go unto the vessels" (fresh supplies and provisions); (6) "A full reward be given thee" (future recompense, REWARDS); (7) "She did eat, and was sufficed" (filled and satisfied).

Here we find Ruth the satisfied stranger. Boaz has a satisfying portion for all hungry, restless Ruths! You, too, reader, may be sufficed, but only as you feast with Boaz.

* * *

"HANDFULS OF PURPOSE"

Unknown to Ruth, Boaz was planning for her future. He orders his young men to help her and strictly charges them never to mention her past life. The young men are told never to dig up the past by reminding her that she is only a Moabite, a poor pauper, an unclean Gentile, a widow, a dependent and altogether outside the society of the elite house of Israel. They were forbidden to mention the past, "Reproach her not," and then instructed that as they reaped to let fall some handfuls of purpose. "Reproach her not: and let fall ALSO some of the handfuls of purpose for her." How wonderful to have handfuls of purpose dropped for us while we serve in the field! Have we received our handful of purpose today? Are we serving in the field?

* * *

"REPROACH HER NOT"

Here are three words from which sermons could be preached and volumes could be written. "Reproach her not." Ruth was a Gentile, and the Gentiles were regarded as unclean, but "Reproach her not." Ruth was a widow, and in heathen lands a widow is held largely responsible for the death of her husband-lord, but, "Reproach her not." Ruth was a Moabite and the Moabites were descendants of worldly Lot and his daughters, but, "Reproach her not. Let her glean even among the sheaves," which was more than she had asked, and, "Reproach her not," for the Lord of the harvest gives abundantly above all that we ask. What if she is a Gentile, a Moabite, a stranger,

an alien and a poor widow? "Reproach her not." Ruth was a Moabite and the Moabites were enemies of God and enemies of Israel, but, "Reproach her not." Ruth was a pauper and an alien, but, "Reproach her not." What lessons. are here for us today! Why do some people persist in digging up the past of others?" "Reproach her not."

* * *

"AN EPHAH OF BARLEY"

Barley was the food of the poor. An ephah was sufficient to supply the needs of a family of ten for one day. Ruth was serving and was sufficed herself, and had sufficient each day for ten others. Ten is the number of completeness, and hence Ruth had a completely satisfying portion, not only for herself, but for others. Ruth supplied nourishment for others!

* * *

"SO SHE GLEANED IN THE FIELDS UNTIL"

A small key often unlocks a big box. It is often in small things that we find out what sort of stuff is in a man or woman. Ruth gleaned and beat out that she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. This service was a necessary and important step between her leaving Moab (past), entering Canaan (present), and becoming the beautiful bride of Boaz (future). Do not despise or neglect the gleaning and giving, for they constitute part of the highway to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

* * *

"WHERE HAST THOU GLEANED TODAY?"

There are four things in this timely message of truth. (1) Today. You are expecting to do something tomorrow, perhaps planning great things for tomorrow, preparing for tomorrow. The text deals with today. Tomorrow is always future. "Where hast thou gleaned TODAY?" (2) Thou. Salvation, sanctification and service are personal matters. Never mind Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Smith, or Mrs. Brown; what about YOU; how about you? "Where hast THOU gleaned today?" (3) Where? Have you found your special field? or are you jealously interested in the field occupied by another? Have you found your own place in life? or are you scheming to obtain the place of another? "WHERE hast thou gleaned today?" (4) Gleaned. Are you serving, working, laboring? Are you gleaning or grumbling, and maybe grumbling about the gleaners? Are you helping in the harvest and heartening the harvesters? Are you gleaning in the field or grunting about the grub? Say not, "There are yet four months, and THEN." "The fields are white already to harvest." Go work today in my vineyard. Go! Go work. Go work today. "Where hast thou GLEANED?" NOT, "Where have you feasted?" but "Where have you gleaned?" NOT, "Where have you shouted?" but, "Where have you gleaned?" NOT, "Where have you worshipped?" but, "Where have you gleaned?" "Where hast thou GLEANED today?"

* * *

"THE MAN'S NAME . . . IS BOAZ"

Ruth not only serves in the field; she also confesses the name of the lord of the field. She becomes a living witness. She opens her mouth in glad testimony. True religion, pure religion, is first a heart religion, and then a hand and mouth religion. It is first an experience, an affair of the heart and then, second, it is a life, an every day affair of the hand and lips.

Pure religion and undefiled before God is first of all an experience (heart), and then, second, it is a life (service). "With the heart man believeth; and with the mouth confession is made" (Romans 10:8-10).

* * *

"BLESSED BE HE OF THE LORD"

Naomi rejoices in the success of Ruth, her daughter-in-law. There is something very beautiful in the conduct of these "in-laws." Ruth and Orpah had proved themselves to be ideal, dutiful and delightful daughters-in-law, and Naomi had been to them a comforting and marvelous mother-in-law. There was real affection and love among these "in-laws" such as is seldom seen anywhere at any time. "The Lord deal kindly with you," said Naomi (1:8), "as ye have dealt with the dead [Elimelech, Mahlon, Chilion], and with me." Ruth had evidently been a kind, obedient, wonderful wife to Mahlon and a dutiful daughter-in-law to Naomi. "She kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept" (1:9). "Ruth clave unto her" (1:14). There is tenderness, sweetness, sympathy, kindness, affection and a loving, delightful oneness and harmony which is a blessing to behold. A word here to wise "in-laws" ought to be sufficient. Naomi rejoiced in the reward received by Ruth for her faithful service among the reapers.

* * *

"HIS KINDNESS TO THE LIVING AND TO THE DEAD"

In this psalm of praise, Naomi exalts the kindness of Boaz who had revealed the kindness of Jehovah to the sorrowing widows. The dead to whom kindness had been shown were Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion (types of Israel in apostasy). The living to whom the Lord had shown kindness were Naomi (type of Israel returned to their own land and restored to favor in the land) and Ruth (type of the sanctified, serving, gleaned Gentile bride).

* * *

"ONE OF OUR NEXT KINSMEN"

Boaz was the near-kinsman of Elimelech and hence also of Naomi and Ruth. He was bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh and blood of their blood. Christ is also our Kinsman-Redeemer, God manifest in the flesh. The angels cannot redeem because (1) they cannot die; (2) because they

are not akin to us; (3) because they are lacking power. Fallen Lucifer, now. Satan, is more powerful than they. Our redeemer must be one of our near-kinsmen.

* * *

"UNTIL THEY HAVE ENDED ALL MY HARVEST"

Boaz instructed Ruth that there must not be any slackening of her zeal, or slowing up in her service, or letting down in her earnestness as a gleaner in the field. "Thou shalt keep fast by my young men" (v. 21), for such was necessary for Ruth's own purity and protection. Such was also necessary if she would finally qualify as the bride of Boaz. She must not lag behind, settle down or slow up. A snail's pace would not suffice. She must keep up to the young men. She must be untiring, earnest, as diligent to continue as she had been to start. These were essential if she would be the bride. There must be no slackening and no stopping UNTIL. She was to work until the end of the harvest. She was to hold fast, stand fast, and be steadfast and unmoveable in allegiance and diligence, always abounding in the work of Boaz for as much as she knew that her labor was not in vain. To Ruth, the commands of Boaz were not grievous. Obedient to them, keeping them, she enjoyed the high honor of feasting with him, following him, fellowshiping with him and gleaning in his field. To others, the commands and demands of Boaz may be irksome, tiring and unreasonable, but not to Ruth. She had already been sufficed and the best was yet to come. Ruth had not only entered Canaan (sanctified wholly), arrived in Bethlehem (house of bread and supplies), found fruitful labor in the field of Boaz (service), enjoyed a place in his house (fellowship) and a repast at his table (feasting), but the best was in the future. There was a marriage ahead, and Ruth was qualifying to be the happy, beautiful bride of the lovely Boaz. A tent or a cottage-why should she care about the hardships of the present? The heart of Ruth was set on the future. The tent or the cottage would certainly give place to the mansion of Boaz. Work UNTIL. Labor UNTIL. Glean UNTIL. Sweat UNTIL. Suffer UNTIL. Keep step UNTIL. The present duty of Ruth was plain, and the future rosy and bright!

Ruth was a young woman of admirable and amiable mind. Modest and industrious, she attracted the attention of Boaz the princely Hebrew.

Her faithfulness and fidelity to her suffering mother-in-law also undoubtedly contributed toward securing the esteem of the benign Boaz.

All these things worked together for Ruth, and finally connected her with the salvation of the world as well as the restoration of the Israel of God.

Ruth followed the path of purity and peace, walked patiently in the way of holiness and rested at last in the lap of luxury and plenty in the palace of her prince.

* * * * *

CHAPTER 3

"SEEK REST"

Finding GRACE and seeking REST constitute two of the key expressions of the charming book of Ruth.

Grace (2:2) is the unmerited favor of God and is the first real need of all mankind.

Seeking rest in a world of unrest and sin should be, the one supreme business of all who have found grace.

Ruth found rest in Canaan (sanctification), rest in the fields of Boaz (service), and rest at the feet of one she loved (submission).

Boaz was a type of Christ in that he bestowed grace on a Gentile stranger, welcomed her into his service, became a kinsman-redeemer, purchased her at great sacrifice and became the restorer of that which had been lost.

* * *

"REST"

Before Ruth may find perfect rest she must first of all leave Moab, enter Canaan, work in the field, keep clean and under the anointing, enjoy continued fellowship with, and abandon herself utterly to, the lord of the harvest. There are several kinds of rest mentioned in the Bible.

(1) The rest of forgiveness or pardon from past sins: "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

(2) The rest of sanctification or purity: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:28-30).

(3) The rest as the result of marriage. Nothing short of marriage to Boaz could completely satisfy the loving and lovable, beautiful and glamorous gleaner, Ruth. "Shall I not seek rest for thee?" Others may be satisfied with less than this, but not Ruth.

* * *

"BEHOLD, HE WINNOWETH BARLEY"

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but . . . he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand" (Matt. 3:11-12). The mighty Boaz was winnowing barley in the threshing floor. That which was light, chaffy, frivolous and empty must be winnowed and fanned away. The threshing floor was a large open space with only a roof overhead to shelter the servants from the hot sun in midday, as well as to provide a place for the heaps of grain after threshing. In the middle of this open space, Boaz slept.

Ruth was instructed to go down quietly to this open place and abandon herself to Boaz. She was also instructed to wash herself, anoint herself, dress in suitable apparel, abandon herself in faith and hope for all the future, and obey implicitly and exactly the word of Boaz. If we would be among the bridehood saints we, too, must keep clean outwardly, stay under the anointing of the Holy Spirit inwardly, adorn ourselves as becometh saints, and dress as becometh disciples, for these are each deciding factors constituting membership among the bridehood saints. We must abandon our future fully to our Boaz and obey His Word and will (vv. 1-4).

* * *

"BEHOLD, HE WINNOWETH BARLEY TONIGHT"

No times are so wild and wicked but that in them may be found quiet corners, green pastures and peaceful homes carried on in holy isolation from the tumult around. Despite the bloody and turbulent scene of strife and war as depicted in the book of Judges, here in the book of Ruth, Boaz stands amid his heaps of corn and no war disturbs or distracts. God has never left Himself without a witness, and there are seven thousand today who have not bowed to Baal.

* * *

"WASH THYSELF"

Ruth had obtained an inheritance in Canaan land, but she must also maintain her inheritance. She must keep outwardly clean, sweet and pure. She must keep clean. Her hands, her ears, her eyes and her lips must be kept clean, spotless and undefiled. "Wash thyself."

* * *

"ANOINT THEE"

It is one thing to enter the Canaan land of perfect love and be filled with the Holy Spirit; it is quite another thing to keep the anointing of the Spirit. Only by walking in the light may the anointing be ours continually. "Anoint thee."

* * *

"PUT THY RAIMENT UPON THEE"

Raiment has much to do with religion. Modest apparel is necessary if unbroken friendship with Boaz is to be maintained. Nudity is of the Devil. Exposing of the body is wicked, sinful and devilish. Immodest dress or undress is to be condemned as Satanic and corrupting. We must dress right if we would please our Boaz. Dress is a sure index to the condition of the mind and the state of the heart. To qualify as bridehood saints we must suitably attire ourselves and thus seek to please our coming Bridegroom.

* * *

"GET THEE DOWN TO THE FLOOR"

Instructed by Naomi and encouraged by Boaz, Ruth presented herself at the threshing floor of the man of wealth and wisdom. "The floor," was a large open barn where masters, servants, water carriers and reapers slept in harvest time. Ruth went down to this threshing floor and Boaz testifies to the virtue and modesty of the trustful maid, praises her conduct and promises to plead her cause. Ruth acts in faith and obedience. In full surrender and entire consecration she makes room for bigger blessing. Washed, anointed, clothed, believing, trustful and with holy boldness she presses her claim and conquers.

* * *

"HE WILL TELL THEE WHAT THOU SHALT DO"

"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." "Happy are ye if ye do whatsoever I command you."

* * *

"SHE CAME SOFTLY, AND UNCOVERED HIS FEET"

Ruth abandoned herself implicitly and unreservedly to Boaz. She died to the thoughts and possible evil surmisings of the other servants, died to the possible slanderings of the gossipers, and resolutely, quietly, unpretentiously laid her down at the feet of Boaz, trusting her present, her future and her all to his loving, tender care. She was satisfied that lasting rest could only be obtained at the feet of Boaz. In that, Mary, the sister of Martha, and Ruth were of one mind and heart.

* * *

"I AM RUTH"

Jacob confessed to the truth when he said, "I am Jacob" ("supplanter"), and Ruth at the feet of Boaz also truthfully confessed, "I am Ruth" ("satisfied"). At the feet of Boaz she was the satisfied stranger. Risking her all to become the bride of Boaz, in perfect trust and as a promise and pledge of protection (see Ezek. 16:8), she prays him to cover her. Ruth sought the love, the protection and the support of Boaz and in simple faith committed her all into his safe care and keeping. She risked all and received all (read verse 11).

* * *

"I AM RUTH THINE HANDMAID"

In order to become the beautiful bride of the wealthy Boaz Ruth must --

1. Keep herself clean -- "Wash thyself therefore" (3:3);

2. Keep under the anointing -- "Anoint thee" (3:3);
3. Abandon herself in perfect trust to Boaz -- "She lay down" (3:4).

Having implicitly and fully obeyed instructions, Ruth confesses herself to be the handmaid of Boaz.

She is not now Ruth the Moabitess, nor Ruth the Gentile stranger, nor Ruth the weeping widow, nor Ruth the damsel of Moab, but "Ruth thine handmaid."

* * *

"SPREAD THY SKIRT" (3:9)

To spread a skirt over one in the Orient is a symbol of protection and modesty. The book of Ruth is filled with Oriental pictures of everyday life.

In his treatment of the Gentile stranger, Boaz was acting in strict obedience to the Deuteronomic law.

His words to Ruth were words of comfort and kindness. He knew all about her and her love for Naomi, as well as her labor in the field. Urging her to stay in his field, he secretly and graciously provided for her. She gleaned in the field and gloried in Boaz under whose wing she had trusted.

Typically, the book of Ruth sets forth --

1. Decision for Christ -- Chapter One
2. Meeting with Christ -- Chapter Two
3. Resting in Christ -- Chapter Three
4. Union with Christ -- Chapter Four

The book of Ruth is a sacred love story with a symbolic significance.

A famine (test) in Bethlehem ("house of bread"). drives Elimelech ("God is my King") to Moab (land of ease, relations and false religion). Amid false gods and godless relations, Elimelech dies. His two sons also die outside of their inheritance (Canaan). Naomi ("pleasant" with Ruth ("satisfied")) returns to Bethlehem where Ruth meets Boaz ("in him is strength"), serves in his field (service), and finally becomes his bride, restoring Naomi (Jews) and all that was lost. The Moabite shut out by law is admitted by grace, and Ruth not only finds free grace but complete rest in Boaz (Christ). Elimelech the Hebrew forsook the Lord and died, while Ruth the Gentile "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." The way of Elimelech seemed right

unto him, but it was the way of death for him and also for his children. Ruth, as a Gentile who was once afar off, is brought nigh and becomes a fellow-heir, for in Christ there is neither Gentile nor Jew.

* * *

"SPREAD THY SKIRT OVER THINE HANDMAID"

A greater than Boaz is represented here. Lord of the Harvest and a Mighty Man of Valor, our Boaz takes notice of us, speaks comfortably to us, treats us kindly; and when in penitence and humility we come to Him, and stretch ourselves at His pierced feet and plead with Him to spread over us the crimson mantle of His redeeming and protecting love, how immediate is His response. Bless His Name!

* * *

"THOU ART A VIRTUOUS WOMAN"

All the world is interested when strength and beauty meet, as they did in Boaz and Ruth. Especially is this so when kinship of high and holy character and conduct is involved. The language of Boaz to his reapers, "The Lord be with thee," reveals him as a man of God. His question to his servant, "Whose damsel is this?" was a further revelation of his interest, while his counsel to the beautiful young maiden, "Abide here fast by my maidens," is a proof of his concern for her welfare. The present-day critic takes pleasure in pointing out any place in the Bible where any man or woman may have erred from the paths of purity and virtue, but passes over the book of Ruth because it affords him no ground for criticism. Boaz was a godly man, and Ruth was a virtuous woman.

"Boaz probably slept upon a mat or skin; Ruth lay crosswise at his feet -- a position in which Eastern servants frequently sleep in the same chamber or tent, with their master; and if they want a covering, custom allows them that benefit from part of the covering on their master's, bed." -- Jamieson.

* * *

"I WILL REDEEM"

Boaz, the mighty and wealthy, the lord of the harvest, the near-kinsman, the true performing GOEL, meets and settles the claims of the law of God, makes a new covenant with new and better promises, pleads the cause of a sinner and a stranger, purchases the penniless Ruth and makes her his own possession, draws her into close union with himself, and finally makes her his beautiful and happy BRIDE.

True to his word (3:11), Boaz went up to the gate which was the place of justice and judgment, sat down, called for the jury and presented his case (4:1-2). The nearest of kin (MAN) was willing to redeem but unable to do so (4:6), and hence Boaz, the next near-kinsman, proved

both his willingness and ability and purchased all that was Elimelech's, Chilion's and Mahlon's. Man may be willing to redeem but he lacks the loving interest, the unselfishness, the power and ability to do so (1:6), and hence the mighty-to-save and strong-to-deliver BOAZ purchases the land and the people and becomes the redeemer and restorer. Five times in chapter 4 the word "redeem" occurs. It is indeed a redemption chapter.

* * * * *

CHAPTER 4

BOAZ

1. Lord of the harvest
2. Powerful and rich
3. Compassionate and kind
4. Interested in both Jews (Naomi) and Gentiles (Ruth)
5. Provides for all
6. Welcomes Ruth into his service
7. Speaks comfort to her heart
8. Purchased Ruth for himself
9. Covered her with his robe
10. Protected her and BLESSED her
11. Redeemed her fully and completely
12. Unites her to himself in marriage

Boaz was a true-blue Hebrew and faithful to the Word of God as given to Moses. Boaz was true to His Book. The near-kinsman, however, was considerate only of himself and his own selfish interests. He could not and would not redeem because love was lacking for either God or man. Boaz buys the land and redeems Ruth because he is both able and willing. Boaz is mighty to save and strong to deliver. Neither Naomi nor Ruth could redeem either themselves or the land. They were helpless. How like the human race! And Boaz! -- how like our loving Lord, our Kinsman-Redeemer, who not only bought the field, but purchased us with His own blood! What marvelous grace! What wonderful love! What matchless condescension! Boaz buys Ruth the Moabitess. He links himself forever with a despised race, makes himself kin of one of the poorest and worst of sinners. Boaz and Ruth! Boaz and Obed! Boaz and David! Boaz and Ruth and Christ!

* * *

"THE GATE"

Legal decisions were given by the elders at "the gate." The greater part of the business of the town was transacted at "the gate."

That GATE had seen Elimelech in his happiest days and hours.

That GATE had also seen him depart for the land of Moab.

That GATE had seen the return of Naomi, now poor and desolate.

That GATE had seen Ruth pass to and fro as she pursued her tasks as a reaper in the fields.

That GATE had witnessed the gathering of the gossipers as they rehearsed the story of Elimelech, Naomi and the Gentile widow and stranger Ruth.

It was most fitting that THE GATE should see the end of this sacred drama.

* * *

"I CANNOT REDEEM LEST" (4:6)

Self-sacrifice is self-saving and self-sanctifying. Self-seeking and self-loving is self-destruction. Orpah went back to Moab, to her people and to her gods, and she is not heard of any more. Ruth counted the cost, paid the price, sanctified herself and she stands honored and exalted among Old Testament saints; and thousands of sweet babies in little baskets have been named after her. Her name has been carved in the Hall of Fame of human hearts in all nations. The conceited kinsman who was afraid lest his name should perish is left nameless, while Boaz is held in everlasting honor and finds a place in the Book of Life.

"The goel had the right of redeeming the inheritance of the person; of marrying the widow; and of avenging the death. (See Lev. 25:25-31, 47-55; Deut. 25:5-10)." -- Spk. Com.

* * *

"SO HE DREW OFF HIS SHOE"

In Oriental lands the wearing of shoes distinguished the rich from the poor and the sons from the slaves. The father put shoes on the feet of his prodigal and thus accepted him as a son and restored him to all the privileges of sonship again. Stepping upon a piece of land was equal to possession, and taking off the shoe was a sign of the transfer of this land and people to Boaz. That which was lost by Elimelech was purchased, saved and restored by Boaz.

"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" (Ruth 4:7). "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses" (Joshua 1:3). The shoe evidently symbolized a possession. To surrender the shoe was a sign of the surrender of the possession. In stripping himself of his shoe he transferred the land to Boaz.

* * *

"HE DREW OFF HIS SHOE" (4:8)

The shoe symbolized a present possession. When the kinsman pulled off his shoe and gave it to Boaz, he surrendered all claims to all possessions about which they had met at the gate.

* * *

"THE MOABITESS"

Boaz was not ashamed of his bride. Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren now, and if we qualify for a place among the bridehood saints, our very past, in contrast with the purchased and purified present, shall become a source of satisfaction to Him who has redeemed us at such tremendous cost. Boaz purchased the field and with the purchase of the field obtained the pearl. Ruth became his happy, glad, rejoicing bride.

* * *

"RACHEL AND LEAH"

The whole Israelitish nation came from Jacob, and directly or indirectly through Rachel and Leah. Three million Hebrews left Egypt under the leadership of Moses. After the death of Solomon the kingdom was divided and Israel was finally taken captive of Assyria, while Judah (the Jews) was taken captive to Babylon., After 3,000 years of checkered history, there are in the world today no less than 18,000,000 Jews, all of whom are the direct descendants of Rachel and Leah. Babylon is gone, the glory of Greece is gone, the old Roman Empire is gone, but the children of Rachel and Leah are as distinct a people as they were in the days of Jacob their father. "The Lord make the woman like Rachel and Leah," is thus a prophecy dealing with the glorious fruitful future of Ruth (4:17), and also of the bride of Christ, of whom Ruth was a type. The fruitfulness and usefulness of the bride of Christ will in reality just begin after the rapture of the saints and the marriage supper of the Lamb. From her home in the New Jerusalem, the glorified bride of Christ shall wing her winsome way throughout the universe and reign and rule with Christ forever.

* * *

"DO THOU WORTHILY IN EPHRATAH"

(1) The word Ephratah means "fruitful," another prophecy of the great fruitfulness of Ruth. How these profound prophecies were in part fulfilled may be seen from the fact that Obed, the son of Ruth, was the direct ancestor of Jesse, the father of David (17-22).

(2) The word worthily which literally means power and riches is another prophecy of the great wealth and power of the Jews. How this prophecy has been fulfilled, also in part, may be seen by remembering that the Jews today have most of the world's wealth in their hands.

Boaz, whose name means "strength," the lord of the harvest, the mighty man of wealth, the true GOEL and near-kinsman, presents a striking picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. Boaz met and settled the claims of the holy law of God, both upon the person of Ruth (Gentiles), and upon the property of Elimelech (the Jews).

Boaz bravely pleaded the cause of Ruth, purchased her and made her his possession, captured her affections, won her love and united her to himself by marrying her.

Ruth, like Rahab, was excluded by law and nature from the congregation of the Lord, but through grace and adoption was included in the line of the Redeemer, Thus the Gentile Ruth was made a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree. The Moabitish maiden, through an utter, complete, unreserved and reckless abandonment became one with the Mighty Man of Bethlehem.

"As a Sinner She Frequented His House.
As a Stranger She Found His Grace.
As a Daughter She Felt His Love.
As a Gleaner She Followed His Word.
As a Worshiper She Fell at His Feet.
As a Handmaiden She Fed at His Table.
As a Bride She Finished His Plan."

Thank God for the rich little book of Ruth! Had we the book of Judges alone, we would have concluded that crime had conquered and sin prevailed.

The book of Ruth discloses to us the purity and piety, sacrifice and selflessness, gentleness and justice, helpfulness and holiness, flourishing amid the foul-smelling scenes of war, strife and bloodshed.

If the enemy of souls was busy causing the people of God to backslide, God was also busy calling the Gentiles and bringing them to Canaan and rest.

* * *

"THE HOUSE OF PHAREZ"

Pharez was the son of Judah and a direct ancestor of Boaz, Jesse, David, Solomon, Zerubbabel and Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, the King of the Jews and the Redeemer of the race. Is it not wonderful beyond all words to describe to see how these words of the people and elders in the gate have been and are being so minutely fulfilled?

* * *

"SO BOAZ TOOK RUTH"

The climax is reached, and Ruth's patience and labor are richly rewarded. Ruth now possesses all. Ruth (1) a stranger, (2) destitute, (3) a Gentile, (4) bids farewell to her past; (5) enters Canaan; (6) possesses the land; (7) dwells in Bethlehem; (8) serves in the field; (9) helps in the harvest; (10) feasts with the lord of the harvest; (11) obeys his word; (12) abandons her all to him; (13) keeps clean and anointed; (14) supplicates; (15) rests in faith at his feet; and (16) becomes his happy bride. The house of Elimelech (Israel) was perishing. It was saved by Boaz

(Christ) marrying Ruth (the Gentile bride), who in Moab was once destitute, unfruitful, helpless and hopeless. By Ruth (the Gentile bride), through Boaz (Christ), Naomi (restored Israel) is built up. Both Naomi and Ruth received "the far more exceeding abundant." Everyone praises and blesses the now beautiful Ruth who becomes honored and exalted forevermore. Selah!

Among the four women mentioned in the genealogy of Christ there are: (1) Rahab, the redeemed harlot; (2) Bathsheba, the redeemed adulteress; and (3) Ruth the redeemed Moabitess.

Ruth is the most complete type of the bride of Christ to be found in the Bible: (1) Ruth deciding to leave Moab; (2) Ruth leaving her past and separating her self; (3) Ruth entering Canaan; (4) Ruth possessing the land; (5) Ruth serving in the field and helping in the harvest; (6) Ruth abandoning herself to the lord of the harvest; (7) Ruth resting; (8) Ruth depending upon and trusting in the Bethlehemite who is able to redeem; (9) Ruth rewarded; (10) Ruth the bride, fruitful and happy. The story of Ruth is one of the choicest and one of the most lasting of all literature. It is a love epic that has fascinated millions in past ages and which has lost none of its charm for us today.

To think of the book of Ruth is to think of Ruth and Boaz. Boaz! Ruth! Boaz and Ruth! These two constituted a highway for God. Ruth, a Moabitess, of an accursed race, and Boaz, an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile. Ruth a Gentile and Boaz a Hebrew. Ruth a penniless widow and Boaz a mighty man of wealth. Boaz took Ruth. What a picture! What a contrast! Poverty need not hinder saintship nor high destiny. Wealth is not necessarily a hindrance to holiness. Holiness, happiness and wealth go hand in hand with Boaz and Ruth. Circumstances neither make nor mar saintship. Cribbed, cabined and confined in prison, Paul was a saint, while Ananias and Sapphira were sinners with wealth and freedom.

Boaz was a beautiful type of Christ: (1) a great giver of grace, "Let me go after him in whose sight I shall find grace;" "Why have I found grace in thine eyes?" (2:2; 2:10); (2) a secret provider in service, "Let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her" (2:16); (3) a kind and kingly kinsman, "Blessed be he . . . who hath not left off his kindness to the living and the dead" (2:20); (4) a redeemer who gives rest, "Shall I not seek rest for thee?" (3:1); "She lay at his feet" (3:14); (5) a purchaser of all lost property, "I have bought all" (4:9); "Ruth . . . have I purchased" (4:10); (6) a restorer of life and health, "He shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, AND a nourisher of thine old age" (4:15); (7) a happy bridegroom, "So Boaz took Ruth" (4:13).

* * *

"BLESSED BE THE LORD"

The book of Ruth has a very sad beginning but a very happy ending. "Blessed be the Lord." It begins in the days when the Judges ruled and God was ruled out. It begins with a famine and in the first chapter there are three funerals, but it ends with a romance, a happy marriage and a smiling boy in a baby basket and a "Blessed be the Lord."

Crooked things at last are made straight, rough places are made plain and all hearts are happy. The Bible opens with a Paradise below and ends with a Paradise above. "Blessed be the

Lord." There is a Paradise at both ends of God's Book. Sobbing ceases. Tears are wiped away. Death is destroyed and the universe joins happily in the Hallelujah Chorus, "Blessed be the Lord."

* * *

"A NOURISHER OF THINE OLD AGE"

(1) Through the backsliding of the Jews (Elimelech and Naomi) salvation came to the Gentiles (Ruth). (2) Through the salvation and sanctification of Ruth (Gentiles) and her consequent marriage to Boaz, salvation came to the Jews. "He shall be a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age." "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles" (Romans 11:11). Our Boaz (Christ) is yet to take unto Himself His bride, and then full restoration, life, health and happiness shall come to both Jews and Gentiles.

* * *

"AND BOAZ BEGAT OBED"

The book of Ruth is a classic among stories of lovers and love. It contains all the elements of true love for all time -- love which overcomes prejudice, love which sacrifices itself and risks its all for the lover, love purified and sanctified by true religion, love which ends in happy marriage and home, sweet home.

Obed means "to serve and to worship." There are eight principal characters in the book of Ruth, and volumes could be written on each character.

1. Elimelech, whose name means "My God is King"
2. Naomi, "pleasant"
3. Mahlon, "sick, infirm"
4. Chilion, "pining, wasting"
5. Orpah, "a faun, empty"
6. Ruth, "satisfied"
7. Boaz, "strength"
8. Obed, "serving"

* * *

"BETTER.. . THAN SEVEN SONS (4:15)"

If Naomi had been blessed with seven sons, they probably would have married and scattered and settled in their own homes, whereas Ruth clave unto her and she was preserved alive and restored.

* * *

"AND NAOMI . . . BECAME NURSE"

The baby Obed in the arms of its affectionate grandmother becomes the restorer of her life and a nourisher of her old age. A new interest in life grips the heart of the happy Naomi. Thank God, she returned to Canaan and Bethlehem-Judah.

* * *

"BOAZ . . . OBED . . . DAVID"

David the great king descended from two Gentile women -- Rahab and Ruth.

Jesus, the greater King and Son of David, traced His human lineage through this same line with the addition of one other woman -- Bathsheba. Oh! the all inclusive conquering grace and condescension of Christ. Linking Himself with the worst of sinners and the poorest of the race, He is able to reach and redeem them all.

Think of it! -- Rahab, Bathsheba, Ruth AND MARY.

"We may learn from the story of Ruth that self-sacrifice is self-saving, and that self-seeking is self-loving. Orpah went back to Moab, and she is heard of no more. Ruth clave to Naomi, and she is canonized among the Old Testament saints, and has a place among the ancestors of our Lord. The nameless kinsman was afraid lest his name should perish while he was seeking to perpetuate Mahion's, and it has perished in spite of his refusal. Boaz did what he declined, and lo! his name stands in everlasting honor, on the first page of the New Testament." -- William M. Taylor.

The thrilling love story of the book of Ruth has fascinated millions, and although thirty centuries have come and gone, it has lost none of its charms.

The story is a classic because it contains all the elements which make up the average human heart and life story. Here, sorrow is turned to singing, purity overcomes prejudice, lust is conquered by love, and self-sacrifice is richly rewarded in both, the hero and heroine. Here, true love is sanctified by pure religion, and a happy courtship ends in a happy marriage; and before the sublime story closes we catch a glimpse of a baby's basket, and hear the sweet symphony of a baby's cooing song.

The climax is reached as we remember that coursing through the veins of the babe of Ruth and Boaz is the blood of David's greater Son, the Savior of the world.

Ruth marched straight forward from the miserable land of Moab to the line of the Messiah.

Ruth committed herself to Boaz believing that he was able to keep that which she had committed unto him (II Tim. 1:12). She committed her way unto Boaz, trusted also in him and he brought things to pass (Psalm 37:5).

She cast her burden upon Boaz, believing that he cared and that he would conquer and bless. She was not disappointed.

* * *

Part 4

LIGHT FROM OTHER LAMPS

I. Title. RUTH, so called from name of that Moabite woman whom Boaz married, and who became one of the ancestors of the Messiah (4:18-22; 1:4-6). II. Author. Uncertain; usually believed by the Jews to have been written by Samuel. It could not have been written before his time, as genealogy, in 4:17-22, shows. Some critics ascribe it to Hezekiah, and some also to Ezra. "The author's name (probably Samuel) is concealed, neither is it needful it should be known; for, even as a man that hath a piece of gold that he knows to be weight, and sees it stamped with the king's image, careth not to know the name of that man who minted or coined it; so we, seeing this book to have the superscription of Caesar, the stamp of the Holy Spirit, need not to be curious to know what was the penman thereof" (Thomas Fuller). III. Date. It records certain events that happened in the time of the Judges; but at what particular time is unknown. IV. Scope. A sequel to the book of Judges, and an introduction to the books of Samuel, its object is, plainly, to establish the fact of the descent of David, the progenitor of the Messiah; and, "perhaps, by the adoption of Ruth into the Jewish Church to intimate the future ingathering of the Gentiles" (Litton). V. Characteristics. This little book "consists of only 85 verses; but these enclose a garden of roses as fragrant and full of mystic calyxes as those which the modern traveler still finds blooming and twining about the solitary ruins of Israel and Moab, this side of the Jordan and beyond. The significance and beauty of the brief narrative cannot be highly enough estimated, whether regard be had to the thought which fills it, the historical value which marks it, or the pure and charming form in which it is set forth" (Cassell).

* * *

OUTLINES OF RUTH

- I. Ruth's Wise Choice Chapter 1
- II. Ruth's Faithful Service Chapter 2
- III. Ruth, the Book of Rest Chapter 3
- IV. Ruth's Rich Reward Chapter 4

* * *

- I. The Persevering Pilgrim Chapter 1
- II. The Patient Seeker Chapter 2
- III. The Peaceful Gleaner Chapter 3
- IV. The Pure Bride Chapter 4

* * *

- I. Ruth, the Book of Redemption Chapter 1
- II. Ruth, the Book of Restoration Chapter 2
- III. Ruth, the Book of Rest Chapter 3
- IV. Ruth, the Book of Reward Chapter 4

* * *

Thomas Fuller in his alliterative and illuminating way says, "The matter may be divided into these two parts: The first chapter showeth that many are the troubles of the righteous,' and the three last do show that 'God delivereth them out of them all.'"

Dr. Morgan in the "Analyzed Bible" summarizes as follows: RUTH -- Faith Amid Faithlessness, and proceeds to divide the contents after this manner: A. The Choice of Faith, 1, 2. B. The Venture of Faith, 3. C. The Reward of Faith, 4.

* * *

"The Companion Bible," which is especially valuable in the structure of the books of the Bible, gives the following fruitful study of the contents of the book:

- A. -- Elimelech's Family, The Depression. 1:1-18.
- B. -- Sympathy with Naomi, In Grief. 1: 19-22.
- C. -- Boaz and Ruth. 2:1-23.
- C. -- Ruth and Boaz. 3:1-4:13.
- B. -- Sympathy with Naomi, In Joy. 4:14-17.
- A. -- Elimelech's Family, The Uplifting. 4:18-22.

* * *

"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

The time: 1322 B.C. Place: Bethlehem-Judah. Circumstances: famine in the land; Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon and Chilion go to sojourn in Moab; Elimelech dies; the sons marry and they too die; after ten years the three widows start to return to Bethlehem; Orpah leaves -- Ruth cleaves.

I. HER CONDITION

A. She was poor; for aught we know all she had was what she wore -- but it is no disgrace to be honestly poor.

B. She was bereft -- a widow; no strong arm to lean upon.

C. She was sad; unlike so many giddy, foolish young people of today.

D. She was virtuous; she had what money could not buy.

II. HER POSITION

The crisis hour had come; before her lay Judah, Bethlehem, the true God, friends, etc.; behind her lay Moab, with her idols, sins.

III. HER DECISION

A. Prompt.

B. Personal.

C. Firm -- not ignorant stubbornness, but intelligent firmness.

D. Final -- Farewell, Moab, Mother, Orpah.

IV. HER DEVOTION

A. It was spontaneous; no urging needed to leave her early associations, friendships, religion.

B. It was supreme -- "Thy God my God."

C. It was fervent -- "Intreat me not." Let me go, pray, give, serve.

D. It was constant -- "steadfastly minded." The cost had been counted, the mind made up, the heart fixed.

V. HER PROMOTION

After all her trials and hardships she finds:

A. A husband

B. A home

C. Happiness

D. Honor -- Matt. 1:5

E. Heaven.

Urge the unsaved to make their decision. Which shall it be? Life or death, heaven or hell, Christ or Satan?

* * *

THEME: "WINSOME WOMANHOOD"

"Intreat me not to leave thee . . . thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

Text generally used in treating of "The Choice of Ruth." But reading between the lines we find suggested the religion of Naomi.

I. Its strength. Could bear transplanting to a foreign land. One thing to be religious at home surrounded by helpful influences. Another when in a strange land, different customs, etc. In Moab she did not do as the Moabites did. Did not compromise. Kept firm and true to her convictions.

II. Its beauty. "On the pillars, lily-work." A personality that could evoke such passionate devotion as Ruth expresses in the text must have been attractive. If the effect (Ruth's conversion) was great and beautiful, the cause (Naomi's personality) must have been equally so.

III. Its results. Conversion of Ruth. Led to Ruth becoming ancestress of Messiah. Broke down barriers of 1. domestic relationship. Mother-in-law! Such have generally poor reputations. Position one of difficulty. Yet she won the devotion of a daughter-in-law. 2. National prejudice. Much harder to impress foreigners than those of our own people. Yet her faith was so strong and beautiful that she won the devotion of a daughter-in-law from another race to herself, her people and her God.

* * *

TITLE: "WHITHERSOEVER HE LEADS"

"Whither thou goest, I will go . . . thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

This is just what each one should be ready to say, who accepts Christ and begins to follow Him. The text indicates: I. Close attachment required: A. Effectual service requires it. B. To learn in His school. C. For assimilation, in order to live a life beautiful. D. To bar out questions as to where He is leading whether pleasant or not, easy or hard. II. A new relationship. The espousal of the laws, claims, customs and privileges of His citizens. "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." This involves: A. Disavowal of the laws and customs of Moab. B. A cutting loose from old ties, old friendships and all other things that are in the old life. C. A oneness though His atonement with Him and His people.

* * *

RUTH 2:2 -- "And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace."

Work has many aspects. It may be treated as a portion of man's curse. But it was not work which was new to man. From the beginning work had been assigned to him; the difference was that work henceforth was to be both excessive in degree and comparatively unremunerative.

Notice: I. Nature works. Sometimes in the mere consciousness of health and vitality. There is that in a man which will not and cannot be idle. Doubtless human life is the gainer by every kind and department of industry. The laborers of society are its benefactors. Better any work than any idleness.

II. Faith works. (1) The work of faith looks within. Faith, which is the sight of the unseen, apprehends the existence of spirit, the possibility of regeneration, and the direct influence of divine grace upon the heart and soul of man. It would not be faith in the Christian sense if it did not apprehend these mysteries. Before faith can set out upon her gleaning she must find grace in the sight of One unseen. (2) The work of faith looks upward. The eye of faith is upon God, even while the hand of faith and the foot of faith are moving among the things of this world. (3) The work of faith looks around. Faith does not look only on her own things, but on the things of others. Faith does seriously contemplate the wants and the woes and the wickednesses which are making havoc of humanity, and has some thing truly of that mind in her which was also first and perfectly in Christ Jesus. (4) The work of faith looks onward. Oftentimes faith would faint if it had not an onward aspect. It is willing to wait for the day of God's power, willing to be lost and forgotten in the eventual ingathering. -- C. J. Vaughan, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 55.

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A FULL REWARD (2:12-13)

1. Ruth's blessed choice. She chose between Moab and Bethlehem, and between her people and Naomi. She weighed the matter wisely and decided irrevocably. Her lot was cast once and for all with Naomi and the people of God, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."

All of us must face the same parting of the ways, that came to Ruth. We must decide for or against God. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Ruth chose wisely, Moses chose wisely. May God help each one to decide for Him. "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life" (Deut. 30: 19).

2. Ruth serving. It is a beautiful sight to behold Ruth gleaning in the fields of Boaz. Oh, that we may serve Him! "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he may send forth reapers into his harvest." Surely if we will go forth as Ruth went forth, weeping, we shall come again as she came, bearing our sheaves with us.

3. Ruth rewarded. First of all Boaz says to her, "Hearest thou not my daughter? Go not to glean in another field" (2:8).

Christ is calling us to serve Him, and to serve Him alone.

Following this admonition of Boaz comes the assurance of reward. "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel" (2:12, 13).

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RUTH 2:19 -- "Where hast thou gleaned today?"

I. There are some whose only chance of gaining knowledge is by gleaning. Their education has been neglected, and their time for reading is limited. To such let me say: (1) Glean where the corn grows and lies near at hand. You will not find corn by the way side or on the moor. It is not in all company that you may glean wisdom. To the most of us, "Where hast thou gleaned?" is but another way of saying, "What hast thou got as the result of thy life?" (2) To glean successfully we must be willing to stoop. He who would be fed with the bread of life must humble him self.

II. If we would glean a heap, we must be content with a little at a time. it is wonderful what, may be done by never passing by a thing that is worth pre serving. We have trampled under foot during our life that which, if saved, would have done much to make a golden age for ourselves.

III. No one can glean well who is not able to persevere. If we mean. to succeed, we must go on long after we are weary. We shall glean with greater care and industry if we remember that we must live forever on the results of this life. If men did but think they gather gold for a crown or iron for fetters, they would be more careful what they pick up. -- T. Champness, New Coins from Old Gold, p. 142.

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THE KINSMAN REDEEMER

"A mighty man of wealth. . .and his name was Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be HE of the Lord . . . the man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen" (Ruth 2:1, 20).

The story would not be complete without a special word concerning Boaz.

1. Boaz was near of kin to Naomi. Jesus Christ is of the lineage of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and David, and was the Son of Mary; and yet He is the Son of God.

2. Boaz was a mighty one; Jesus Christ is the Almighty One. Boaz was a man of wealth; Jesus Christ is the Lord of Glory. By Him and for Him were all things made, and in Him all things are held together.

3. Boaz paid the ransom and redeemed unto himself, Naomi and all her possessions; and he also bought unto himself Ruth, to become his wife.

Jesus Christ hath redeemed us from sin. We are His and all that we have is His. He loved us and bought us with His blood.

"I will sing of my Redeemer,
And His wondrous love to me,
On the cruel cross, He suffered,
From the curse to set me free."

The near-kinsman (v. 9). -- I. Christ is our near-kinsman -- 1. By birth: He took our nature; 2. By condescending love: He came to His own; did not disown them; 3, By self-sacrificing grace: loved us to the end; 4. By present thoughtful care: He is the Lord of Providence. II. Let the poorest and most friendless -- like the widowed Ruth -- learn to trust Him.

Spreading the skirt (v. 9) .-The prophet Ezekiel, in describing the Jewish Church as an exposed infant, mentions the care of God in bringing her up with great tenderness, and then, at the proper time, marrying her; "which is thee, . . . and thou becamest mine." Dr. A. Clarke says, "Even to the present day, when a Jew marries a woman, he throws the skirt, or end of his talith, over her, to signify that he has taken her under his protection." I have been delighted at the marriage ceremonies of the Hindoos, to see among them the same interesting custom. The bride is seated on a throne, surrounded by matrons, having on her veil, her gayest robes, and most valuable jewels. After the thāli has been tied around her neck, the bridegroom approaches her with a silken skirt (purchased by him self), and folds it round her several times over the rest of her clothes. The request of Ruth, therefore, amounted to nothing more than that Boaz should marry her. -- Roberts. Christ's willingness to receive. -- It is our melancholy and miserable misapprehension, that we fancy there is some reluctance on Christ's part that needs to be overcome, some repulse in His mind that we need to do away with, and that we have to persuade and urge Him to do what we yearn to have done, to forgive us all our sins, and to blot out all our iniquities. This is a great mistake; ten thousand times more willing is Christ to receive you, than ever you were to make application to Him. -- Cumming.

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TAKING OFF THE SHOE

At a Jewish marriage I was standing beside the bridegroom when the bride entered; and, as she crossed the threshold, he stooped down, and slipped off his shoe, and struck her with the heel on the nape of the neck. I at once saw the interpretation of the passage in Scripture respecting the transfer of the shoe to another, in case the brother-in-law did not exercise his privilege. -- Kitto's Illustrations. The simple object in taking off the shoe, was to confirm the bargain: it was the testimony or memorial of the compact. In Deuteronomy it is mentioned that the brother of a deceased husband shall marry the widow, but should he refuse, then the widow is to "go up to the gate unto the elders and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in

Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother." Then the elders were to call the man, and if he persisted in his refusal, the woman was to come forward "and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face;" and was to answer and say, "So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house." From that time the man was disgraced, and whenever his person or establishment was spoken of, it was contemptuously called "the house of him that hath his shoe loosed." To be spit at in the face is the most degrading ceremony to which a man can submit. This was done by the widow to her husband's brother, and she confirmed his ignominy by taking off his shoe. But this taking off the shoe may also refer to the death of her husband, whose shoes were taken off and of no further use to him. An affectionate widow never parts with her late husband's shoes: they are placed near her when she sleeps, she kisses and puts her head upon them, and nearly every time after bathing she goes to look at them. These, therefore, are the "testimony," the melancholy confirmation, of her husband's death. -- Roberts.

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MARRIAGE

What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are joined for life -- to strengthen each other in all labor, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each other in all pain, to be one with each other in silent, unspeakable memories at the moment of the last parting? -- George Eliot. Ancient Eastern marriage ceremony. The marriage ceremony was commonly performed in a garden, or in the open air; the bride was placed under a canopy, supported by four youths, and adorned with jewels according to the rank of the married persons, all the company crying out with joyful acclamations, "Blessed be he that cometh." It was anciently the custom, at the conclusion of the ceremony, for the father and mother, and kindred of the woman, to pray for a blessing upon the parties. Bethuel and Laban, and the other members of their family, pronounced a solemn benediction upon Rebecca before her departure. And in times long posterior to the age of Isaac, when Ruth the Moabitess was espoused to Boaz, "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 Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem." After the benedictions, the bride is conducted with great pomp to the house of her husband; this is usually done in the evening. -- Paxton.

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The book of Ruth is a love story told in four chapters. It gives us a glimpse of everyday life in Bethlehem, in home and in harvest field, in its general gossip and its law-suits, more than three thousand years ago.

I. Glancing back over the lines of this sweet and pure pastoral idyl, we feel that rarely did human story more impressively demonstrate the unspeakable worth of lowly folk, the fine and favorable issues of seemingly suppressed lives, the hidden wealth of true and unobtrusive souls, for nations and for the race. Notoriety counts for nothing in the sum of things. The world's future lay more in quiet Bethlehem, with Naomi and Ruth, than it did at the headquarters of Judge Eli. Let us not despise ourselves. God does not, and our future is with Him. Every name is historic in His estimate.

II. But we are not near enough to the heart of this story to hear its beat and feel its warmth, until we see that it is a true and tender, pure and heroic woman's love that gives such grace to these Hebrew homes and confers such peerless worth on these lowly lives. The spell of the book of Ruth is Ruth herself, and the chief charm of Ruth is her unselfish and devoted love.

III. Life and love lead to God. For life is God's gift, and love is of God's nature. "We love, because he first loved us." This is true of the love in the home as much as of the love of the Church. All pure and unselfish love comes from God and leads to God.

Thus the story of Ruth is a fragment in a missionary report. It tells of the conversion of a Gentile and illustrates the wisest way of winning souls. God saves the world by love, and we cannot succeed by departing from His method and ignoring His Spirit. Naomi is a typical home missionary, and Ruth is the pattern and prophecy of the success that crowns wise and loving labor. -- J. Clifford, Daily Strength for Daily Living, p. 119.

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The book of Ruth is a priceless jewel in the inspired Word. It throbs with interest, when read as a simple story of the times of the Judges; but it is passingly full of meaning, when studied in the light of dispensational forecastings.

Taken dispensationally, the book of Ruth gives us first of all the picture of Israel's scattering among the Gentiles, and of her great losses and sufferings there. All of this has been accomplished. Next comes the return, which is still future. Israel, even now, is beginning to lift up her eyes toward her former land. Zionism is most significant.

Men may think that Israel will be entirely swallowed up and digested of the nations; but that will never be the case. Israel must abide the day of her restoration to her land.

The next picture is that of Ruth, the Gentile, blessed through the good offices of Naomi. Many think of Ruth as a picture of the Church, but, while there is a striking analogy, yet it must be remembered that the Church is not exclusively "Gentile." Again, the Church is made up during the time of Israel's scattering, and not after her return. Therefore we have placed the type as significant of the enlarged Gentile blessing that will come to the nations through the good word and testimony of Israel, after the Church is taken out and Israel is grafted in again. -- Dr. R. E. Neighbour.

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BOAZ AND THE REAPERS

I. The living presence. The Lord with us means courage and consolation -- courage to face difficulty, and consolation in all times of depression and disheartenment. II. The harvest toil. "Said unto the reapers." It is hard work everywhere in the glaring heat to put in the sickle, and to gather up the sheaves. We may learn from the spectacle the blessed lesson of our duty in relation to

others. Let us try to cheer and inspire. We little know what a word of cheer does for others. Encouragement is like fresh strength to weary hearts.

III. The kind response. The benediction of Boaz awakens a corresponding benediction from the reapers. The harp answers to the hand that sweeps it. Men are to us very much what we are to them. "The Lord bless thee." We need never despair of this reward. Love begets love. Confidence begets confidence. Blessing awakens blessing. This is what we long and pray for cessation of war between capital and labor, and mutual benediction. -- Pul. Corn.

Gleaning barley. -- Traveling on the plains of Bethlehem, I was struck by and equally delighted with the sight of the reapers in the fields cutting barley, and after every company were women and children gleaning, just as Ruth did when Boaz came to look after his laborers. In the evening may be seen some poor woman or maiden, who has been permitted to glean on her own account, sitting by the roadside, and beating out with a stick or a stone what she has gathered, just as Ruth did. I have often watched this process in various parts of the country. The meals, too, are quite in keeping, the dip ping her morsel in the vinegar, and the parched corn. -- Thomson.

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"The greatest thing," says some one, "a man can do for his Heavenly Father, is to be kind to some of His other children."

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THE END

The Book of Ruth (abbreviated Rth) (Hebrew: ספר שופטים, Megilath Ruth, "the Scroll of Ruth", one of the Five Megillot) is included in the third division, or the Writings (Ketuvim), of the Hebrew Bible; in most Christian canons it is treated as a history book and placed between Judges and 1 Samuel. The book tells of Ruth accepting the god of the Israelites as her god and the Israelite people as her own. In Ruth 1:16–17, Ruth tells Naomi, her Israelite mother-in-law, "Where you go I will go, and where