

pursued what God had given as proper. Their steps in His path ultimately brought about the Messiah himself! What blessing is in store for those who perform His will.

THE BOOK OF RUTH

"How God Guided Ruth Through Naomi"
Ruth 3:1-6

Introduction

1. The progress of the events in this book are patent. Chapter 1 scores a triumph for the God of Israel. Ruth, a Moabite, takes her stand for the true God (vv. 16, 17). This is her decision of faith.

2. Ruth's "work of faith" in proof of her commitment is given in Chapter 2. It will always be true that we are saved by a faith that works, not by works and faith (Eph. 2:8-10; Rom. 1:5). Ruth's walk in obedience to her decision testifies to her reality.

3. Now the third chapter speaks of the appeal of faith. More action is expected. Faith is the key in chapter 1; grace is the key in chapter 2. Now in chapter 3 the key is blessing. The whole matter rests on the truth that the life related to God is one which grows (2 Cor. 5:17). This is a basic appeal of the Word (2 Pet. 3:18).

4. Central to Ruth's progress is the faithfulness of Naomi, her mother-in-law. She forges ahead with a plan to glorify God and bring fulfillment to Ruth. This plan has specific parts.

1. IT IS DECIDED v. 1.

The time of the barley and wheat harvests was drawing to a close (2:23). Apparently Naomi felt it was time to seize on the opportunity which God had made for Ruth in view of her contact with Boaz (2:3). Naomi's plan was a decision to pursue the will of God which had already been made known! Incidents come in the lives of believers, but no accidents. In view of this movement of God, Naomi raises a question. The Hebrew indication of a question is transliterated into English by "hello." It really suggests that Naomi should in fact seek "rest" for Ruth. This word "rest" has already been used (1:9) and the obvious intent is marriage. Hence, certainty is expressed by the question that something must be done for Ruth.

2. IT IS DIRECTED v. 2.

a. By the Bible

The concern of Naomi for Ruth was not merely her feminine intuition. Rather, it was based soundly on what she knew of the Word of God. Two truths play a role:

1) Law of the land This is clearly stated in Leviticus 25 (see vv. 10, 13-16, 24-28). Summarily, the passage teaches that no Israelite land was ever sold (v. 23). Both the land and the people belonged to the Lord. If anyone sold his land, a kinsman might redeem it at any time and the holder was obliged to sell it back. If no kinsman appeared, the buyer or his heirs could keep the land until the year of Jubilee. This was God's plan for enabling each tribe to maintain his property.

2) Law of the Levirate There was really no place for single women in Israel. Hence, widows normally re-married. A similar injunction is given in the New Testament (1 Tim. 5:9-14). This was practiced as early as Genesis (38). It certainly was incorporated into the Mosaic economy (Deut. 25:5-10). While this particular law was not linked with that of redemption of the land, it was very natural to do so in practice. Apparently, this was the view of Naomi.

b. To Boaz

Again certainty is expressed, as in v. 1, with the question form of sentence. Boaz is in fact a kinsman. The word used here means to be known. It does not signify the technical concept of redeemer (cf. 2:20). Nonetheless, Naomi marks Boaz out as the potential one for fulfilling the truths of the Word for her family. There is a great deal of faith on the part of Ruth in all of this. She was a stranger to the Israelite God, albeit a proselyte (cf. 1:16, 17 with 2:10). Naomi was in fact saying that Ruth would have to lay aside her hope of another marriage and submit herself to an apparently older man to preserve the family name and rights. The issue must be seen in this light to gain the fullest intent of the arrangement. Furthermore, Ruth was a Moabite and this complicated the entire matter, but

since Boaz had already showed such kindness, Naomi opted to move in this direction.

3. IT IS DETAILED vv. 3-6

a. Preparation v. 3a

Instruction was given to Ruth for three actions: wash, anoint, clothe herself. The will of Ruth was vitally involved in all of these actions. Her commitment was called forth.

b. Presentation vv. 3, 4

Boaz was at the threshing floor. This was not a special place, save that it was ground in the field which had been beaten down so as to provide a hard earthen area about 50 feet in diameter. Apparently, he also was involved in the work of threshing (v. 2) and used the same place for sleep (v. 4). While some may question the modesty of the action suggested, the custom was totally free from misconduct. Furthermore, Naomi knew the kind of person Boaz was and her trust in his propriety was in order.

c. Provocation v. 4

It is a mark of total faith that the text records: "he will tell thee what thou shalt do" (v. 4). Ruth's actions would inevitably cause Boaz to respond. The whole matter rested on the Word of God and the response which each one gave to it. What a lesson for us today!

d. Participation vv. 5, 6

Here are some wonderful words. Ruth's submission to her mother-in-law is unusual (v. 5). But she not only agreed to "do" but she "went...did" what her mother-in-law had commanded ("bade"). The fact that Ruth had never been involved in this plan of God to raise up seed makes the issue of the matter of particular significance. She gave herself to the revealed will of God.

Conclusion God does guide. This is an everlasting truth. But the cooperation of His own in that will is also of importance. Here the truth is clear. Ruth and Naomi