

RUBIES FROM RUTH

by

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CHAPTER SIX

LIGHT FROM OTHER LAMPS

I. Title. Ruth; so called from name of that Moabitess whom Boaz married, and who became one of the ancestors of the Messiah (4:18-22; 1:4-6).

II. Author. Uncertain; usually believed by the Jews to have been written by Samuel.

It could not have been written before his time, as genealogy, in 4:17-22, shows. Some critics ascribe it to Hezekiah, and some also to Ezra.

“The author’s name (probably Samuel) is concealed, neither is it needful it should be known; for, even as a man that hath a piece of gold that he knows to be weight, and sees it stamped with the king’s image, careth not to know the name of that man who minted or coined it; so we, seeing this book to have the superscription of Caesar, the stamp of the Holy Spirit, need not to be curious to know what was the penman thereof” (Thomas Fuller).

III. Date. It records certain events that happened in the time of the Judges; but at what particular time is unknown.

IV. Scope. A sequel to the book of Judges, and an introduction to the books of Samuel, its object is, plainly, to establish the fact of the descent of David, the progenitor of the Messiah; and, “perhaps, by the adoption of Ruth into the Jewish Church to intimate the future ingathering of the Gentiles” (Litton).

V. Characteristics. This little book “consists of only 85 verses; but these enclose a garden of roses as fragrant and full of mystic calyxes as those which the modern traveler still finds blooming and twining about the solitary ruins of Israel and Moab, this side of the Jordan and beyond.

The significance and beauty of the brief narrative cannot be highly enough estimated, whether regard be had to the thought which fills it, the historical value which marks it, or the pure and charming form in which it is set forth” (Cassell).

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Outlines of Ruth

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

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

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

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

Dr Morgan in the "*Analyzed Bible*" summarizes as follows: Ruth—Faith Amid Faithlessness, and proceeds to divide the contents after this manner:

- A. the Choice of Faith, 1, 2.
- B. The Venture of Faith, 3.
- C. The Reward of Faith, 4.

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

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

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

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

I. HER CONDITION

- A. She was poor; for aught we know all she had was what she wore—but it is no disgrace to be honestly poor.
- B. She was bereft—a widow; no strong arm to lean upon.
- C. She was sad; unlike so many giddy, foolish young people of today.
- D. She was virtuous; she had what money could not buy.

II. HER POSITION

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

III. HER DECISION

- A. *Prompt.*
- B. *Personal.*
- C. *Firm*—not ignorant stubbornness, but intelligent firmness.
- D. *Final*—Farewell, Moab, Mother, Orpah.

IV. HER DEVOTION

- A. It was spontaneous; no urging needed to leave her early associations, friendships, religion.
- B. It was supreme—**“Thy God my God.”**
- C. It was fervent—**“Intreat me not.”** Let me go, pray, give, serve.
- D. It was constant—**“steadfastly minded.”** The cost had been counted, the mind made up, the
- E. heart fixed.

V. HER PROMOTION

- A. After all her trials and hardships she finds:
- B. A husband
- C. A home
- D. Happiness
- E. Honor—Matthew 1:5
- F. Heaven.

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

THEME: “WINSOME WOMANHOOD”

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

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

I. *Its strength.*

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

II. *Its beauty.*

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

III. *Its results.*

- Conversion of Ruth.
- Led to Ruth becoming ancestress of Messiah.
- Broke down barriers of:

1. *Domestic relationship.* Mother-in-law! Such have generally poor reputations. Position one of difficulty. Yet she won the devotion of a daughter-in-law.

2. *National prejudice.* Much harder to impress foreigners than those of our own people. Yet her faith was so strong and beautiful that she won the devotion of a daughter-in-law from another race to herself, her people and her God.

TITLE: “WHITHERSOEVER HE LEADS”

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

This is just what each one should be ready to say, who accepts Christ and begins to follow Him.

The text indicates:

I. *Close attachment required:*

- A. Effectual service requires it.
- B. To learn in His school.
- C. For assimilation, in order to live a life beautiful.
- D. To bar out questions as to where He is leading whether pleasant or not, easy or hard.

II. *A new relationship.*

The espousal of the laws, claims, customs and privileges of His citizens. “Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” This involves:

- A. Disavowal of the laws and customs of Moab.
- B. A cutting loose from old ties, old friendships and all other things that are in the old life.
- C. A oneness through His atonement with Him and His people.

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Ruth 2:2—

“And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace”

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

Notice:

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

II. *Faith works.*

(1) The work of faith looks *within*.

Faith, which is the sight of the unseen, apprehends the existence of spirit, the possibility of regeneration, and the direct influence of divine grace upon the heart and soul of man. It would not be faith in the Christian sense if it did not apprehend these mysteries. Before faith can set out upon her gleaning she must find grace in the sight of One unseen.

(2) The work of faith looks *upward*.

The eye of faith is upon God, even while the hand of faith and the foot of faith are moving among the things of this world.

(3) The work of faith looks *around*. Faith does not look only on her own things, but on the things of others. Faith does seriously contemplate the wants and the woes and the wickednesses which are making havoc of humanity, and has something truly of that mind in her which was also first and perfectly in Christ Jesus.

(4) The work of faith looks *onward*.

Oftentimes faith would faint if it had not an onward aspect. It is willing to wait for the day of God's power, willing to be lost and forgotten in the eventual ingathering.—C. J. Vaughan, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 55.

A FULL REWARD (2:12-13)

1. *Ruth's blessed choice*. She chose between Moab and Bethlehem, and between her people and Naomi. She weighed the matter wisely and decided irrevocably. Her lot was cast once and for all with Naomi and the people of God.

“Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.”

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

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

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

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

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

Ruth 2:19— **“Where hast thou gleaned today?”**

I. **There are some whose only chance of gaining knowledge is by gleaning.** Their education has been neglected, and their time for reading is limited.

To such let me say:

(1) *Glean where the corn grows and lies near at hand.* You will not find corn by the wayside or on the moor. It is not in all company that you may glean wisdom. To the most of us, “**Where hast thou gleaned?**” is but another way of saying, “What hast thou got as the result of thy life?”

(2) *To glean successfully we must be willing to stoop.* He who would be fed with the bread of life must humble himself.

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

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

THE KINSMAN REDEEMER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The near-kinsman (v. 9).—

I. *Christ is our near-kinsman*—

1. By birth: He took our nature;
2. By condescending love: He came to His own; did not disown them;
3. By self-sacrificing grace: loved us to the end;
4. By present thoughtful care: He is the Lord of Providence.

II. *Let the poorest and most friendless*—like the widowed Ruth—learn to trust Him.

Spreading the skirt (v. 9).—The prophet Ezekiel, in describing the Jewish Church as an exposed infant, mentions the care of God in bringing her up with great tenderness, and then, at the proper time, marrying her; “**which is thee, . . . and thou becamest mine.**”

Dr. A. Clarke says, “Even to the present day, when a Jew marries a woman, he throws the skirt, or end of his talith, over her, to signify that he has taken her under his protection.”

I have been delighted at the marriage ceremonies of the Hindoos, to see among them the same interesting custom. The bride is seated on a throne, surrounded by matrons, having on her veil, her gayest robes, and most valuable jewels. After the thali has been tied around her neck, the bridegroom approaches her with a silken skirt (purchased by himself), and folds it round her several times over the rest of her clothes. The request of Ruth, therefore, amounted to nothing more than that Boaz should marry her.—Roberts.

Christ’s willingness to receive.—It is our melancholy and miserable misapprehension, that we fancy there is some reluctance on Christ’s part that needs to be overcome, some repulse in His mind that we need to do away with, and that we have to persuade and urge Him to do what we yearn to have done, to forgive us all our sins, and to blot out all our iniquities. This is a great mistake; ten thousand times more willing is Christ to receive you, than ever you were to make application to Him.—Cumming.

TAKING OFF THE SHOE

At a Jewish marriage I was standing beside the bridegroom when the bride entered; and, as she crossed the threshold, he stooped down, and slipped off his shoe, and struck her with the heel on the nape of the neck.

I at once saw the interpretation of the passage in Scripture respecting the transfer of the shoe to another, in case the brother-in-law did not exercise his privilege—*Kitto’s Illustrations*.

The simple object in taking off the shoe, was to confirm the bargain: it was the testimony or memorial of the compact.

In Deuteronomy it is mentioned that the brother of a deceased husband shall marry the widow, but should he refuse, then the widow is to “**go up to the gate unto the elders and say, My husband’s brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband’s brother.**”

Then the elders were to call the man, and if he persisted in his refusal, the woman was to come forward “**and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face**”; and was to answer and say, “**So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother’s house.**”

From that time the man was disgraced, and whenever his person or establishment was spoken of, it was contemptuously called “**the house of him that hath his shoe loosed.**”

To be spit at in the face is the most degrading ceremony to which a man can submit. This was done by the widow to her husband’s brother, and she confirmed his ignominy by taking off his shoe. But this taking off the shoe may also refer to the death of her husband, whose shoes were taken off and of no further use to him. An affectionate widow never parts with her late husband’s shoes: they are placed near her when she sleeps, she kisses and puts her head upon them, and nearly every time after bathing she goes to look at them. These, therefore, are the “testimony.” the melancholy confirmation, of her husband’s death.—Roberts.

MARRIAGE

What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are joined for life—to strengthen each other in all labor, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each other in all pain, to be one with each other in silent, unspeakable memories at the moment of the last parting?—George Eliot. *Ancient Eastern marriage ceremony.*—The marriage ceremony was commonly performed in a garden, or in the open air; the bride was placed under a canopy, supported by four youths, and adorned with jewels according to the rank of the married persons, all the company crying out with joyful acclamations, “**Blessed be he that cometh.**”

It was anciently the custom, at the conclusion of the ceremony, for the father and mother, and kindred of the woman, to pray for a blessing upon the parties. Bethuel and Laban, and the other members of their family, pronounced a solemn benediction upon Rebecca before her departure. And in times long posterior to the age of Isaac, when Ruth the Moabitess was espoused to Boaz, “**All the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem.**” After the benedictions, the bride is conducted with great pomp to the house of her husband; this is usually done in the evening.—Paxton.

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

I. Glancing back over the lines of this sweet and pure pastoral idyll, we feel that rarely did human story more impressively demonstrate the unspeakable worth of lowly folk, the fine and favorable issues of seemingly suppressed lives, the hidden wealth of true and unobtrusive souls, for nations and for the race. Notoriety counts for nothing in the sum of things. The world’s future lay more in quiet Bethlehem, with Naomi and Ruth, than it did at the headquarters of Judge Eli.

Let us not despise ourselves. God does not, and our future is with Him. Every name is historic in His estimate.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BOAZ AND THE REAPERS

I. *The living presence.* The Lord with us means courage and consolation—courage to face difficulty, and consolation in all times of depression and disheartenment.

II. *The harvest toil.* "**Said unto the reapers.**" It is hard work everywhere in the glaring heat to put in the sickle, and to gather up the sheaves.

We may learn from the spectacle the blessed lesson of our duty in relation to others. Let us try to cheer and inspire. We little know what a word of cheer does for others. Encouragement is like fresh strength to weary hearts.

III. *The kind response.* The benediction of Boaz awakens a corresponding benediction from the reapers. The harp answers to the hand that sweeps it. Men are to us very much what we are to them. “**The Lord bless thee.**”

We need never despair of this reward. Love begets love. Confidence begets confidence. Blessing awakens blessing. This is what we long and pray for—cessation of war between capital and labor, and mutual benediction.—*Pulpit Commentary.*

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

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

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