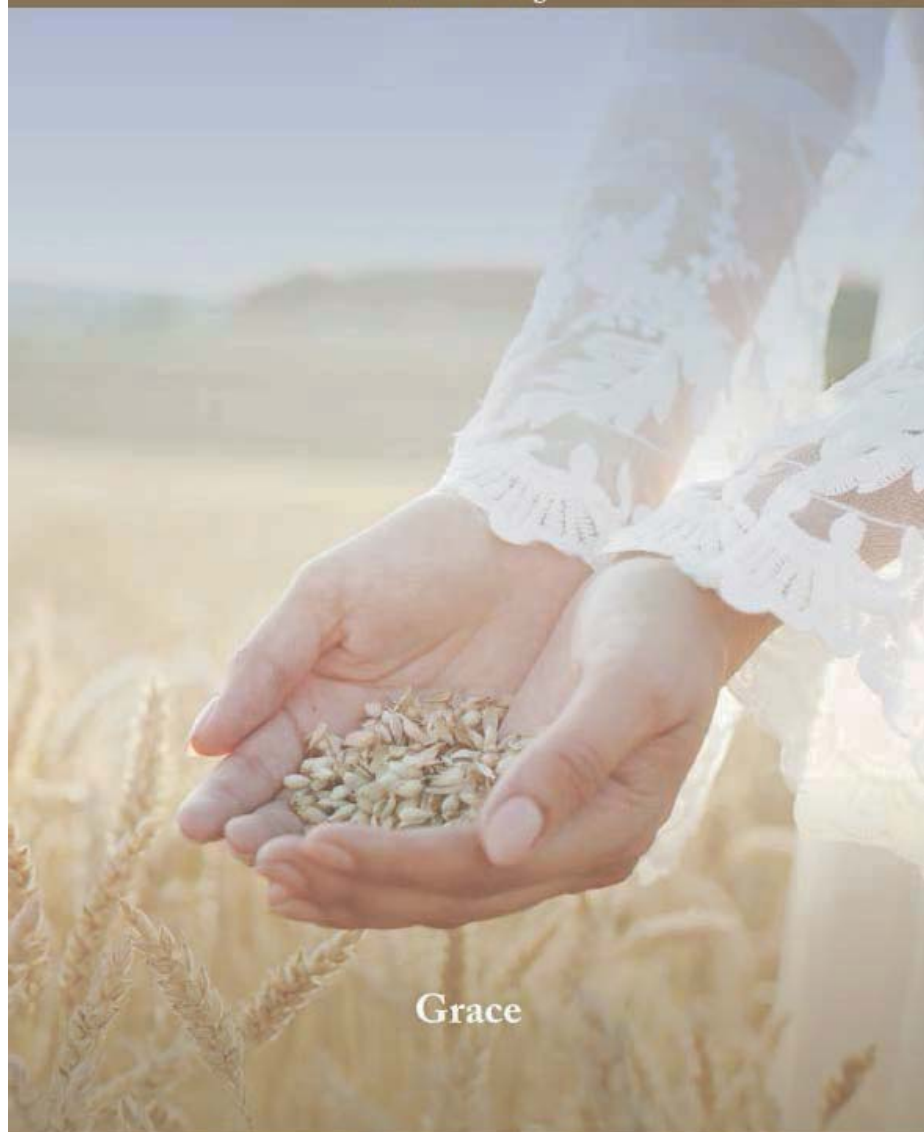


# Ruth

## Explained & Applied 08

Ger de Koning



Grace



# **Ruth**

Explained & Applied



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Grace

Ger de Koning

Dutch version:

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# Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

## Old Testament

Gen	Genesis
Exo	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deu	Deuteronomy
2Ko	2 Korinthiërs
Jos	Joshua
Jdg	Judges
Rth	Ruth
1Sam	First Samuel
2Sam	Second Samuel
1Kgs	First Kings
2Kgs	Second Kings
1Chr	First Chronicles
2Chr	Second Chronicles
Ezra	Ezra
Neh	Nehemiah
Est	Esther
Job	Job
Psa	Psalms
Pro	Proverbs
Ecc	Ecclesiastes
Song	Song of Songs
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Eze	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniël
Hos	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Oba	Obadiah
Jona	Jonah
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
Zep	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zec	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi

## New Testament

Mt	Gospel of Matthew
Mk	Gospel of Mark
Lk	Gospel of Luke
Jn	Gospel of John
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Rom	Letter to the Romans
1Cor	First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor	Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal	Letter to the Galatians
Eph	Letter to the Ephesians
Phil	Letter to the Philippians
Col	Letter to the Colossians
1Thes	First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes	Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim	First Letter to Timothy
2Tim	Second Letter to Timothy
Tit	Letter tot Titus
Phlm	Letter to Philemon
Heb	Letter of the Hebrews
Jam	Letter of James
1Pet	First Letter of Peter
2Pet	Second Letter of Peter
1Jn	First Letter of John
2Jn	Second Letter of John
3Jn	Third Letter of John
Jude	Letter of Jude
Rev	Revelation

## Explanation of general format

**PERSONAL PRONOUNS** are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

**BRACKETS** [ ] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

**SHARP BRACKETS** < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** \* are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

**ALL CAPS** in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

# The Book of Ruth

## Introduction

The book of Ruth is placed between the book of Judges and the books of 1 Samuel and of 2 Samuel. What is described in 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel, follows on the book of Ruth. We may see this in the last word of this book. The last word is the name "David". He's the person that the books of Samuel deal with. The book of Ruth is the introduction to these books. It was probably written during the life of David or just after. The book of Ruth gives us the history and ancestry of the king who is a man after God's heart. Therefore, this king appears in 1 Samuel without genealogy, as it were suddenly (1Sam 16:11-13). That is different from the first king, Saul. When Saul appears, a genealogy is given (1Sam 9:1-2).

The book of Ruth makes it clear from which family David descends. However, the light is not only on a blessed ancestry that belongs to the tribe of Judah. It is also on someone who as a Moabitess had no share in God's people and for whom also there was no chance ever to belong to that people.

The book may be historically followed by the books of Samuel, but it does not historically follow the book of Judges. According to the first verse of Ruth 1 the book takes place in the time of the book of Judges (Rth 1:1). Boaz, one of the main characters of this book, is the son of Rahab (Mt 1:5a), whom we know from Joshua 2 (Jos 2:1). The story of Ruth must therefore be historically placed at the beginning of the period of Judges. The time of Gideon has been thought of, because in that time there is a famine (Jdg 6:6,11), and this is also mentioned in the first verses of Ruth.

The era when the judges lead God's people is characterized by struggle and decay. We find nothing of that in the book of Ruth. It is the history of the family of an Elimelech, an ordinary, inconspicuous family, as there are so many; a family that lives in simplicity in Bethlehem in Judah.

The course of events is generally not determined by such people, unlike rulers and kings – although God, of course, is above everything and ultimately determines history. Regarding this family, we hear nothing about

idolatry or other national sins that are so often mentioned in the book of Judges.

Although Elimelech's family is one of many, God puts the spotlight especially on this family because He has a plan for them. He wants to bring His grace to the fore in a special way in this family. When we read the book of Ruth against the background of the time, it is a relief to learn of a family in which God's grace works in a special way. It is also a refreshment to hear that there was a man like Boaz in those days.

The book of Ruth has a beautiful prophetic meaning. This is related to the purpose of the book and that is to introduce David. Then, of course, we must think of the true David, the Lord Jesus. Boaz, the main character of this book, together with Ruth and Naomi, is also a picture of the Lord Jesus. But who is Ruth a picture of? Not of the church, because the way with which Ruth is connected to Boaz is not the way with which the church is connected to Christ. In Ruth we have a picture of the remnant of Israel.

When the church is caught up, a remnant will be formed by God in Israel. This will happen through heavy trials, through a great tribulation. This remnant will be attracted by the love of the Lord Jesus. The same we see in the book Song of Songs.

However, the remnant as presented in Ruth, the Moabitess, is not connected to the true Boaz through tribulation and trial. Nor is the atonement for guilt – an aspect with which other parts of God's Word deal – in the foreground. The book of Ruth shows how God forms a seed that can regain possession of His land, from which the people have left. This book is about restoring forfeited and lost blessings. It shows that this restoration does not take place through oppression or through atonement, but as a result of the love between two hearts that are attracted to each other.

The question that arises is this: How is it possible that a woman from the nations, and especially from Moab, can be a picture of the remnant of Israel? If we fully realize what the condition of the remnant is, it becomes clear that there can be no picture more excellent of the remnant than Ruth, precisely because she is a Moabitess. The fact that she is a Moabitess is the clearest expression of the fact that the people have completely lost any right to the restoration of their land and possession of the inheritance. Is-

rael has lost everything because it has failed in everything. There cannot be, and will never again will be, fruit of the fig tree – the fig tree is also a picture of Israel after the flesh (Mk 11:13-14a).

If there is a restoration, it is because of the counsels, the promises and the grace of God. From the point of view of responsibility, there can be no right of restoration. Israel has become like a stranger, a people of whom God has said it is “Lo-Ammi” (Hos 1:9), which means “not My people”. He considers the people as belonging to the nations because of their sins of idolatry and the rejection of the Lord Jesus. If the people, that is, a remnant, come as strangers, in the awareness that they have lost everything through their own fault, they will be accepted as the object of God’s grace.

Ruth returns with Naomi from Moab. Naomi is a widow of a Jewish man and may step into the rights of her deceased husband. Ruth does not have such rights. She needs a redeemer to get her rights. It is remarkable that it also says of Ruth that she, with Naomi, *returns* (Rth 1:22), even though she literally never left Judah.

We therefore see two aspects of Israel in the two women. In Naomi we see the *former* Israel that as a woman, has been in connection with God. Thus, God says to Jeremiah: “Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD, “I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth, The love of your betrothals”” (Jer 2:2a; cf. Eze 16:8). In Ruth we see Israel as the wife of God in the *future*.

Elimelech means ‘my God is King’, a name that indicates Who God is for His people. Naomi means ‘My joy’, a name that indicates what the people are for God. Elimelech and Naomi together represent the original relationship between God and His people.

Elimelech dies because the people reject God. This depicts the separation that has come between God and His people. God cannot take His people to Himself. The divorce was completed, the divorce letter was sent (Jer 3:8). With the old Israel, the fig tree, things never get right again (Mt 21:19). But God accepts a new Israel. The returned Naomi represents the new Israel. In the daughter-in-law Ruth we see the bride of the future with whom the Lord Jesus joins Himself.

In order to clear the way for that bond, the bride must be redeemed, i.e. detached from her past. Boaz performs this. In Isaiah 50 there is also spoken of a certificate of divorce (Isa 50:1), but there as, *not given*, because it is a remnant. God has rejected Israel, but has always kept a “remnant according to [God’s] gracious choice” (Rom 11:5). This remnant belongs originally to the wicked nation, but has to be redeemed by the true Boaz. Thus, in the chapters that follow Isaiah 50, the Lord Jesus is called the “Man” and the “Redeemer” of Israel (Isa 54:5).

What prophetically applies to Israel has a practical application for us. This application concerns not so much to us as a church, but more as individual believers. This book answers the question of whether a recovery is possible if we have lost everything and have no more rights. As was said, it is not about atonement and forgiveness, but about restoring the enjoyment of what has been lost for those who really do penance and desire to have fellowship with God. The possibility of recovery is there, through grace and the Savior, the Redeemer.

However, this is not about a man, a sinner, who finds rest for his conscience (Mt 11:28). It is about a believer who finds peace for his soul in the confidence that God is with him (Mt 11:29). We only find peace for our souls if we turn away from everything that removes us from the Lord Jesus, and entrust ourselves to Him.

## Ruth 1

### Verses 1-2 | Famine in Bethlehem

*1 Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons. 2 The name of the man [was] Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons [were] Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there.*

A famine (verse 1) in the land of which God has said that His people would not lack anything there (Deu 8:9a), must have a certain cause. That cause is that the people have become unfaithful to God. Because of this unfaithfulness God sends a famine. His goal is that His people turn back, repent, and serve Him faithfully again. He would like His people to be happy and that can only be in relationship with Him. The faithful, they are those who remain faithful to Him in the midst of general unfaithfulness, share in the famine. The famine serves as a trial for them to continue to trust in Him, even if the blessing associated with faithfulness is withheld.

“The days when the judges governed” Israel, are days when stability in society is far from being achieved. There is no king in Israel and “every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Jdg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). In such an uncertain time of crisis, it is not easy to know what to do. Without asking the LORD for permission, “a man of Bethlehem in Judah” on his own initiative flees his residence, with his wife and both his sons. The goal of his journey is the plains of Moab.

We do not have to look down on him because he took this arbitrary decision. Abraham and Isaac also tapped wells in another land when hunger came into the land God promised them. Abraham goes to Egypt (Gen 12:10) and Isaac to the land of the Philistines (Gen 26:1). Elimelech may not have remembered these histories, and he left as they did. Have we always been warned by examples of believers who have deviated?

Elimelech doesn't intend to stay there all the time, because he wants to sojourn there i.e. to stay there as a stranger. He doesn't go that far either,

only about forty or fifty kilometers. After all, he is not going all the way to Egypt either, but stays close to the country. 'I can just go back', he must have thought. But things run differently. The place of which he thinks the grass there is greener, becomes a cemetery.

In verse 2, the author mentions the names of the members of the family who are moving away. The meaning of these names prepare us. The name of the LORD, which appears more than ten times in this little book, does not appear in verses 1-5. The LORD is the great Absent One at this departure. The first name is Elimelech. He is responsible for this move. Elimelech does not honor his name. In his name the name of God does occur because his name means 'my God is King'. He confesses God as King with the meaning of his name, but does not acknowledge Him as King in the practice of his life.

Then the name of his wife is called: Naomi. This name means 'my lovely one'. She must have been a radiant woman. Everything she will experience will dramatically change that. She later lets herself be called "Mara" because of the bitterness she experienced on her way of life (verse 20). Mara means 'bitterness'.

The names of his sons are also mentioned and have a meaning. Mahlon means 'sick' and Chilion means 'languishing away'. Is there anything to be learned from this about Elimelech's spiritual state when the young people are born? Giving a name shows something of the parents' faith. It seems that Elimelech sees God as Someone Who only gives trouble and sorrow. Seen in that light, it is understandable that he runs away when hunger starts to gnaw.

It does not seem that he is part of a large group that, like him, is driven by hunger, and leaves Bethlehem in search of food. There is an indication that he is not yet hungry when he leaves. Naomi says later, when she returns, that she has left "full" (verse 21). In any case, the run to Moab is not motivated by faith, but by calculation. If all had reasoned like this, there would have been no one left in Bethlehem. Throughout this history, it is clear how much this family has lost. Everything lost through its arbitrary actions, so that every blessing it still receives, clearly comes as a proof of God's grace. Just as Elimelech no longer recognizes the meaning of his name in practice, he no longer recognizes the meaning of the names Bethlehem and Judah.



Bethlehem means 'bread house'. Judah means 'praise'. Instead of asking the LORD why He does not give bread, Elimelech goes with his family to Moab. As if he could in this way escape the discipline of God. Because he does not ask the LORD why there is famine, he does not ask the LORD where he can best go. His departure also means that his praise disappears.

Moab is the land of his own choice. In this choice he was only guided by the question of where there is bread. He moves to the plains of Moab because he thinks he finds there what he misses in Bethlehem. He exchanges the LORD's discipline for Moab's bread.

Moab is known for his pride and laziness (Isa 16:6; Jer 48:11). Moab is an enemy of God's people who has tried to bring a curse upon God's people (Num 22:1-7). Elimelech seeks refuge with such an enemy. By this he brings shame upon God's Name. He who does not stand to his confession, disgraces God's Name.

But how do we react to trials, illnesses, difficulties and the like? Do we want to escape from them or do we wonder what lesson the Lord wants us to learn with them? In case of illness, do we resort to a medicine or a doctor rather than to God? We may certainly use a medicine or a doctor, but what is our first action? And when we are financially tight? Do we think first of the Lord or are we looking for ways to solve this problem ourselves?

When we come into trials, our first action should be an examination of our own heart. Then we are in God's light and see what solution He gives. If His blessing is withheld, do we want to get it through our own efforts or do we go to the Lord to ask Him if there are any thing that is stopping His blessing? We tend to avoid the difficulties and look for the shortest route to happiness.

From a spiritual point of view, we can see in Bethlehem a picture of a local church where the Lord Jesus as the bread of life is central. It can happen sometimes that in a local church the spiritual life is languishing away. Every member of the church is responsible for this because all members together form the church. The blame should not be put too quickly on someone else. Leaving is the way of the least resistance. And if you leave anyway, where do you end up? Not in Egypt, a picture of the world. No, you don't give up your faith. You end up in Moab. That is not the world, but an area between the world and the church.

Moab spiritually represents an area where you can be a Christian in a relaxed way – Moab is a picture of laziness! – without worrying about your responsibilities in the church. Sometimes it is about Jesus, but His authority is difficult to be found. He is a good example, but He should not come any closer and be presented as Someone who has all authority over your life. More and more often you only hear about ‘God’. God’ sounds nice and general. Everyone is free to fill in who or what you mean by God. Whoever really knows God as Father loves the Lord Jesus (Jn 8:42a) and honors Him. It is actually impossible to honor God if the Son is not honored: “He that does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him” (Jn 5:23b). In ‘Moab’, it is not the Son who is the central focus of faith life, but whether you get a good feeling from something. You don’t get that in ‘Bethlehem’ but you get it in ‘Moab’.

### **Verses 3-4 | Marriage With Moabite Women**

3 Then Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died; and she was left with her two sons.  
4 They took for themselves Moabite women [as] wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years.

Where Elimelech thought he would survive, he dies. He had plans to stay there as a sojourner and return to the land of God after a while, but Moab becomes his grave. Many people make plans. They retire and then want to enjoy themselves. Often, they do not take into account death that can suddenly take its toll.

There is another aspect with Elimelech and that has to do with the meaning of his name. For someone who chooses Moab as his habitat, the authority of God disappears from his life. After all, Elimelech means ‘my God is King’, doesn’t it? Naomi and both children are left behind at the place where Elimelech has taken them to. The death of her husband doesn’t cause Naomi to return to Bethlehem. She stays where she is. Then it happens, the thing that Elimelech would not have wanted, and what Naomi cannot stop: the two sons marry Moabite women. Mahlon marries Ruth (Rth 4:10) and Chilion marries Orpah.

It is the natural consequence of the direction that Elimelech has gone. His way led away from God and that is a way where you never go alone.

Others will always go with you on that way. Elimelech searched out the things of the world, his sons searched out the world itself. It is not clear how old Mahlon and Chilion were, when their parents took them to Moab. What is clear is that they have built their existence in Moab. Elimelech still thought about going back, for his sons this thought does not exist. The little faith their father still had is not to be found with the sons.

If they have been religious at all, it has not played a role in choosing their wife. Their wives can also continue to serve idols. In verse 15 Naomi tells Ruth that Orpah has returned to her gods and that she should do so. Neither of the boys show any interest in the land of God, which is also evident from their choice for a Moabite woman. In doing so, they are indicating that God's commandment that "*an Ammonite or Moabite may not enter the congregation of the LORD*" (Deu 23:3a; cf. Neh 13:1-2), has no meaning for them.

In view of the marriage of the two sons as members of God's (earthly) people with women who serve idols, there is still a practical application to be made. When a member of God's (heavenly) people, the church, a believer, marries someone of the world, there is an unequal yoke. God's Word warns against such a commitment clearly and emphatically (2Cor 6:14). If this happens, the consequence is not that the unbeliever repents, but that the believer becomes even more unfaithful to the Lord. By repentance and confession of the sin that has been committed by entering into this marriage, there is grace to become faithful again.

From this history we also learn that it is a great responsibility for parents as to where they take their children even though they are with them. If the parents do not give first place to the Lord Jesus and the church, it is not to be expected that the children will then do so.

### Verses 5-6 | Naomi Returns to Israel

*5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband. 6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD had visited His people in giving them food.*

It seems that the happiness of the weddings of Mahlon and Chilion lasted only briefly. Even before there were children, they died. Now Naomi has

lost every male support. Around her she has nothing left of any support. If she looks ahead, there is no prospect at all. She has gone down a dead-end road with her husband and children and has now reached the end of that road.

She sees no way out, but is still not entirely without a way out (2Cor 4:8). At this deepest point in her life, when everything is lost, the desire arises in Naomi to return to the land of Israel. The awakening of this desire is not even the result of the misery in which she finds itself. Because she is now all alone, there is room for the LORD to awaken this desire in her. He lets the rumor reach her that He has given the land bread again.

The LORD takes the initiative. Perhaps after all the misery – the death of her husband and her sons – she had no need to go back at all. But the LORD works in her the desire to return to Him and to the inheritance. That’s how He always works. He fulfills a longing for Him and doing penance.

It is not so much the insight of everything that has been lost that makes a person return, but the remembrance of home, as with the prodigal son: “But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men”’” (Lk 15:17-19). It is the longing for which only God can give.

If we as Christians have strayed from God and the place where He gives blessing, we must first come to the acknowledgment that we have not found what we were looking for. Seeking to satisfy our desires independently of the Lord Jesus and the path God shows us towards Him, always ends in disappointment after a time. Only then will there be room again for God’s Spirit to work in us the longing for all the spiritual blessings that God has given us in Christ. The emergence of this longing is the first step towards restoring of the enjoyment of the blessing.

### **Verses 7-13 | Naomi and Her Daughters-In-Law**

7 So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. 8

*And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. 10 And they said to her, "[No], but we will surely return with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 12 Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons, 13 would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me."*

After the prehistory in the previous verses, the actual story now begins. This story is mainly given in the form of conversations. More than three-quarters of the book consists of conversations. The first conversation starts in verse 8. The reason is Naomi's return to the country of Israel. With this she gives in to the longing that the LORD has worked in her heart. Here too she resembles the prodigal son who stands up and goes back after his remembrance of home (Lk 15:20a).

When she leaves Moab, her two daughters-in-law go with her. They have somehow become attached to Naomi. The young women are not frivolous women. Although they are free to marry someone else, they still want to stay with Naomi. Once they are on their way, Naomi suddenly considers that her daughters-in-law have no future in the country she is going to. She doesn't want them to come and tells them to go back. Because of their Moabite nationality they have no future in her country. They had better go back "each of you to her mother's house". There they have enjoyed their Moabite education and from there they just have to start a new life.

Naomi no longer has a view of the God of Israel, the only, true God. Her daughters-in-law have come into contact with Him through their marriage. Although there must not have been much to see of Him, there must have been something visible. However, Naomi has become bitter, and for the women, life with her boys has turned out to be a great disappointment. Can she still warm up for that God? Can she tell her daughters-in-law with warmth about that God? She advises them to remarry and have children.

In this way they “may find rest, each in the house of her husband”, Naomi believes.

This means that Naomi sends them back to the world where there is no place for the true God. It may be that she does so because she is very disappointed in God. She may return to her native country, but that is because she knows deep inside that she belongs there, rather than she is motivated by a longing for the LORD. She has to get to know the LORD again. Now that she has heard that there is food in Israel again, she sees no more reason to stay in Moab.

Although she is disappointed in the LORD, she still gives her daughters-in-law His blessings. This shows that, despite disappointment, she still clings to Him. It seems too bad that her thoughts about Him are confused. Her statement sounds pious and her wish is sincere, but it is an impossibility, for how can the LORD bless a life in idolatry?

This mixture is often present in someone who has deviated and is on the way back, but has not yet been restored to fellowship with the Lord. From the past there is a certain knowledge of the Lord, but there is no longer clarity about the conditions attached to living in fellowship with Him. Fortunately, the Lord has patience with someone who is returning back from darkness on the way to light. He will make the light shine brighter and brighter (Pro 4:18). This will become clear in Naomi’s life.

In the way that Naomi goes from darkness to light, we also see the way that Israel will go in the future. From the darkness of the great tribulation the light will go up for the remnant when they come face to face with their once rejected Messiah. The day will come for them when the Messiah will shine brightly as the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2).

The testimony Naomi gives of her daughters-in-law is beautiful and to be envious of. Both women loved their husbands and they also loved Naomi. There are also people today who, although unbelieving, are committed to good family relations. That is praiseworthy and will be blessed by the Lord. If men observe any institution of the Lord, this will have a beneficial effect on the relationships between them. The abandonment of, or even consciously breaking with the family bonds established by God, will chill the climate of interaction between people.

Naomi's proposal shows that her religious life is still on the back burner. She is on the way back to the LORD, but she is far from being able to help others to find that way and to go that way. There is nothing by which she can encourage them to seek the LORD. On the contrary, she discourages her daughters-in-law from joining her.

A few times she mentions the name of the LORD, but that cannot conceal the fact that she eventually wants to send her daughters-in-law back to their idols (verse 15). Would she be ashamed to arrive in Bethlehem with two Moabite daughters-in-law? She can imagine what people will think. No, they can't come along.

When a believer has gone astray, he suffers damage to his own soul. Those who live outside of fellowship with God cannot help others to find Him either. A backslidden believer is more of a stumbling block than a help for anyone to find the Lord. Such a life is not a testimony to the Name of the Lord. The Christian testimony has collapsed and no longer attracts because the Christian testimony has waxed cold in the pursuit of their own interests. Christ is not central, but that old ego, I.

Christians living this way can only say to others that they should stay where they are. Their own life with Christ radiates nothing. The disappointment they have experienced in their path of deviation and the bitterness resulting from it, are not yet overcome. Only when the soul has been fully restored in the fellowship with the Lord and all that is wrong has been confessed can a clear testimony be given again.

When Naomi has finished her advice, she kisses her daughters-in-law. It only stirs up strong emotions in her daughters-in-law, attached as they are to their mother-in-law. With tears they assure her that they will go with her to her people. It is almost impossible to understand, but instead of agreeing, Naomi again makes frantic attempts to keep them from their intention. The first time she has pointed out their origins and the future in their own country (verse 8). With the second attempt she points out that there is nothing more that binds them to her and that there is no change to be expected for the future either.

She makes it clear that the women should not expect her to make any contribution to a life that is meaningful to them. She declares any hope

of it unfounded. Everything is worse for her even than for them because she is dealing with a God who is against her. It is as if she is saying to her daughters-in-law: 'It's better not to have to deal with such a God'.

Thus, she gives a very wrong impression of the LORD. She blames Him for all her difficulties. As if it is His hand that has brought her to Moab, and not the arbitrary choice of she and her husband. That God is a God full of goodness and grace, even for strangers, does not arise in her mind.

### Verses 14-15 | The Choice of Orpah and Ruth

*14 And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. 15 Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law."*

Then we see God in His sovereignty using Naomi's persistent misrepresentation of affairs to test the faith of Orpah and Ruth. Her discouragements reveal the state of the heart of each of them. The rejections are made and the decision falls. Both women cry again, but now they are no longer saying that they will both go with Naomi to her people (verse 10). Orpah chooses to go back and follows Naomi's bad advice. She looks no further than life on earth. She lacks the faith that makes a person look further and deeper than what they can superficially discern.

Orpah gives Naomi expressions of love by kissing her; Ruth gives Naomi her heart. The faith that is lacking in Orpah is present in Ruth. It is remarkable how much Ruth has been attracted to Naomi. This is only possible because she has seen the presence of God in Naomi's life. Ruth has looked deeper than the miserable state in which Naomi ended up. She even looks through the words that Naomi speaks and that should keep her away from God.

It makes Ruth's faith all the clearer. She does not believe because of Naomi, but despite Naomi. After all, how tragic it is that Naomi once again says to Ruth that she should follow her sister-in-law to her people and her gods! However, Ruth's faith sees right through everything behind Naomi a God Whom she also wants to know as her God because this is the only true God. That's why she doesn't turn away from Naomi, but rather clings to her.



Orpah looks at that from which she left and therefore returns. Ruth is looking forward to where she is going and that's why she goes with Naomi. She goes in faith. She is one of those from whom it is written: "And indeed if they had been thinking of that [country] from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better [country], that is, a heavenly one" (Heb 11:15-16a). This is incomprehensible to unbelief because all circumstances are against her.

### Verses 16-17 | The 'Creed' of Ruth

*16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you [or] turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people [shall be] my people, and your God, my God. 17 Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus, may the LORD do to me, and worse, if [anything but] death parts you and me."*

Ruth declares that she will stay with Naomi. She has seen something in Naomi that has touched her heart. She doesn't know what the consequences of her decision will be for her, but her choice is clear. She asks Naomi to stop urging her to leave. She is determined to be wherever Naomi is and to have fellowship with her people and her God. That is where faith leads to.

In seven statements she indicates that she does not only want to be a foreigner in Naomi's country, but that she wants to commit herself to it forever. It is a creed that must make a great impression on us. It shows a state of heart that makes us envious. We can apply this to our attachment to the Lord Jesus and our fellow believers and to our stay in the world.

1. "Where you go, I will go, ...". This indicates an unconditional following. Is it not the wish of every believer who loves the Lord Jesus to follow Him in an unconditional manner (Rev 14:4b)?
2. "... and where you lodge, I will lodge". By the rejection of the Lord Jesus it is night in the world. In this position is the believer (Rom 13:11-14; 1Thes 5:4-7; Jn 13:30). But in the heart of the believer shines the morning star (2Pet 1:19) as the harbinger of the day that will come when the Lord Jesus will shine as the Sun of righteousness (Mal 4:2).
3. "Your people [shall be] my people ...". She declares herself one with the people of Naomi, even though they are still so unfaithful. She

doesn't select the people with whom she wants to connect herself. It is also important for us who belong to the church to realize that we have not chosen our brothers and sisters ourselves, but that the Lord has given them to us.

4. "And your God, my God." Above all, she chooses the God of Naomi. With this she says goodbye to the idols of Moab forever.
5. "Where you die, I will die ..." Her attachment is so great that she not only wants to share in Naomi's life, but she also wants to share death with her. This is a proof of true connectedness. For us, we died with Christ. The place of our death is the cross. True attachment to one another becomes reality to the extent that we personally prove that I am crucified with Christ (Gal 2:20). That means the end of a selfish life.
6. "... And there I will be buried." This means the radical end of the bond between the world and the believer. Whoever is buried has disappeared from the world. This is expressed in baptism (Rom 6:4). But burial also has to do with the future. Burying is sowing. One is buried in view of the resurrection. Being buried and being resurrected belong together (1Cor 15:4). Ruth does not want to be buried in Moab when she dies. Where Naomi is buried, there she wants to be buried, for there they will rise up together to live in the promised blessing.
7. "... [anything but] death parts you and me." Ruth draws the full consequence from all her previous statements. The only thing that can bring separation between her and Naomi on earth is death. She does not talk about any expectations she has of her mother-in-law. She does not impose any conditions on her attachment to Naomi. Her commitment to Naomi is a proof of a faith that goes beyond what becomes visible from God in a member of God's people.

The seven statements Ruth makes can be divided into a group of four and a group of three. The first four statements have to do with the way of faith in a world where it is night, but also where God's people are present and where God Himself is our help. The last three statements all have to do with death. If death is taken into account, the flesh, the self, is not given the chance to assert itself.

Only those who have died and been buried can live real life. Only physical death puts an end to this life on earth. Ruth does not want to go with Naomi as a stranger to the land of God, to stay there for a while and then go back to Moab. She wants to stay there forever.

### Verse 18 | Naomi Accepts Ruth to Go With Her

| *18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.*

Naomi has made three attempts to stop her daughters-in-law from leaving Moab and going with her to Israel. She made her first attempt in verses 8,11, where she told her two daughters-in-law to return. She supported her urgent advice with logical arguments. After her second attempt, also supported by a rational argument (verses 12-14), Orpah decides to return.

To convince Ruth to follow her sister-in-law, she makes a third attempt (verse 15). That attempt brings out from Ruth the wonderful confession of the previous verses. Then Naomi gives in. She does not make a new attempt to convince Ruth to return. Ruth's determination has closed her mouth.

Determination or conviction of our faith silences people in their objections. There are no more questions for a tenacious sticking to a position once it has been adopted. Ruth's determined attitude shows a striking, humble mind at the same time. A humble attitude does not harm determination, but rather gives it extra strength. With the Lord Jesus this can be seen in a perfect way.

### Verses 19-22 | Naomi and Ruth Come to Bethlehem

| *19 So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, "Is this Naomi?" 20 She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. 21 I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?" 22 So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.*

Naomi and Ruth go together on their way to Bethlehem. It is likely that Ruth asked her mother-in-law on the way how life in Bethlehem had been. Old memories will have come back with Naomi. Maybe she has spoken about God's care for His people. She may have also told Ruth about the family's departure from Bethlehem and why they left. She may have already told her that in Moab, but now it speaks all the more to the heart of Ruth. After all, they are on their way to Bethlehem, with the beautiful meaning 'house of bread'? Soon she will be there! For Ruth it will be her first acquaintance, which she looks forward to with full expectation.

With Naomi, other feelings will have prevailed. This is also evident from the first words she speaks in Bethlehem. These are words in response to what the women say who know her from the past. She will be curious to know what it looks like if much has changed during her absence. Even more, she must have wondered how the people of the city would react to her return.

There is a reaction. There is a wave of excitement through the city. Her return to the people of God shakes up the whole city. It goes from mouth to mouth. The women who know her from the past, see in this Naomi someone who reminds them of the Naomi from the past, but she is no longer the same. As respected as she used to be, now so poor.

We can learn another lesson from the city's reaction to the return of Naomi. If we compare this with the return to the church of someone who has backslidden, how is our reaction? Does it do anything for us? It can cause a shock. The question is whether this is of joy or of fear. A person who has strayed but returns with repentance should be accepted by us with the assurance of our love (2Cor 2:6-8).

When the women pronounce her name, a name that means 'lovely' or 'pleasant', she resists. They no longer need to call her by that name. For her life is not lovely and pleasant anymore. Nor does she experience that the LORD finds her lovely or pleasant. They should call her "Mara", which means "bitterness". By her departure she has lost her vision of the LORD, and His relationship. In so doing, she attributes incongruous things to the LORD. She accuses Him, that He, the Almighty, "has dealt very bitterly" with her.

God once revealed Himself to Abraham as “God Almighty” (Gen 17:1). By virtue of that name God has made His covenant of blessing with Abraham. Naomi, however, does not mention this Name because she experienced His blessing, but because He has dealt very bitterly with her. The Almighty is not for her, but against her. He did not do her good, but evil. His omnipotence did not comfort and strengthen her, but was in her mind the cause of her misery.

She does acknowledge that she herself (“I”, emphatically) left. It was her own initiative. She went voluntarily, without being forced to and she also went “full”. She also acknowledges that the LORD has made her return. She has not returned because she wanted to, but because the LORD has inwardly urged her to return. That happened when she was “empty”. Selfishness made her go away, grace brought her back. She is on her way to restoration, but she is not yet fully restored. Restoration is a process. Discipline must be fully effective.

Where the road to restoration has begun, the first results of the full harvest are visible. It is therefore significant that they come to Bethlehem “at the beginning of barley harvest”. That means, that the people are harvesting from the field the sheaf of the first fruits after the Passover. The sheaf of the first fruits speaks of the resurrection of Christ. At that moment they return. Faith can see that. Restoration takes place on this basis.

The resurrection of Christ is the proof that His work of reconciliation has been perfectly accepted by God. As a result, there is the possibility of restoration for anyone who has backslidden. The ‘beginning of the harvest’ contains the promise of the entire harvest. The beginning of restoration means the promise of a full restoration.

The resurrection of Christ also contains a promise. He rose “as the first fruits” (1Cor 15:23), from all those who are asleep. His resurrection promises the resurrection of all who are in Christ. The full harvest of His work will become visible when He appears among all His own on earth, to establish His kingdom of peace. Despite all our failures, we can focus on that.

## Ruth 2

### **Verse 1 | Boaz**

*1 Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.*

Immediately after the scene of the beginning of the barley harvest at the end of the previous chapter (Rth 1:22), attention is drawn to Boaz. He is the second man to be mentioned in this book. The first man, Elimelech, has failed. He has left the place of blessing and brought a curse upon his descendants. The second man is not weak, but powerful and he restores everything in which the first man has failed.

This first and second man are a picture of the first man and second Man, the first Adam and the last Adam (1Cor 15:45,47). In the first Adam all men died; in Christ, the last Adam, those who are connected with Him are made alive. Naomi was first connected to the first man. It turned out that death was connected with this. Now a relationship is established with the second man, not by her, but by Ruth.

Naomi seems to have forgotten that he is there. Therefore, there is bitterness in her heart. With us there is often bitterness because we forget that there is Someone Who can help us. But the Holy Spirit points to Him, as He points to Boaz here.

The name Boaz means 'in him is strength'. He is a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus as He is in glory, the heavenly land. Before he appears on the stage, some things are said about him. First of all, he is a relative of Naomi. This fits in with the picture of the Lord Jesus because the Lord Jesus took part in blood and flesh and thus became a 'blood relative' of us (Heb 2:14-15). Only by becoming like men – but without sin! (Heb 4:15) – He could become a Savior or Redeemer for men. Boaz is also a very wealthy man. He also has the means to redeem.

The mention that he is "from the family of Elimelech" emphasizes his relationship with Elimelech. Elimelech did not live up to the meaning of his name, 'my God is King'. Elimelech had died outside the land. He is a

picture of Israel that has not recognized the rule of God in any way. As a result, God has caused them to be taken away from their land in His discipline, and made them perish. Now someone else is coming to give full shape to the kingship of God. This is perfectly to be seen in the Lord Jesus. Everything Israel has failed in, He has lived up to perfectly. He voluntarily went into judgment and death to restore the broken relationship between God and His people. The people have lost everything, but Christ has made everything good.

## Verse 2 | Ruth Wants to Glean

*2 And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."*

Ruth takes the initiative to pick up the ears. Naomi does not seem capable of anything. Ruth is in the land, but she is not satisfied with it. She longs for food. For this she has to work, she has to make an effort. A spiritual longing for God's Word will prompt a diligent investigation of it.

In practical terms, we can also learn from Ruth. She doesn't stay at home waiting for work to come to her. She goes looking for work, she makes an effort to find it. God blesses such action. It also applies in following a training course. There too God will bless effort. It is about being faithful in what is expected of us. Whoever wants to do the will of the Lord is led by Him to the place of blessing.

Ruth is aware that she depends on grace. After all, she has no right to anything. But where there are no rights and someone is aware of that, there can be made an appeal to grace. In that mind she wants to go. Ruth will not have known much about God's gracious provisions in a case like hers (Lev 23:22; 19:9; Deu 24:19). Because her heart, however, has gone out to the God and the land of Naomi, the faith that is in her is given the space to act. She could have stayed at home, but she realizes that she can appeal to grace.

God works, but man must go in faith. It is not about rights, but about grace. She will, as "the dogs", be content with "the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" (Mt 15:27). It is not about a *field* where she will be able

to pick up ears, but about a *person* who will allow her in his grace on his field. That's what she says. She says she wants to "glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor".

The initiative does come from Ruth, but she does not act impulsively and on her own. She discusses her considerations with Naomi. It is good for young believers to discuss certain initiatives with spiritually-minded older believers. Naomi confirms her intention and she goes.

There is great connectedness between Naomi and Ruth. Naomi represents the ancient Israel, but then the part that repents and that takes shape is seen in Ruth. In Ruth the faith of the remnant is revealed. This picture shows the relationship that exists between the faithful remnant in the future and the Israel from the past. Together they represent God's people, with on the one hand the hopeless situation as a result of their own unfaithfulness and on the other hand the burgeoning faith with dependency on God's grace. God will fulfill all His promises He has made to Israel in the past, to the remnant in the future. The remnant will be aware that that fulfillment will fall to them by pure grace.

### **Verse 3 | Ruth Enters the Field of Boaz**

*3 So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.*

Ruth has no preference whatsoever for the field where she can glean. She would not know on which field she is welcome, or on which field the most grain lies. As far as she is concerned, any field is good. That is why she will have gone into the first available field. This 'happens to be' the field of Boaz. That is seen from her side. For us who know this history, it is clear that God has guided it in this way. The 'chance' encounters that we may have, encounters that 'happen to us', are also God-governed events, through which He works out certain intentions.

This would not have happened to her if she had still been under the idols of Moab. The idols of Moab would not have sent her there to that field. She is not looking for the redeemer, she doesn't know him at all. But the God of Israel, to Whom she has entrusted herself, is working to connect her to



Boaz, without her being aware of it. God guides the blind to a way they do not know (Isa 42:16a). In this way He makes Ruth one of the cases in which He brings a woman to a man. He also brought Eve to Adam.

She comes “after the reapers” to glean ears. The reapers do an important job. If there were no reapers, there was nothing to glean. The field could be full of wheat, but poor Ruth wouldn’t be able to take anything from it. Reapers provide us with the grown-up corn. Reapers are the people who mow the wheat and bind it together in sheaves. What they drop is food for the poor. It is also the case in spiritual terms. What would we know of the blessings if the Lord had not given gifts (Eph 4:7,11) which know the blessings and distribute them to those who have come to faith?

### Verses 4-7 | The Testimony About Ruth to Boaz

*4 Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, “May the LORD be with you.” And they said to him, “May the LORD bless you.” 5 Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?” 6 The servant in charge of the reapers replied, “She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab. 7 And she said, ‘Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.’ Thus, she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while.”*

Then Boaz appears. The words he and his reapers exchange at the greeting, prove the good relationship between them. Boaz comes from Bethlehem to his field. His blessing for his reapers is that the LORD will be with them. It is reminiscent of the words “peace be to you” which the Lord Jesus says to His disciples when He appears among them after His resurrection (Jn 20:19-23). They do everything under His supervision and blessing. In their turn the reapers wish Boaz the blessing of the LORD. Thus, all the workers of the Lord Jesus wish Him blessing from God (cf. Psa 20:1-5).

In practical terms, this greeting between an employer and his employees is rare in a society where the boss is generally governed by selfishness and the subordinates by suspicion. All kinds of regulations can limit evil a little, but never exclude it, because the root of evil remains. Only when the Lord Jesus will reign righteously and the relationships with Him will be experienced immediately in a new way of thinking, will the situation be

as it is here, in the field of Boaz. Yet both employers and employees who know the Lord Jesus are called to deal with each other in the spirit of this greeting (Eph 6:5-9).

Then Boaz asks about Ruth. His eye is on her (cf. Psa 33:18). He notices her as a new one on his field. He pays attention to her, but doesn't show that directly to herself. He does not ask *who* she is, but *whose* she is: "Whose young woman is this?" Boaz is no longer a young man. In any case, he is a lot older than Ruth, because he addresses her a little later as a 'daughter'. He is still not married. So, he asks whom she belongs to, whose she is. In veiled terms he asks if she is already married. This fits in perfectly with this history, which is primarily a love story.

From a spiritual point of view, the question can also be asked to us: 'Whose are you, whom do you belong to?' If the things of the world control our lives, we are from the world and not from the Lord.

The servant tells Boaz who Ruth is, and reports on her activities. She is someone who has left the plains of Moab behind her and who wants to be dependent on grace. As proof of the latter, the servant cites her statement with which she asked him to glean ears. She did it in the humblest way, she did not demand work. She longed to glean Bethlehem's food and gather it. She asked for a place close to the sheaves behind the reapers.

In spiritual terms this speaks of the desire of a young believer to read (glean ears) in God's Word and to see the coherence of the different verses (gather). To this end, the young believer will like to be close to believers who have already discovered this coherence, and he will like to learn from them. Therefore, he will like to visit meetings where God's Word is explained and he will like to read comments that show him the coherence in God's Word.

Boaz talks to his servant about Ruth. The servant who is in charge of the reapers is a picture of the Holy Spirit. He speaks to the Lord Jesus about us (cf. Rom 8:26). When someone comes in humility to receive blessing, the Lord sees it, He notices it. The servant testifies of her that she has focused entirely on her work. Therefore, he mentions that she is someone who "has been sitting in the house for a little while", which probably indicates sitting in a hut in the field to find rest and shade. Ruth did it only for a little while.

**Verses 8-10 | Boaz Speaks to Ruth**

*8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids. 9 Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw." 10 Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"*

Then Boaz turns to Ruth. He does so with due respect for her attitude. He doesn't overload her with a load of grain and doesn't speak about his place as the redeemer. His first words are an encouragement for her not to go to another field and not to leave the field where she is now either. She has ended up on the right field. Leaving that field will mean that she disadvantages herself. What a blessing she will lose if that happens. For us this means not to leave the place where the Lord Jesus is with His blessing.

He also encourages her to join his maids. They have been on the field for a long time. They know where the gleanings are: with the reapers. She has to stay with them, that is the best company. The picture shows that the Lord Jesus indicates that fellowship with other believers in His field is the way in which we can make the spiritual blessings our own. In this way we will grow in faith.

He points her to "the field", that is his whole land. That is what her eyes should be focused on. Thus, the Lord Jesus points out to us that a great expanse of blessing is waiting in the heavenly land. Every believer who desires to know all the spiritual blessings he possesses "in the heavenly [regions] of Christ" (Eph 1:3) may enjoy them. That blessing is ready to be gathered by us, handful by handful. If we want to receive that blessing, we must be where the Lord bestows the blessing. Other fields may also be good, but they are not the fields of Boaz. It's about being where he is. He encourages her to keep searching. We must keep searching in the Word of God (Isa 34:16).

Boaz also said something to the servants. He has forbidden them to touch Ruth. The field of Boaz is characterized by purity. For us it means: Keep your hands off. Do not touch anything that is not yours (1Thes 4:3-8). Keep the relationships pure. Keep yourself clean.

From a spiritual point of view, one application is that those who have been given a service to do by the Lord Jesus may not submit the believers to themselves. They must not harass the believers by imposing burdens on them. Instead, He has given His servants another command: They must use their hands to refresh thirsty souls. “Drink from what the servants draw”, means that we listen with desire to healthy teaching from the Word through the gifts the Lord Jesus has given. These gifts are themselves first refreshed by the Word and have gathered it and can then pass it on.

Ruth falls down before Boaz. She is impressed by His Mercy. This show of mercy comes to her unexpectedly. We pray for mercy, and when we receive it, it causes wonder. The heart says to the Lord Jesus: “Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?” Then the Lord explains how He appreciates it when a heart seeks His blessing. He rewards every trust in His grace as if it were a merit. Whoever takes refuge in Him is rewarded. The Lord’s recognition of this as merit does not mean that there is anything we can boast of. It is all the result of His work and grace.

That is why Ruth speaks of a favor. She doesn’t yet know what else is going to come, but her attitude prepares her to receive more. She will soon get beyond praying and thinking.

### **Verses 11-12 | Boaz Tells What He Knows About Ruth**

*11 Boaz replied to her, “All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. 12 May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.”*

In his answer, Boaz does not elaborate on the grace that impressed her so much. He speaks only of what she has done. He praises her dedication. Boaz’s answer shows that she is not a stranger to him. First, he mentions what she had done for her mother-in-law after the death of her husband. The death of her husband has not been a reason for Ruth to look for a new partner in Moab. Instead, she has focused on being there for Naomi.

She has become more and more attached to Naomi. This will undoubtedly be because of Naomi's faith, which, despite the weakness with which that faith was apparent, she nevertheless noticed in her. This has awakened in Ruth a longing for the God of Naomi. This desire can only be appeased in one way and that is by linking her fate to that of Naomi.

Ruth was not a restless pleasure seeker who lived from one party to another. She was looking for rest for her heart and she felt that Naomi could somehow help her in that. That is why she linked her fate to Naomi's and went with her mother-in-law. This meant that she turned her back on her parental home, to which she could have returned after the death of her husband and to which Naomi had also wanted her to turn back (Rth 1:8). She has cut the natural ties to never restore them again. In her we see the practice of the Lord Jesus' words: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Mt 10:37a).

Then Boaz speaks about what she left and where she went. Thus, the Lord Jesus speaks to every believer who has been impressed by grace. Abraham also left the land once and went, showing faith in what God said, to the land that God would point out to him. Ruth is a second Abraham, she has done the same. With her this did not happen because of faith in a promise of God, but through what she heard about Him from Naomi, and what she saw of Him in her.

Boaz speaks of recompense and "full" wages from the LORD for what Ruth has done. He tells her where her faith has brought her and what else she will get. She has come to seek refuge under the "wings" of the LORD, the God of Israel. Those who do so will not only find protection, but so much more. God rewards this trust in Him, with rich blessings.

Peter asks the Lord Jesus what their share will be because they have left everything down. In his answer, the Lord even speaks of a hundredfold blessing and the inheritance of eternal life: "Then Peter said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?" And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive

many times as much, and will inherit eternal life" (Mt 19:27-29). The grace of God is so great that He gives a rich reward to those who relinquish all for His sake.

### **Verse 13 | Reaction of Ruth to the Kindness of Boaz**

*13 Then she said, "I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."*

All these words of grace make a great impression on Ruth. It happens to her as it also happened to Mephiboseth who is also overwhelmed by the grace David shows him (2Sam 9:8). She does not doubt his grace, even less does she refuse it, but she confesses her unworthiness. She feels overwhelmed by his favor which is a comfort for her.

After everything she that she has experienced and left behind, she needs it. Her heart has been searching for what really brings peace. In that which Boaz says to her, she feels that peace flowing in. This doesn't make her self-aware and self-assured, but humble and small. She remains aware of her origin. When she thinks about Boaz' servants, she is reluctant to compare herself with them. Grace always thinks less of ourselves, and considers others more than ourselves.

If we are aware of our origins from sin, we will particularly appreciate the favor God has shown us. That will also keep us from placing ourselves above others. We will consider others higher than ourselves (Phil 2:3b).

### **Verse 14 | Boaz and Ruth Eat Together**

*14 At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So, she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left.*

The blessing is getting bigger and bigger, according to the principle that "to everyone who has, [more] shall be given" (Mt 25:29a). Boaz invites her to come and eat with him, and his reapers. Boaz is not always busy giving orders to all his servants. He also grants them their rest. In that time of rest, they take food.

In all his activities it is necessary for a servant of the Lord to take some rest with Him (Mk 6:31a) and eat what He gives. Before they continue their

service, they must have enjoyed the food themselves first. After that they can also hand out to others.

Ruth sits down. This is necessary to take the food at rest. The Lord also recommends that the crowds “sit on the grass” first and then feeds them (Mt 14:19). Then Boaz personally gives Ruth the food, while she is sitting beside the reapers. A service for the Lord does not give us the right to a place closer to Him than someone who has just come to faith.

For Ruth, the meal has a special meaning. It is, so to speak, a phase in her spiritual development. She is involved by Boaz in fellowship with him and his servants. A meal is a picture of fellowship. Spiritual development and ‘a meal’ belong together. So, we see it with Esther, who first receives grace and then has a meal with the king (Est 5:4-8; 7:1-2). We also see it with the brothers of Joseph (Gen 43:33-34).

Ruth takes her place among the reapers and takes from Boaz’s hands what he has for her. This is a personal blessing for her, different from what she gets from the reapers. He gives her “roasted grain”. This is the food that came in the place of the manna, after the people of Israel arrived in the promised land (Jos 5:11-12). The roasted grain is grain that has been in the fire. It speaks of the Lord Jesus who was in the fire of God’s judgment. He has been in death, but he is also risen and gives eternal life to everyone who believes. That is the illustration of what has happened to Ruth

She has to dip it in the vinegar herself. It recalls the sour wine offered to the Lord Jesus during His suffering on the cross (Psa 69:22; Mt 27:48). This is a picture that when she takes this food, she must remember what a suffering this has meant for the Lord Jesus. Then she eats, is satisfied and has some left. We also see that there is some food left when the Lord has fed the crowd (Mt 14:20). That is how grace acts. There is always more than what is required for our needs. Our capacity to receive is always much less than His capacity to give. He always provides according to His wealth, and that wealth is inexhaustible.

### **Verses 15-16 | The Servants Get a New Command**

*15 When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. 16 Also you shall*

*purposely pull out for her [some grain] from the bundles and leave [it] that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."*

After she has eaten and is satisfied, she doesn't go home. She has not become lazy by the grace shown to her. She rises and continues gleaning. She remains busy. That gives Boaz the opportunity to show a second sign of his personal affection. She does not have to stay at the edge of the field, but may "glean even among the sheaves".

He instructs his servants to purposely pull out some grain for her. His servants don't decide how to deal with hungry souls. It would also have been easier for them to directly give her a whole sheaf. But they like to serve Boaz and by his grace they communicate to others in the way he indicates. What belongs to the Lord Jesus, we may give in grace to others who remain in the blessings, without being entitled to direct them. The servants are there for others.

Boaz doesn't give her in the lap what he wants to give her. Boaz's grain is already assigned to her, but she has to glean herself, she has to make an effort to glean. The result of the gathered ears is therefore not only dependent on her zeal, but also and in the first place on the goodness of Boaz. In the same way, we may diligently examine the Scriptures, but the riches we draw from them are the result of the goodness of the Lord Jesus. Only His blessing makes us rich (Pro 10:22a).

Ruth must not have been aware of this sign of his love, unless she has had her eyes open to the fact that there are suddenly so many ears to glean. They have been left especially for her. The Lord has for each of His own special grain, a special sign of His love, which He sends to us through obedient, faithful servants.

### **Verse 17 | The Yield**

*17 So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.*

Ruth has gleaned, but she also needs to beat out. Grain cannot grow without straw. However, straw is not food for humans. In speeches and comments there will often also be some straw, such as examples or repetition, so that the meaning of the Bible section is well remembered. In addition, there



is the weakness of the expressions that are used or sometimes wanting to say it more beautifully to impress. All these human elements must be removed. Often, it is those things that we take home from a meeting and we talk to each other about the straw, and little or not at all about the grain. We remember the defective or beautiful form in which something is said, while ignoring the content.

Ruth has no interest in straw. She beats the grain out to take it home, because only therein is food. Spiritually, it means that we consider before the Lord what we have read in God's Word and take into our hearts what it contains. Not everything we hear or read we keep. It's about what we beat out. We have to work on it and we have to make an effort to do so. Then what we have gathered can become bread.

Ruth has gleaned an ephah of barley at the end of the day. An ephah is ten omer (Exo 16:36) and an omer in the wilderness was the meal of manna for one day (Exo 16:16,22). Ruth has collected food for ten days. She takes that home, so others can be fed with it.

Beating out also indicates that more work needs to be done to get the full benefit of what she has gathered. It can be compared to the 'chewing the cud' – by clean animals (Lev 11:3) – of what we have taken from the Word, for example in a meeting or at a conference. Beating out means to pray and think about what we have read or heard from and about God's Word. Many impressions disappear like smoke, simply because we haven't thought about them afterwards.

### **Verses 18-19 | Ruth Lets Naomi Share in the Blessing**

*18 She took [it] up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took [it] out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied. 19 Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed." So, she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz."*

Ruth takes with her what she has gathered and beaten out. Yet she does not give that to Naomi. She gives Naomi what she has left, after she was satisfied with what Boaz gave her (verse 14). The rich Ruth lets the still

poor Naomi share in her abundance. With what we have personally received from Christ in abundance, we can feed others. This is not only in the meeting, but especially in our contacts as believers with each other.

How much did we enjoy the Lord Jesus? Is that so much that we can also give it to others, out of its abundance? Often our contacts are limited to everyday conversations which we also have with our unbelieving neighbors. That is not necessarily wrong, but sometimes it is the result of spiritual poverty, so the level of conversation doesn't go beyond earthly things.

Naomi can see from the large quantity, that Ruth is particularly blessed by a landowner. Because of the fruit she sees, Naomi asks where she has been. People ask us, when they see what we have and hand out, where we have been. The Thessalonians are known throughout the area to belong to the Lord Jesus and live for Him (1Thes 1:8). If we spend a lot of time watching TV and surfing the internet, if we have been busy in those 'fields', and have read nothing of the 'field' of God's Word then we probably can't hand out anything. I take with me to the meeting, where I have been, and what I have been doing.

In answer to Naomi's question, Ruth does not mention the place where she worked, but the name of the man on whose place she worked: Boaz. It means something special to Ruth, but only that he is a friendly man who has blessed her richly. She now knows his name, that name with the beautiful meaning 'in him is strength'. There is growth in her spiritual development. So, it is with someone who has just come to faith. First, he is happy about the forgiveness of his sins, then he becomes happy with the Redeemer by getting to know Him more personally, by discovering more the meaning of the Name 'Jesus' (meaning 'in Him is salvation').

### **Verse 20 | Boaz Is One of the Closest Relatives**

*20 Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead." Again, Naomi said to her, "The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives."*

For Naomi, Boaz's name is a new ray of light in her dark circumstances. In her hopeless situation she is suddenly reminded of Boaz, the blood related, the Redeemer. She should have known that in him there is salvation,

but she has forgotten him. God makes sure that she gets in touch with him again. Naming him suddenly opens the blessing of the LORD for her.

Ruth has the faith, Naomi has the knowledge. Naomi sees the goodness of the LORD for the dead, that offspring could come, and therefore goodness for the living. His goodness to the dead means that everything He promised will be fulfilled by Him to their offspring. He will do so through the 'close relative' or the Redeemer. As soon as eyes are turned to Him, hope appears with all consequent blessing.

The word here translated as 'close relative' is literally 'redeemer'. The word comes from family law. The word contains the meaning of demanding back, buy out, release, redeem. The person of the redeemer occurs in four connections:

1. The redeemer may reclaim a piece of land; he may redeem it from someone who bought it from the original owner (Lev 25:25). Thus, the land will be made free of encumbrance (Isa 63:16-18) in relationship with the remnant, who will again be put in the possession of their inheritance.
2. There is also a meaning of redeeming people who have sold themselves out of poverty (Lev 25:48-49). They can also be made free (Isa 43:1; 51:11). God buys back His people from all the nations of the earth.
3. The redeemer also releases debt. We see that with the blood avenger (Num 35:16-27), that is literally a blood redeemer. What does he redeem? He redeems by killing the killer (Isa 47:3-4).
4. The redeemer is also the one who releases his brother's wife from childlessness – the duty of a husband's brother (Deu 25:5-6). Boaz will redeem Ruth (Rth 3:13). He will not redeem *something* for or on behalf of Ruth, the inheritance, but *herself*. This makes him both her redeemer and her husband. These are also the relations in which the LORD stands to his people (Isa 54:5).

For Naomi, Boaz is still "one of our redeemers", not yet the only redeemer. She is similar to people who have a high appreciation of the Lord Jesus, but for whom He is not yet the unique Redeemer (cf. Mt 16:13b-14). But she is on the right track.

### Verse 21-23 | Ruth Continues to Work on the Field of Boaz

21 Then Ruth the Moabitess said, "Furthermore, he said to me, 'You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.'" 22 Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, so that [others] do not fall upon you in another field." 23 So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Boaz has overwhelmed Ruth with the great promise that she is allowed to be on his land with his servants until the end of the harvest. The servants are *his* servants and the land is *his* land. Everything belongs to Boaz.

Ruth's thoughts go no further than that she can be on his field every day. But Naomi already sees Ruth as Boaz's wife. Her faith and hope have been awakened. Naomi works slowly with Ruth because Ruth doesn't know of a redeemer yet. Love cannot be forced; restoration cannot be enforced either. Love must have its own natural development. So, Ruth needs to be there every day on the field to meet Boaz every day.

The period that she works in the field of Boaz will last fifty days, from the beginning of the barley harvest (Rth 1:22) until all Boaz's harvest is finished. When the harvest of wheat is over, it is the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (Exo 34:22; Lev 23:15-21; Deu 16:9-12). Ruth chapter 2 takes place between the Passover and the Feast of Weeks, i.e. in a period of seven weeks. We can assume that during that time Boaz and Ruth have eaten together every day, in the presence of others. In this way they got to know each other better in a relaxed and practical way.

Ruth has always looked for the right company, by which she gained the blessing for herself. Ruth not only started well, but she also continued well until the end of the harvest. Perseverance is an important characteristic for a believer. She also stays with her mother-in-law. She continues to remain true to what Naomi suggests

## Ruth 3

### **Verse 1 | Naomi Seeks Rest for Ruth**

*1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?"*

In the fifty days that Ruth has been near Boaz, Boaz has told her nothing about his love for her. It was neither the time nor the opportunity for it. Ruth must initiate it. He waits, as it were, for her to call upon his grace. Grace is present, but she only will receive it and it will only be experienced when she appeals to it. In addition, Boaz can't ask her to become his wife, because there is another redeemer closer than he is. The law also states that it is forbidden for a member of God's people to marry a Moabitess (Deu 23:3).

This means that everything comes back to the basis of grace. If this is appealed to, grace will prevail. We see that, in a wonderful way, expressed in the appeal of a Canaanite woman to the Lord Jesus for the sake of her daughter (Mt 15:21-28). Whosoever comes to God in this way is heard by Him.

Naomi knows that for Ruth, there is only one way to get rest and that is when she marries the right man. Therefore, she is now taking the initiative, while in Ruth chapter 2, Ruth is taking the initiative to provide food (Rth 2:2). The rest that Naomi is looking for is that Ruth will marry Boaz and find rest in her own home, her own family with children.

Earlier she had desired for Ruth another rest, but that was when she had wanted to send her back to Moab with the inappropriate wish that Ruth would find rest in the house of a Moabite man (Rth 1:9). If Ruth had listened to her then, she would never have known Boaz and would have continued to serve the idols of Moab instead of being brought into contact with the true God, the God of Israel.

A practical lesson can be learned in view of the desire for and search for a spouse. It is important to learn the will of the Lord in this, trusting Him that He knows who suits whom. Whoever does his own will in these things

will not find rest in marriage, but unrest. Marriage is meant as an oasis of rest, despite the activity that can be present, especially if there are several children to raise and care for. Yet the man who follows the will of God in this finds the inner peace that God has connected to marriage.

It is important that parents seek this rest for their children, as Naomi does here for Ruth. Parents' selfishness can lead them to seek a good partner for their child, i.e. someone with whom they can create an impression without thinking about the source of unrest they may create for their child.

Another remark in connection with current events is that finding rest in one's own home is not in keeping with the generally present urge of women to work outside the home. Here too, whoever follows the will of God will find true satisfaction.

The wish that "it may be well" with someone is also found in the law and in the commandment for the children to honor their parents (Deu 5:16). Paul cites this commandment in the letter to the Ephesians, emphasizing that it is the only commandment that is not followed by a punishment for transgression, but that it is "the first commandment with a promise". This promise is that it may be well with the child who honors his parents (Eph 6:2-3).

## **Verse 2 | Naomi Knows Who Boaz Is and Where He Is**

*2 Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight.*

Naomi indicates to Ruth that Boaz is "our kinsman". With this Naomi is saying that she and Ruth have a common family member. This is reminiscent of the Lord Jesus, who therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same (Heb 2:14a; Rom 8:3), yet without sin (Heb 4:15). By mentioning the blood relationship, Naomi also seems to think of the duty of a husband's brother (Deu 25:5-10). The appeal to the duty of a husband's brother cannot be made in a direct sense, because Boaz is not a brother of Mahlon, the deceased husband of Ruth. Nevertheless, the idea of the duty of a husband's brother may have played a role.

If there is a way for a marriage between Boaz and Ruth, it should be by that way, with grace bridging the distant relationship. Naomi would also know about the prohibition to marry a Moabitess (Deu 23:3). However, she knew herself to be an object of the grace of God Who brought her and Ruth back into His land. She understands that where in this case two laws seem to conflict, God is greater and goes the way of grace. That is the way from which the blessing can be obtained and that is the way she proposes to Ruth.

The awareness of the blood relationship between them and Boaz is the starting point of her plan that she will introduce to Ruth. Boaz has already shown his affection so much that she feels invited to act. Faith and acting in faith belong together. Faith does not make you passive, but leads you to action. Faith in God's goodness is a great stimulus to activity. An action done in faith is not a leap in the dark with an uncertain outcome. An action done in faith happens in the confidence that God will reward faith.

She was with the "maids" of Boaz. That time is over. She does not return to them. Now she is ready for a meeting and relationship with Boaz personally. The most suitable opportunity for this is when the harvest is gathered. Then the harvest is taken to the threshing floor to be fanned by the owner. They also eat and drink to celebrate the rich harvest. There is joy with the owner, with Boaz.

The Lord Jesus will also fan His harvest (Mt 3:12). He will fan His people in the future to distinguish between chaff and wheat. The chaff is the godless, renegade mass of the people who are in revolt against Him. The wheat is the God-fearing part that, in the great tribulation, undergoes heavy trials to purify their faith.

We can also apply this to ourselves. The Lord Jesus says to Peter that Satan has demanded to sift (that is another word for fan) the disciples like wheat. It will be clear that Satan is only interested in the chaff (Lk 22:31).

A "threshing floor" appears several times in Scripture and is a significant picture. On a threshing floor, the wheat is beaten out of the ear and the wheat is separated from the chaff. A threshing floor therefore speaks of judgment, distinguishing between those who belong to the Lord and those who do not. In our personal lives we also are fanned. The Lord does this

or allows it to happen, for example, through something that happens in our lives and in which we recognize His hand. He is working with us to remove from our lives all features that are not His. All features that are not His features prevent His life from becoming visible in our lives.

### Verses 3-4 | Instructions From Naomi for Ruth

*3 Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your [best] clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; [but] do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do."*

Before Ruth can go to Boaz, she has to do a few things: she has to wash herself, anoint herself and put on her best clothes. Someone washes himself to become clean or pure. This is also the case spiritually. In spiritual terms, washing means that one is cleansed in one's heart and mind by reading God's Word (Jn 15:3; Eph 5:26; 1Pet 1:22). Only when someone is cleansed, he can have part *with* the Lord Jesus (Jn 13:8b). Ruth must wash herself to be clean and then have part with Boaz.

Then she has to anoint herself. Ointments are made with anointing oil. Ointment with oil is a picture of the anointing with the Holy Spirit. God's children are anointed with the Holy Spirit (1Jn 2:20,27). He who is anointed with the Holy Spirit – and that is every child of God! – will also show this in his life by showing the fruit of the Spirit.

It is about being filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18b). This is a command. It is our responsibility to give the Holy Spirit room in our lives. That is, our whole life is to be permeated by Him. That we live and walk through the Spirit (Gal 5:16). As a result, our lives will spread a pleasant aroma (cf. Jn 12:3). With Ruth it means that it is no longer the smell of Moab that hangs around her (Jer 48:11), but the smell of the new relationship she wants to enter into. We can ask ourselves the question: 'What smell do we spread?'

She is putting on the best clothes she has. Clothes indicate behavior. What the people see of us is our behavior and actions, just as they see our clothes. It is God's intention that through our actions we should "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (Tit 2:10). What the Word of God and



the Holy Spirit do with us becomes visible in our appearance, our way of speaking and acting.

Our contact with the Lord, our desire to be with Him and to live with Him and for Him, will have a cleansing effect on our lives (1Jn 3:3; cf. Rev 22:11-12). Do the people around us see that we are clothed with the Lord Jesus? God “has taken us into favor in the Beloved” (Eph 1:6). The intention is to show that too. We are urged to show the features of the new man (Col 3:12; Rom 13:14). Externally, this happens when we are baptized (Gal 3:27).

After these three actions she can go to Boaz. But she is not allowed to make herself known to Boaz until he has eaten and drunk. This shows that we can only come into contact with the Lord Jesus after He had completely fulfilled the Father’s will. The Father’s will was His food (Jn 4:34), His ‘eating and drinking’. This advice also infers that she must not behave conspicuously in order to be seen by him. Everything speaks of humility and modesty.

Naomi has given Ruth advice for her ‘personal care’. She also pointed out to Ruth that she should be modest and not impose herself. That’s not necessary with Boaz. Even when she now tells Ruth how to approach Boaz, it speaks of modesty. Ruth must first find out where Boaz will spend the night. That means she has to pay close attention to where Boaz is and where he is going. She has to follow him with her eyes, she has to keep an eye on him constantly. This also applies to our connection with the Lord Jesus. The contact with Him, every word we read about Him in His Word, makes us familiar with His ways.

When she has ‘localized’ him, as it were, she has to go to him. What she then has to do – uncover his feet and lie down – means as much as asking him if he wants to marry her. By lying under the same blanket she offers herself to become his wife. However, she does not lie at his side, she does not (yet) have the right to do so, but at his feet. She wants to be his maid-servant. A sense of grace leads her to this plan. She is dependent on grace.

Naomi has already gained so much insight into Boaz that she knows how he will react. She tells Ruth that Boaz will tell her everything she must do. Ruth has the right mind for that and Boaz has the wisdom to notice it.

From a spiritual point of view, what Ruth is doing here is to unite herself with the death of the Lord Jesus. Here it is not the sinner who comes to Christ to get new life, but the believer who sees more and more of the truth about what Christ has done and wants to experience it in his own life. Thus, from a spiritual point of view, the result of all her previous actions – which show the believer’s mind – is that the Lord Jesus will show what His will is (cf. Jn 7:17).

### Verses 5-6 | The Obedience of Ruth

5 She said to her, “All that you say I will do.” 6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her.

Ruth wants to be obedient in everything. She doesn’t realize what it all means, nor does she know what the consequences are, but she listens to the wise advice of her mother-in-law who has also grown spiritually. She is aware of Boaz’s activities. This enables her to give Ruth the right instructions.

Here we can learn practical lessons about the blessed effect of a good relationship between children and parents. If, through one’s own fault, there is a poor relationship with the parents, there can be no good relationship with the Lord. There is no Scripture that calls on children to *disobey* their parents.

Also, in the relationship between the elderly and young people in the church, the task is that the young people are submissive to the elderly: “You younger men, likewise, be subject to [your] elders” (1Pet 5:5a). In a good spiritual atmosphere where elderly people have real care for young people, this will not be a problem for young people. But even if the elderly do not behave as wisely and thoughtfully as is appropriate to their age and life experience, the task remains to young people to be subject. Submission is an attitude, a mindset.

What Ruth says here to her mother-in-law recalls what Mary later says to the servants at the wedding in Cana (Jn 2:5). There it is related to what the Lord Jesus says, while this is about Naomi. But the attitude that lies in both statements is the same. Only complete trust in the commander leads to complete obedience.

Ruth makes no reservations. She doesn't say: 'I can't do that.' There is also no 'Yes, but ...' from her mouth. Without a hint of self-confidence, she resolutely declares that she will do everything that Naomi has asked. This is because she is sure that Naomi is right in what she asks, and especially because Naomi knows Boaz.

Ruth not only *says* she will do everything Naomi has said, but she also *does it*. She does not answer from an impulse, but from the determination she also showed when she accompanied Naomi to Israel.

### Verse 7 | Ruth Lies Down at Boaz' Feet

*7 When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down.*

As indicated in verse 3b, Boaz's eating and drinking is a picture of the Lord Jesus doing the will of the Father. With Boaz we see that after he has eaten and drunk, he has a happy heart. We also see this joy in the Lord Jesus. He has looked forward to "for the joy set before him" (Heb 12:2a). After completing the work on the cross, He speaks of praising God (Psa 22:23b,26a). In that joy He lets His people share. This is a joy that belongs to the harvest: "They will be glad in Your presence as with the gladness of harvest" (Isa 9:3b; Psa 126:6).

Just before completing the work, He sings "a hymn" with His disciples (Mt 26:30). He can do so, because He has just instituted His Supper and has revealed its meaning to His disciples. Paul can therefore speak of "the cup of blessing which we bless" (1Cor 10:16). This also speaks of the wonderful results of the work of the Lord Jesus.

Boaz goes to lie down "at the end of the heap of grain". This is the result of the fanning. There is only wheat left. Wheat speaks of the fruit of the work of the Lord Jesus, Who Himself is the grain of wheat. He fell into the earth and died (Jn 12:24). Therefore, there is much fruit. This fruit consists of countless grains of wheat. All these grains of wheat are the result of the one grain of wheat that fell into the earth and died. All these grains of wheat have the same nature as the one grain of wheat. In this picture we see that the Lord Jesus is eternal life, and that all who believe in Him

possess Him as eternal life. The eternal life that the believer possesses is no other life than the Lord Jesus Himself. To share this life, He gave His life, He died.

It is significant that Ruth lies down at that place with Boaz. There she identifies with him. In the picture she makes herself one with Him Who fell into the earth and died, to rise up with Him in a new life.

### Verses 8-9 | Boaz Discovers Ruth

*8 It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet. 9 He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative."*

In the middle of the night Boaz wakes up. He is startled and bends forward. The cause of his surprise is that he notices in the middle of the night that someone is with him. In practical terms, this indicates that Ruth had lain down at his feet without Boaz noticing anything. It shows her great prudence and patience. Naomi did not say anything about waking up Boaz. Therefore, she waits patiently to see what the course of the night will bring. Naomi has said that Boaz will tell her what to do (verse 4). He will wake up at some point. She is not ashamed of her attitude which speaks entirely of dependency on grace.

Boaz discovers that there is a woman lying at his feet. He asks who she is. It is in the middle of the night, which makes it impossible to distinguish faces accurately. Yet it is not impossible that he has recognized Ruth. He had her in his field for fifty days and loved her. His heart will have been full of her. The question "who are you?" does not necessarily mean that he does not recognize her, but may also mean that he wants to hear from her mouth the confession about herself.

Her answer to Boaz's question is characteristic of her humility. She is his "maid". Then she asks him to spread his covering over her. In veiled terms, that is the question of whether he wants to take her to be his wife. Earlier Boaz expressed his appreciation for her because she took refuge under the wings of the LORD (Rth 2:12). As Ruth speaks she imitates Boaz in her words, but brings it closer. She speaks of the covering of Boaz and

thus says as it were that she will experience in the shielding of Boaz the protection of the LORD (cf. Psa 36:8; 57:2; 61:5; 91:4; Eze 16:8).

This protection gets its meaning from the fact that he is the redeemer. She appeals to him as the redeemer. With this she takes over what Naomi said about Boaz in verse 2, where she calls him “our” blood relative. Boaz is also the redeemer of the Moabite Ruth. But there is no question of her claiming any rights on that ground. On the one hand she acknowledges that he is the redeemer, while on the other hand she indicates that she expects everything from him and perhaps there is a possibility for her to be blessed. She voluntarily calls herself a maid, she confesses her helpless condition, and acknowledges that it will only be grace if he meets what she asks.

Remarkably enough, she does not call herself ‘Ruth, the Moabitess’. She is aware of the family relationship with Boaz. She doesn’t seem to be aware of a redeemer closer than Boaz, although Naomi did allude to it in Ruth 2, where she says Boaz is “one of our redeemers” (Rth 2:20). In spiritual terms, it means that she no longer sees herself as a poor sinner, but that she knows that she belongs to God’s family.

Whoever remains in the ‘I am a poor sinner’ attitude, will not become a joyful and thankful Christian and will not grow in faith. In such an attitude God is deficient and the work of the Lord Jesus undervalued.

### **Verses 10-11 | Boaz Encourages and Praises Ruth**

*10 Then he said, “May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich. 11 Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.*

Instead of blaming Ruth for an inappropriate action, Boaz wishes her the blessing of the LORD. If anyone of the readers thinks that Ruth is working in a wrong way or with wrong motives, Boaz takes away that impression or image with these words. His appreciation for Ruth goes even further. He brings her into a personal relationship with himself by calling her “my

daughter". In doing so, he gives her access to Israel. That must have been a great encouragement for her.

Her whole behavior and offering herself to him in this subdued way is particularly praised by him. He speaks of "your last kindness", for he has praised Ruth before for an earlier act of love, namely everything she did for Naomi (Rth 2:11). The love deed she proved to Boaz is more something she did *not* do: "Not going after young men, whether poor or rich". Thus, the Lord Jesus not only appreciates what we do, but also what we do not do out of love for Him.

The fact that he calls her "my daughter" and talks about "young men" indicates that Boaz is a lot older than Ruth. By this "last kindness" Boaz means that Ruth did not follow the desires of her own heart and lusts, but that she wanted to be with Boaz. She did not seek the attractiveness of youth, but the quiet contemplation and protection of the man in whom strength is, after the meaning of the name Boaz. She could have followed a poor young man because of a natural attraction and the rich young man because of his possessions. She didn't do either because she loved Boaz. That is not because of his appearance or his wealth, but because of everything he has become for her. She wants him for himself, not because of what he owns.

Boaz encourages Ruth. She doesn't need to fear. He also gives her a great promise that he will do everything for her she has asked. His name is not Boaz for nothing, with the impressive meaning 'in him is strength'. He is "a man of great wealth" (Rth 2:1). He will do everything for her because she is "a woman of excellence", a valuable or worthy woman, a woman who is good and trustworthy (Pro 31:11a). The whole city knows that right up to the city council. Therefore, because she is worthy, then so will he do everything for her. He rewards her virtue and praises her for it (Pro 31:28b; 12:4a). This is the language of Boaz's love for her. While Ruth calls herself his maid, saying 'I am nothing', he says to her, as it were, 'you are everything'.

### **Verses 12-13 | Another Redeemer**

12 Now it is true I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.

13 Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good;

*let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning."*

After Boaz has declared Ruth his love, he responds to her remark that he is the redeemer. He is, but he is not the sole redeemer. The other redeemer is even closer to Naomi and her relative than he is. But he doesn't need Ruth to solve that problem. Ruth will not need to deal with the relative who is closer than he is. Boaz makes it his business by talking about "a relative closer than I". He mentions him, however, not in relation to Ruth, but in relation to himself.

In this closer redeemer we can see a picture of the law. First of all, the way according to the law must be followed. If the law can redeem, then that's good and it should indeed redeem. If the law does not do it, the second Redeemer will do it. When someone comes to faith, there is often a period in the development of the life of faith when there is a desire to keep the law. But it soon turns out that it is not possible to keep the law.

Salvation is only through Christ, and serving God can only happen through the Spirit of Christ. When that is seen, it becomes day, in the believer's life. So, we read here that Boaz will redeem her in the "morning" when it will become clear that the first redeemer does not want to.

The order of redemption is clear: first the other redeemer and only if he does not want it, Boaz takes over the redemption. He confirms his commitment with an oath. Then he tells her to stay with him until morning. Boaz is not only able to redeem, he wants too also, and will do it. His firm intention is seen in his comment to Ruth: "Lie down until morning". It radiates rest. She may entrust herself entirely to him. She doesn't have to do anything until morning. He knows what he is going to do.

Thus, the Lord Jesus is occupied with the soul of a man who has entrusted himself to Him, but with whom the claims of the law must first be settled. Anyone who wants to resolve this issue himself will be in great need. In the experience of the believer this is often the case. We see that illustrated in Romans 7. There we find someone who wants to keep the law and thereby ends up in hopeless misery, so that he finally exclaims: "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (Rom 7:24). When that cry of despair has been uttered, we read in the next verse

how the morning dawns. He turns his eye to God and thanks Him through Jesus Christ, the second and final Redeemer.

### Verses 14-15 | Back to Town

*14 So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." 15 Again he said, "Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it." So, she held it, and he measured six [measures] of barley and laid [it] on her. Then she went into the city.*

Ruth does everything Boaz asks. She stays at his feet all night. Earlier we read that she "until evening" gleaned ears on the field of Boaz (Rth 2:17). That means that she has been busy all day with gleaning. Here we see the two sides of Christendom. On the one hand we are working as sons of the day (1Thes 5:4-8) "as long as it is day" (Jn 9:4). On the other hand, we live in the night of this world (Rom 13:12) in the awareness that we are connected to a rejected Lord. In the night it is important to be close to Him, at His feet, which indicates fellowship with Him, to listen to Him (Lk 10:39).

Before the sun rises, Ruth rises. She does because Boaz asks her to go. He does so out of care for her, for the sake of her good name. The relationship with Boaz is growing, but has not yet been fully established. Therefore, for his part, there cannot yet be an open declaration of his love for her.

The Lord Jesus must first complete His work in a soul before He can openly show Himself in the life of such a person. In the life of someone who is not at peace with God through faith in the completed work of the Lord Jesus, He cannot become visible. There may be devotion and faithfulness, but these characteristics, however valuable, show more of one's own person than of Him. And after all, it all has to be about Him alone.

Although Boaz cannot yet openly acknowledge her as being connected with him, his kindness and grace toward her are not diminished. He gives her six measures of barley. Six is the number of man and indicates imperfection, while the number seven indicates perfection. She will receive the seventh measure in the next chapter in Boaz himself. Then she will have him and she will not only have something of his possession, but himself and in that way also everything he possesses.



The barley she receives from Boaz is an explicit gift for Naomi (verse 17). It is a sign of his favor. He measured it himself. What Ruth received, Naomi also receives. Here we see again the relationship between Naomi and Ruth and thus a picture of the relationship between the old Israel and the remnant, which is the new Israel. The old Israel will be blessed in the future and that indeed, in the new Israel.

This ancient Israel is not the Israel that God has rejected in His Son, but the Israel as God has always seen it in those who have remained faithful to Him. The old promises that applied to them are fulfilled to the remnant, while all of ancient Israel who have relied on Him will receive everything He has promised them. We see that also when the child that is born to Ruth, is attributed to Naomi (Rth 4:14-15). What Ruth gains, Naomi gains too. Ancient Israel receives in the remnant all that God has promised Israel.

### Verses 16-18 | Ruth Returns to Naomi

*16 When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did it go, my daughter?" And she told her all that the man had done for her. 17 She said, "These six [measures] of barley he gave to me, for he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'" 18 Then she said, "Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today."*

When Ruth has got up, she goes directly to her mother-in-law. She asks her: "Who are you?" [which is the literal translation]. Boaz asked her the same question when she came to him at night and he discovered her (verse 9). We have already seen that this does not necessarily mean that he did not know her. It was the question that sought a personal testimony. When asked, Ruth answered who she is and what she wants to be for him (his maid) and what he is for her (the redeemer). When Naomi asks who she is, it is certain that this question does not mean that Naomi no longer knows who Ruth is. Naomi's question refers to how Ruth has returned, in what capacity: 'Are you an outcast or are you the future wife of Boaz?' The question is whether she has found the rest that Naomi is seeking for her (verse 1).

In practical terms, this question can also be asked of us, believers. Have we found rest in the Lord when we have been somewhere? Why am I going somewhere? How am I now? How do I stand before God?

Ruth's answer, like her answer to Boaz, is a testimony. This time she does not testify of herself, who she is. Now she testifies of Boaz. She tells Naomi everything he had "done for her" and that, while everything has yet to happen. It seems that in faith she sees the whole result of the work that Boaz will do for her.

When she has told everything, she showed what Boaz gave her and what he said when he gave it to her. This encouraged Naomi very much, because she understood the message of hope that is hidden in the sign and the words. In faith, she attributes the right value to this gift and draws the right conclusion. She tells Ruth that she can now wait restfully, wait for him.

Naomi's advice is in line with what Boaz said at the end of verse 13. We can see in it the advice given to someone on his way to full assurance of faith. Full assurance of faith is not to be gained by one's own effort, but by simply trusting the Lord and His Word. It is about being still and seeing the salvation of the LORD (Exo 14:13). Power is found in it.

That Ruth can have rest is because Boaz, as Naomi says, does not rest before he has brought the matter to an excellent conclusion. Nor does the Lord rest until we have rest in the presence of God. He will complete it for us (Psa 138:8). We may live in the confidence that He will perfect His work (Phil 1:6). This applies to our conversion, but also to the practice of our life of faith, in which much can happen that can make us restless. The Lord is dealing with us in this manner because He loves us.

It is also about the rest as a result of His work, and for whom He has done it: His church. If He has her with Him, He will rest in His love. Now He is still busy sanctifying and cleansing the church, us. Therefore, He has given Himself up on the cross and He still gives Himself up for her in heaven, that is to say He is constantly committed to her (Eph 5:25-26). As long as we are here, He does not give Himself rest. He will finish His work however, and soon.

## Ruth 4

### Introduction

Ruth 4 is the chapter of Boaz. Here he is central. It's only about him. After Ruth took the initiative in Ruth 2 and Naomi took the initiative in Ruth 3, Boaz takes the initiative in this chapter. He starts acting to finally be able to take Ruth to his wife. We do not hear a word from the mouths of Naomi and Ruth. They are silent. They have handed over the case and put it in his hands.

### **Verses 1-2 | The Two Redeemers and the Witnesses**

*1 Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, "Turn aside, friend, sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down. 2 He took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So, they sat down.*

As Naomi said at the end of the previous chapter, wait while it happens (Rth 3:18). Boaz acts immediately. While Ruth reports to Naomi about her encounter during the night with Boaz, he goes to the gate. Throughout his performance, we see that he does everything with consideration, masterfully and patiently. Everything he does, he does it as it should be done, even though it was in a time characterized by 'everyone doing what is right in their own eyes'. He is not like Samson who wants to have a wife and wants her NOW. Nor does he ignore the right of the first redeemer. In all things he is in step with the LORD.

Boaz goes to the gate, for that is the place where public justice is spoken (Deu 16:18; Gen 19:1; 34:20). It is a matter that will be noticed by the all the people. Boaz acts in everything, in full public view. Matters of law and marriage should not in any way create the appearance of secrecy. Everyone should be able to see what is happening.

Boaz first looks for the redeemer. He patiently waits until the other, closer redeemer passes-by. When he appears, he calls him, but not by his name. His name is not mentioned at all. Boaz must have known his name, because he knows he is the redeemer who is in an even closer relationship to Naomi

than he is. It seems that Boaz appeals to him in that way, because of the indifference the man displays in Naomi's case. Although Naomi has been back for so long, he hasn't made himself known yet. Even now he does not come to fulfil his duty as a redeemer. He is just on his way somewhere. Boaz must call him to remind him of his obligation as a redeemer.

The man listens to Boaz and sits with him. He probably realizes that he does have a responsibility. If Boaz had not called him, he would have walked on. He doesn't want to have anything to do with Naomi and Ruth. He can't do anything with Naomi's land and doesn't want anything to do with it. This attitude comes to light through his conversation with Boaz. Boaz calls him to sit down, so he can show that this redeemer cannot and will not redeem.

When the first redeemer has taken his place in the gate, Boaz takes "ten men from the elders of the city" and they too sit in the gate. It is always Boaz who acts. He exercises authority, he decides what needs to be done. The other attendants agree because his instructions and orders are justified.

These ten men are the witnesses of the negotiations about the possessions of Naomi, between Boaz and the first redeemer. We can see in them a picture of the law of the ten commandments. Also, in the first redeemer we see a picture of the law. The law has not been able to free man. The law sets the conditions for man to get rid of his guilt. Only when these conditions are met can a person receive the promised blessing.

In short, the law comes down to this: Do this and you will live. However, man is not able to keep the law. There has never been a human being who has kept the law and thereby earned life. Every human being is subject to the judgment of the law and that is the curse. To receive the blessing of the promise of life, another redeemer is needed. The other redeemer is the Lord Jesus, of whom Boaz is a picture. The Lord Jesus did what the law could not do. Yet at the same time, He has fully met all the holy requirements of the law. The ten witnesses Boaz has summoned are a picture of this.

The law can only agree with the sinner who knows that the Lord Jesus is his Redeemer. All the requirements of the law are fulfilled by what Christ

did on the cross: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” – in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal 3:13-14).

The law cannot bring Ruth into the place of blessing, but will first become clear in the presence of witnesses. These ten witnesses – a picture of the ten commandments – can only agree with the fact that the first redeemer cannot redeem.

Three questions must be answered with a view to redeeming:

1. Does the redeemer have the right, i.e. is he a relative?
2. Can he do it, that is, does he have the capacity, can he pay the price?
3. Is he willing to do it, does he want to?

The Lord Jesus is the answer to each of these questions.

1. The Lord Jesus can be the Redeemer because He has become Man, like us, although without sinful nature (Phil 2:7; Heb 4:15). He took part in blood and flesh (Heb 2:14a).
2. No one can pay the ransom price for another person. Each must keep the law himself to be saved and receive life. This is impossible because the flesh does not submit to the law and cannot do so (Rom 8:7). The Lord Jesus has answered perfectly to God’s will and has therefore been able to pay the price of His blood for others (1Pet 1:18-19).
3. He has also been willing to do it and He has done it. He said when He comes into the world, “Behold, I have come ... to do Your will, O God! (Heb 10:7,9). By what He has done, He has fulfilled the claims of the law. What He has done is ascribed to everyone who believes in Him. Whoever believes in Him may know that he has been sanctified by the will of God which He has fulfilled, that is to say that he may know he has been set apart for God.

The two redeemers – the law and Christ – are beautifully contrasted by Paul when he says: “For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God [did]: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and

[as an offering] for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom 8:3). He says this after he has shown in Romans 7 what the law does with someone who desires to do God's will, but takes the law as the norm: it leads to great inner misery instead of liberation and salvation.

### Verses 3-6 | Negotiation on the Redemption

3 Then he said to the closest relative, "Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. 4 So I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy [it] before those who are sitting [here], and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem [it], redeem [it]; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem [it], and I am after you.'" And he said, "I will redeem [it]." 5 Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance." 6 The closest relative said, "I cannot redeem [it] for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem [it] for yourself; you [may have] my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem [it]."

Boaz explains to the redeemer, who so far has not shown any interest in Naomi, what is going on. He tells him that Naomi has sold the land of "our brother Elimelech". He hereby acknowledges the right of the other redeemer to redeem. It is about the land sold being returned to Naomi. Naomi probably sold the land to get money to support her. Such a sale is regulated by law (Lev 25:25).

In fact, it is not the land that is sold, but the number of harvests. But because the land actually belongs to God, it can only be pledged. That's why God has arranged that in the fiftieth year, the year of jubilee, the land returns into the possession of its original owner.

This can make it appear that it is not as bad as having to sell your land, because you'll get it back one day. But for the Israelite who appreciates God's blessing, it is a great loss and a great sorrow, that he has been driven from his possessions until the year of jubilee and cannot enjoy the harvest. How great the appreciation is of the God-fearing Israelite for the inheritance that the LORD has given him. We see this in Naboth (1Kgs 21:1-3) and Jeremiah (Jer 32:6-8).

If Boaz has declared the case to the man and reminded him of his obligation and at the same time of his right, he also presents the choice to him. The man feels obliged to redeem. He can't get out of it because that means loss of face. That is why he promises to redeem the land. That doesn't have to be a bad thing at all. If it pays more than he has to pay for it, he will earn a lot from it. In addition, Naomi and Ruth have no children. If this situation continues, he will ultimately become the owner of the land and not just of the harvests.

Then comes Boaz with the decisive condition. The land cannot simply be bought, but the redeemer must also take Ruth with it. It seems that Naomi has made this a condition. Elimelech's inheritance became the property of his sons after his death. However, his sons also died. But because both sons were married, the right of ownership has passed to their wives.

Because Orpah wanted to stay in Moab, she has expressed no interest in the land of God. There can be no question of her right to land here. This means that Ruth is the sole entitled party. Naomi wants the land to remain in her offspring's possession. That is why she will have bargained that the person who redeems the land should also take Ruth as his wife. Children born from that marriage are ascribed to the deceased Mahlon, and in this way the inheritance is preserved within Elimelech's family.

The additional condition, which Naomi as owner was allowed to impose, that the redeemer will also take Ruth to be his wife, makes it clear that it is not only about the redemption of the inheritance, but also about the begetting of an heir. The redeemer understands that any son will not be ascribed to him but to the deceased. He will then lose everything again.

For those who are guided by love in these cases, that is not a problem. Love sees only the interest of the other person and does not look after its own interest. With the first redeemer, however, there is no love. The thought that he should marry the Moabitess Ruth is horrible for him. He feels too good for that. He quits. This is the language of the law.

As mentioned earlier, the first redeemer represents the law. The law has the first rights to Israel. Israel has first voluntarily placed itself under this in order to receive God's blessing in that way. But it has become clear that the law has no power to bring life out of death. The law can only condemn,

but does not give strength to comply with what it says. The law cannot deliver those condemned by it. If the law could deliver, the law would no longer be the law. The law is rightly called “the ministry of death” and “the ministry of condemnation” (2Cor 3:7,9). This is not due to the law, but to man. Because of the weakness of man, the law, which does not take weakness into account, is powerless. Only those who keep the law, deserve and receive the blessing. That makes the human condition hopeless. The only solution is to recognize the judgment of the law. He who does so sees himself as having died by the law to the law, with the result that the deceased is free from the law (Rom 7:3-6). Therefore, anyone who is connected to the Lord Jesus, the true Boaz, has nothing to do with the first redeemer, just as Ruth never had anything to do with it. Again: Whatever was impossible for the law, God did through His Son (Rom 8:3).

### Verses 7-8 | The Redemption Sealed

*7 Now this was [the custom] in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange [of land] to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the [manner of] attestation in Israel.*

*8 So the closest relative said to Boaz, “Buy [it] for yourself.” And he removed his sandal.*

Because the first redeemer cannot and does not want to redeem, he gives Boaz the right of redemption. There is no enmity between Boaz and the first redeemer, nor is there any enmity between the law of God and the grace of God. God’s righteousness and God’s love never conflict with each other. They both have their own fields of activity, where grace can come into the realm of the law, but the law not into the realm of grace.

In order to confirm the case, an existing practice is followed. According to the old custom, the shoe is removed as proof that the right of redemption is waived. That is the opposite of the picture where any place on which a person’s shoe is placed becomes their property (Jos 1:3; 10:24; Psa 60:10; 108:10).

### Verses 9-10 | What Boaz Has Redeemed

*9 Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all*



*that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. 10 Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his [birth] place; you are witnesses today."*

Now that the first redeemer renounces the purchase, Boaz can openly testify of his desire to take Ruth as his wife. He does this to maintain the name of the deceased. In this we can see a spiritual meaning. What Boaz says, means that the name of the deceased owner is preserved in new life that will result from the new relationship.

In this we see the resurrection from the dead of God's people. When God will accept His earthly people again to be His people, "what will [their] acceptance be but life from the dead?" (Rom 11:15). God will bring His people to life, that He may fulfil all His promises to them. All the people are witness to this action. Boaz begins and ends with the determination that the people are witnesses.

Boaz gets Ruth, as was included in the terms of sale. He doesn't take her however as a slave, but he takes her to be his wife. For Ruth this is an overwhelming goodness. She, who at first was not entitled to anything, gets through the redemption by Boaz, right to the full inheritance of Elimelech and Mahlon and Chilion. And not only that. Because Boaz takes her to be his wife, she also gets all the wealth of Boaz at her disposal.

That will be the surprise of the remnant in the future. They will realize that they have forfeited any right to possession in the land. To their surprise they will see that they are back in the land and enjoy all the blessing that the LORD has promised them. Above that, however, they will know that they are closely connected to the Giver of blessing. Their Messiah is also their Husband (Hos 2:15).

### **Verses 11-12 | Blessings for the House of Boaz**

*11 All the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, "[We are] witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem. 12 Moreover, may your house*

*be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the LORD will give you by this young woman."*

The inhabitants of Bethlehem declare their consent to the joining of Ruth in her position of privilege as associated with Boaz, the man of Bethlehem. They are witnesses. Marriage and preparation for it, is a matter where witnesses – like parents, friends, neighborhood – are present who rejoice at what they see and agree to it. They see that there is a new beginning. They rejoice so much about this that they make a comparison with Rachel and Lea, who form the beginning of the house of Israel. Rachel is mentioned first, Jacob's beloved wife, but both women have built Jacob's house. Thus, the importance of offspring in building a house.

In addition to the blessing with a view to offspring, the people and the elders also mention places in their blessing. With these places they connect powerful deeds and a glorious name. Ephrathah means 'the fertile' and Bethlehem means 'house of bread'. The people wish Boaz a powerful performance that will bear fruit, that is a performance in the power of the Holy Spirit. The people also wish him to make a name for himself in Bethlehem, that is the name of David and beyond it the great David, the Lord Jesus, by which there will be food for all the people of God. Fruit is especially for God and food especially for God's people. The Lord Jesus provides for both the desires of God and the needs of His people.

After the comparison with Rachel and Lea the people also draw the comparison with the house of Perez. Perez was born of an adulterous relationship between Judah and Tamar (Gen 38:13-30). The people know history and see the comparison between Tamar and Ruth. The memory of Tamar is revived through the history of Ruth. Tamar was also involved in the so-called duty of a husband's brother. Because Judah did not take this into account, Tamar came to an action that cannot be approved. Tamar gave up her honor because of Judah's infidelity, who failed to give his son Shelah to her as a redeemer. She then seduced Judah by deceit to beget a descendant with her. Boaz works in a completely different way. He does not use trickery and deceit, but acts completely in the public view.

The resemblance between Tamar and Ruth lies in the area of grace. The offspring that Boaz desires is granted him by the LORD, and that from one

who belonged to a cursed people. God's grace triumphs over a sinful act (Tamar) and over a cursed people (Ruth).

### Verse 13 | The Son of Boaz and Ruth

*13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.*

After Boaz has openly and in accordance with the law acquired her to be his wife, he marries her. The rich man marries the poor Moabitess. She is one with the great man of wealth. The LORD blesses their intercourse with pregnancy, and the birth of a son. The LORD *enabled* pregnancy, so it is said here. This indicates that pregnancy is a gift from Him and not a personal achievement. People don't make life. God gives it, even though unbelievers do not acknowledge it.

Ruth has been infertile so far. No child was born of her marriage to Mahlon. Only in relationship with Boaz does she become fertile. Spiritually, we can only bear fruit for God if we have a relationship with the Lord Jesus if we abide in Him (Jn 15:4-5).

By the birth of her son, she helped lay the foundation for the birth of the Messiah. Thus, are the counsels of God fulfilled. It begins in Moab with showing mercy to a single sinner who is completely outside of blessing. From her the river of grace begins to flow, flowing into an ocean of endless glory that originates from the Son of God.

### Verses 14-17 | The Son of Ruth Is the Son of Naomi

*14 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. 15 May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." 16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse. 17 The neighborhood women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So, they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.*

When Boaz and Ruth's son is born, we no longer hear about Ruth, she is no longer spoken about. It is only about Naomi. The women again speak

about Naomi (Rth 1:19). They show insight into God's thoughts and praise the LORD for what He has done with Naomi. Her condition was hopeless. But through Ruth she receives new life.

The son of Ruth, whom she has in her arms, is for her the redeemer, the savior from her misery and hopelessness. In Boaz she gained hope for redemption. Ruth's son is the fulfillment of that hope. They speak of the redeemer as a refresher or restorer of the soul. Naomi, who didn't like life, who returned from the plains of Moab as a destitute and bitter woman, now springs up refreshed through her experience. In her old age she gains an awakening of life and joy.

The "women" (verse 14) not only point to Ruth's restoration, but also to Ruth's love for Naomi. Ruth has not taken Naomi's place. For Ruth, the current blessing is linked to her attachment to Naomi. She doesn't forget this, despite her loving relationship with Boaz. The remnant of Israel will always remember its relationship with ancient Israel. They are a new people, but they were born in ancient Israel. They receive the blessings promised to ancient Israel. In them, ancient Israel is restored in accordance with God's thoughts about His Israel.

Naomi recognizes the child as her own child and takes care of it. One day the remnant like an abandoned widow will embrace the Lord Jesus and say: "A Child is born to us" (Isa 9:5). In Him, is all their salvation, and all the promised blessings will be given to them, "for as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore, also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us" (2Cor 1:20).

The "neighborhood women" (verse 17) – a smaller, more intimate circle than the women of the city (verse 14) – give the son the name Obed, which means "servant" or "worshipper". In the union of the two meanings we see that the true service of a believer is to worship God. At the same time, there is also a practical side to serving. The son of Ruth will be a servant of Naomi. In spiritual terms, it is also true that the Lord Jesus, the great Son of Boaz, the true Servant, will serve His people. Both Boaz and Obed are pictures of the Lord Jesus.

The neighborhood women are in a broader sense a picture of the surrounding peoples, the neighboring peoples, who will come to the acknowledgement

that there is a God who serves and invigorates His people. The old Israel – the Israel under the law or the old covenant, and not the apostate Israel – is finally free of worries and enjoys what the true Boaz has done for her. At the same time, it is a new, young people who are connected to this Boaz and not to Mahlon, although the son must be ascribed to him after the duty of a husband's brother. This is the situation for Israel in the kingdom of peace under the reign of the great Son of David.

### Verses 18-22 | David's Genealogy

*18 Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron, 19 and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab, 20 and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon, 21 and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed, 22 and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.*

This genealogy is an appendix. The end of the book is reached. Yet the genealogy is part of it. It makes clear that the book of Ruth describes events that fit into God's plan of salvation. He carries out this plan of salvation throughout the generations. This plan of salvation from God also incorporates our responsibility. Ten names are mentioned here, ten, the number of responsibility.

Of the last two names we can make the following remarks. Jesse means "the LORD confirms". He has shown this in this book. Out of Jesse is born David. His name means 'beloved'. That ends the book with: love. This can be seen throughout the book. Love is the theme of this book, in which we can see the love of Boaz for Ruth, and the love of the LORD for His people. That love can be seen in the great Son of David, the Lord Jesus. He is the Beloved of the Father, and He is the Beloved of all who belong to His people.

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