

Place: Lurgan Baptist 18:10:2005

Reading: Ruth 4:1-22

THE ROMANCE OF REDEMPTION

10. THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER

A little girl had learned the story of “*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.*” She was telling the story to her mother. When she got down to the place where the prince kissed Snow White and awakened her from her sleep, the little girl said, “*Mother, do you know what happened then ?*” The mother knowing how the story ended said, “*they lived happily ever after.*” The little girl said, “*Oh, no they got married.*” In the case of Ruth and Boaz, they got married and they lived happily ever after. Do you not like a story with a happy ending ? Well, the book of Ruth is that kind of story. The book began with three funerals and three widows weeping. But the book ends with a wedding, and ultimately the joyful birth of a baby boy. At the beginning of the Book of Ruth, everything is falling apart, but at the end life has been put back together again. If this story were a work of fiction, someone might say, “*But life isn't that way. People don't always live happily ever after.*” That's right, but the Book of Ruth is true, and these events happened to real people. Everything ended “*happily ever after,*” because these people obeyed the Lord. My ... the Lord can put your life back together again if you gave all the pieces to Him. Then, instead of being a burden you will become a blessing. I am sure you have noticed that the scenes change ever so quickly in this little book. We have come from Weeping in (Ch 1) to Working (Ch 2) to Waiting in (Ch 3) to the Wedding in (Ch 4) The opening chapter is all about Sorrow as Naomi loses Elimelech and here two sons. The second chapter is an account of Service as we see Ruth in the harvest field. Chapter 3 is all about Submission, and in the final chapter we see Ruth in the place of Satisfaction. As we chart Ruth's progress from the Land of Moab to the Line of the Messiah we note the steps she took.

1. As a Sinner she Frequentated His House:

It was here that Ruth became acquainted with Boaz and received instructions from him. (2:7) Is this not where the most of us are saved ? In the house of the Lord, where the gospel is preached, and where the sinner is converted.

2. As a Stranger she Found His Grace:

For Ruth cries, “ *Why have I found grace in thine eyes ?*” (2:10) The Law shut her out for she was a foreigner, a Moabitess (Deut 23:3) but Boaz and grace brought her in and she was accepted. My can you not rejoice that in spite of your background that you have been accepted in the beloved ? (Eph 1:6)

3. As a Daughter she Felt His Love:

For when she said, “ *thou hast comforted me,*” (2:13) It was just the same as saying, “ *I have felt your love.*” And does love not bring comfort ? What the love of Boaz was to Ruth the love of Christ is far more to us.

4. As a Gleaner she Followed His Word:

And if we expect to continue in his fellowship we must be gleaners in His Word. (2:8, 23) To study it prayerfully, to practice it earnestly, to trust it completely, and to proclaim it faithfully.

5. As a Worshipper she Fell at His Feet:

In wonder, gratitude and thanksgiving ! (2:10 Mk 7:25)

6. As a Handmaiden she Fed at His Table:

Just like Mephibosheth who sat at David’s table (2 Sam 9:13) so Ruth sat at Boaz’s table. So we can sit at the Lord’s Table ! (1 Cor 10:21)

7. As a Bride she Finished His Plan :

How ? By uniting with Boaz in marriage. (2:21) I have got news for you this ! One of these days we are going to get married and live happily ever after. We that are the earthly servants of Christ will one day become the heavenly spouse of Christ. Today, we are His workers, one day we will be His wife ! Now I want to focus on three things in this closing section of the Book of Ruth. Notice,

(1) A HOPE THAT IS EXPRESSED

For after Boaz had settled the matter of redemption, did you notice what the people say ? (2:11) In other words, their hope was a two fold one. They wanted,

(a) Ruth to Experience the Blessing of Fruitfulness:

Since marriage was ordained of God, it is becoming that it always should be accompanied with God's blessing and the presence of Christ. Yet how sad in our day, that marriage is ignored altogether. Now the first desire of these people was this, that Ruth might be as fruitful as Rachel and Leah, from whose sons came eight tribes of the Nation of Israel. (4:11) In the beginning of the book of Ruth, the house of Naomi and Ruth was torn down, their husbands had died and they were childless. Now in the Eastern world the biggest disgrace that a woman could experience was to be barren and her house remain empty. A woman's only claim to fame lay in her family and their accomplishments, that's why they wanted Ruth to experience the blessing of fruitfulness. I wonder have you ever asked yourself the questions. " *What am I ? Who am I ? Why am I here ?*" Have you come up with the right answers ? Paul reminds that spiritually we are married to Christ (Rom 7:4) and that through Him and for Him we should bring forth fruit. Why has the Lord chose us ? Why has the Lord Jesus redeemed us ? Why does the Holy Spirit indwell us ? What is the one thing that we have been saved for ? To bear fruit. The Lord Jesus says, " *I am the Vine, ye are the branches.*" (Jn 15:5) What is a branch for ? But to bear fruit ! And this fruit is to be understood in terms,

1. Of Character: Being:

Its interesting to note that Christ in (Jn Ch 15) names three varieties of fruit that are borne by the branches. What are they ? Love (15:9) joy (15:11) peace (14:27) Now what does that remind you of ? Does it not remind you of the " *fruit of the Spirit ?*" Which is love, joy, peace ! Why am I here ? To reflect Christ to a needy world !

2. Of Service: Doing:

Character has to do with production, but service has to do with reproduction. Of Dawson Trystman, it was said, " *he was born to reproduce.*" Yet is this not what ought to be said of every believer ? For the influence of our lives on others should be such, that under the Holy Spirit's blessing there will be reproduction. Baby believers would you please ! This explains Paul's word to the church at Rome, " *I purposed to come unto you,*

That I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles." (Rom 1:13) Do you realise that the secret of living is fruitfulness ? Why are you here ? To reflect Christ and to reproduce, to have spiritual children ! (a)

(b) Boaz to Experience the Blessing of Fame:

Do you see their sentiment in (4:11-12) ? The name " *Ephratah*," is another name for the town of Bethlehem. The word " *worthily*," in this text is from the same Hebrew word that is translated " *wealth*," in (2:1) where Boaz is referred to as " *a mighty man of wealth*." This word can mean to be strong materially, physically, or morally. I think this prayer is a prayer of well-wishing. Its what you would expect from friends of a newly wedded couple. The word " *famous*," means to obtain a name. Remember the nearer kinsman. He was trying to protect a name. He couldn't marry Ruth because he was afraid he would lose his inheritance. Do you know who he was ? No, and neither does anyone else. But Boaz's name has lived throughout history, because of his redemptive work. My this is not the fame of Hollywood, this is the fame that comes by doing the will of God. Mark it down, God honours those who trust Him. (1)

(2) A HOME THAT IS EXCITED

Sure, there is nothing that brings excitement into the home like the birth of a baby. What wonderful changes came into Ruth's life because she trusted Boaz and let him work on her behalf. She went from loneliness to love, from toil to rest, from poverty to wealth, from worry to assurance, and from despair to hope. I wonder did you notice that Ruth got her blessings in ever increasing proportion ? All she had to with Boaz brought bigger and better rewards. At first she just got a few ordinary gleanings (2:3) then she received parched corn (2:14) then there were handfuls of purpose (2:16), then six measures of barley (3:15) but now there was all his possessions. For we read " *So Boaz took Ruth and she was his wife.*" (4:13) So that she could now look to the furthest field in every direction and say, " *Mine, mine, mine, mine.*"

You see, all was hers, simply because she was his. Is it not the same with us ? All is mine because I am

Christ's ! Paul could say, " *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.*" (Eph 1:4) Now one of the blessings that Boaz and Ruth received was the gift of a baby boy. Isn't a baby a tremendous blessing ? Well, not everyone in

society believes that. Did you know that in the U.S.A. that one third of all married couples who are of child-bearing age are permanently sterilized ! They don't want children. One survey done in the U.S.A. indicated that 70 percent of the parents surveyed would not have children if they had to do it over again. *There is actually an organisation in the U.S.A. called Non, the National Organization of Non-parents.* They say they don't want to complicate their lives with children, and they meet regularly to talk about the wonder of not having babies. But children are not meant to be a burden but a blessing. They are our future. We invest in them everything we are, and everything we have, and they carry into future generations who we are. It isn't true that when a person dies he really dies because he lives on not only in the presence of the Lord if he is a Christian, but in the children who live after him.

And if those children are born into the family of God, they will carry that influence with them throughout their lives and through their children after them. It's a sad commentary of society today that multitudes of lives are legally destroyed in the womb. One hospital may have a staff working to help babies survive, and have another area where babies are murdered. In the U.S.A. each year a million and a half babies are legally destroyed in the womb, and the pieces of their bodies removed as though they were cancerous tumours. My every Christian must believe in the sanctity of life in the womb, for life is in the hand of God alone. Now here were a people who realised the importance of this child's birth in Israel, not only to continue the nation, but because through Israel Messiah would be born. Now there are a several things that want you to notice about this precious gift that was given to Boaz and Ruth. Notice, that this gift was,

(a) DIVINELY GIVEN:

1. Do you see the Loyalty here:

“ So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife.” Do you know something ? He kept his word. Do you recall what he promised Ruth on the threshing floor ? He said, *“ I will do to thee all that thou requirest,”* (2:11) he was faithful to his word.

Unfortunately, faithfulness in marriage commitments is becoming less and less in our day. So many seem to repeat under their breath *“ for better for worse, but not for long.”* My God's kind of marriage involves an exclusive relationship, *“ keep thee only unto her,”* and God's kind of marriage involves an enduring relationship, *“ till death us do part.”* God's idea of marriage is one man and one woman for life. For God hates divorce (Mal 2:16)

2. Do you see the Morality here:

Look if you will at (4:13) That's an O.T. term for sexual intercourse. Now I want you to notice when this physical act occurred. After he was married to Ruth and not before. You see, according to the Word of God, sex is reserved for marriage. Paul says, "*the body is not for fornication.*" (1 Cor 6:13) Now does not that need to be emphasised today ? People in our society are shacking up together, people who have not be married. Morality has been thrown out.

3. Do you see the Activity here:

"*the Lord gave her conception and she bare a son.*" Now the emphasis here is on the fact that it was the Lord who gave conception. My is this not how we are to regard our children ? Do you remember what the Psalmist says ? "*Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is His reward,*" (127:3)

Time and again in Scripture that principle is illustrated.

The Lord promised Abraham and Sarah a son

(Gen 18:10) but there was a problem. It was a physical problem, for both of them were past child bearing age yet we read "*For Sarah conceived and bare Abraham a son in his old age.*" (Gen 21:2) What about the distressing cry of Rachel to Jacob ? "*Gave me children or else I die.*" (Gen 30:1) Do you remember his reply ?

"*Am I in God's stead who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb.*" (30:2) Hannah was barren for "*the Lord had shut up her womb.*" (1 Sam 1:5)

So Hannah "*vowed a vow and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid and remember me and wilt gave unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will gave him unto the Lord all the days of his life.*" (1 Sam 1:11) Do you know why she called him Samuel ? "*Because I have asked him of the Lord.*" (1 Sam 1:20) For children are divinely given. Now do you see your children in that light ? Surely, if we saw them more in that light we would be more sensitive to the awful responsibility that is laid on us as parents. The responsibility to teach them,

(Deut 6:7) to train them (Prov 22:6) and to intercede for them (1 Sam 1:27) ! I think it was Susannah Wesley who had seventeen children, and yet she found time for each of them to pray with them and for them. (a)

(b) GRATEFULLY RECEIVED:

For these women in Bethlehem recognised that it was by the providence of God that at all these events had taken place. That's why they cry out, "*Blessed be the*

Lord,” or “*Praise the Lord.*” Naomi was not left desolate now she had a grandson that would inherit the estate of Elimelech. Its interesting to notice that Ruth had been barren in Moab. She had been married to Mahlon for many years and they had no children. Now back in Bethlehem, in the place of God’s blessing, after just a few short months, that which was not possible outside the will of God becomes possible as the Lord blesses her.

Paul reminds us “*in every thing gave thanks.*”

(1 Thes 5:18) Do you look upward during those moments of family rejoicing ? Are you grateful to the Lord for such precious gifts ? Indeed in all the blessings that come to us domestically, do we recognise the Lord as the disposer of events so that we continually say,

“*blessed be the Lord.*” You’ll notice that this gift was,

(c) *TENDERLY NURSED:*

Naomi’s empty life had been restored. Because of the blessing of Ruth, Naomi now had a full heart, a full home, and full arms and hands. She was thrilled at what God had done. What a change in her attitude from Chapter 1 to Chapter 4. What made the difference ? Ruth placed herself at the feet of Boaz, the Lord of the Harvest who willingly redeemed her. As a result Naomi’s life was changed and those tiny infant fingers unlocked the love that was enclosed in her heart. (c) Is that not what our children expect from us ? Care, attention, love and doing these things not as a burden but as a pleasure.

(Prov 22:6) This little baby was,

(d) *APPROPRIATELY NAMED:*

Here is the only place in the Old Testament where a child was named by someone other than the immediate family. Obed means “*worshipper and servant.*” Do these two features not sum up godly living ? This combination was referred to by the Lord Jesus, when tempted by Satan, He quoted from the Scriptures, “*It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve.*” (Deut 6:13 Matt 4:10) My every time we look upon a newborn child we realise that God has a plan for that child. Who can foresee the potential of a newborn soul ? What will be the final outcome in terms of testimony, missionary enterprise, or evangelism ? In latter life Obed was,

(e) *CERTAINLY USEFUL:*

Elderly folk appreciate those who brighten the evening of their life and Obed

would certainly do that. But do you see the position is reversed now ? Obed expected from love from Naomi in his childhood, Naomi expects love from Obed in her old age. In his tender years she ministers to him, in her later years he ministers to her.

Is this not how life ought to be ? Is there not to be this two fold reciprocal action ? As parents we minister to our children (Lk 11:13) then, our children minister to us. (Exod 20:12) But do you see this home ? Do you see this gift ? ***It was Divinely give.*** Now if we are going to have spiritual children, souls for our labour, they must be divinely given, for while Paul may plant and Apollos may water only God can gave the increase. (1 Cor 3:7)

Do you know one of the things that has amazed me over the years ? When God has given the increase and souls have been saved, this note of praise has not been sounded the way it ought to. “ *Blessed be the Lord.* ” Of course we are responsible to nurture those who are young in the faith. (1 Thes 2:7) To watch over them, to care for them, to show them that the fruit of their union with Christ is worship and service. We are to make every effort to see that they become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (Eph 6:10) that they in turn might minister to us and others ! (1) (2)

(3) A HAND THAT IS EXHIBITED

For one pre-eminent theme which dominates the Book of Ruth is the hand of God working behind the scenes. He is the hidden Controller of lives. God’s divine providence is given special emphasis in this book. One of the main purposes of the Book of Ruth is brought to light in these closing verses. You see, the result of the union between Boaz and Ruth leads on to the record of the royal line of Judah, through which David would come, and through David would come, the Messiah. My God’s hand is in control. His hand is guiding, shaping, directing ! The hand of the Lord is revealed,

(a) *NATIONALLY:*

Now I don’t know about you but when I come to genealogies I tend to read over them quickly. The phrase

“ *these are the generations of,* ” or similar phrases occur often in the New Testament. This genealogy which spans 9 centuries from Perez (1885 BC) to David

(1040 BC) specifically names 10 generations. The first 5 Perez to Nashon, cover the patriarchal times to the Exodus and the wilderness wanderings. Salmon to David covers Joshua’s lifetime and the judges to the monarchy. Now what does this

genealogy tell us ? *Well, it emphasizes the scarlet line of redemption and the purple line of royalty.* It connects David with Judah

(4:12) of whom it was said, “ *the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.* ” (Gen 49:10) You see, Christ is traced back to David in the Book of Ruth (Matt 1:1

2 Tim 2:8) Christ is called the Son of David in the Book of Matthew (15:22, 20,29-30 22:42) and Christ will one day sit on the Throne of David, when He rules and reigns. (Is 9:6-7) My God’s eye is still on the nation of Israel, and God’s hand is protecting and directing their affairs !

(b) GLOBALLY:

Do you see this little baby Obed ? He not only blesses a marriage, and a mother, and a mother-in-law, he blesses all men everywhere. For Obed was the father of Jesse who was the father of David. Obed was King David’s grandfather. We don’t think about that when we first read this book, but if we look ahead about two generations, and then read backwards to where we are right now, we might have a completely different perspective on the importance of that little baby God has given. For through this line, ultimately will come the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer ! *So that little baby blessed a marriage, a mother, a mother-in-law, and continues to bless us even to this day, because through that line of Boaz and Obed and Jesse and David came our precious Saviour.* Is not thrilling to know that God’s hand is guiding globally ? My **history is His story !** For the Lord’s hand is over all history working out His sovereign plan and purpose. Do you need to be reminded of that ? Do you need to realise afresh that God is working “ *all things after the counsel of His own will,* ”

(Eph 1:11) that God is still doing “ *according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay His hand or say unto him what doest thou ?* ” (Dan 4:35) My God is still on the throne ! (a) (b)

(c) PERSONALLY:

For as we reflect on the “ **Romance of Redemption,** ” we see the unfolding purpose of God. Was it not the Lord who directed Ruth to the field of Boaz ? (2:3) It was the Lord who knew that Boaz was next of kin. God was in this thing, indeed the Lord brought something beautiful out of something tragic. My life is not some haphazard lottery but rather the unfolding of His plan for the believers who trusts Him. (2:12) The whole cycle of life, birth, marriage, death, every second, minute, hour, month, year, decade of my life is part of a plan that is determined and

directed by the God of eternity. My our God is not dead, His hand is shaping, guiding, directing and happy are we to sit at the Master's feet and pour out our love and devotion to Him.

(Jn 12:3)

Do you know what Boaz said to Ruth ? “ *tarry this night and it shall be in the morning.* ” (3:13) “ *Lie down and rest I will care of everything in the morning.* ” My we wait in the night but morning is coming. Do not despair the sunset for the sunrise is coming. The Lord Jesus said, “ let not your heart be troubled be also.” (Jn 14:1-3)

***“ Some glorious morning sorrow will cease
Some glorious morning all will be peace
Heartaches all ended, labour all done
Heaven will open, Jesus will come.”***

That will be a thrilling moment and then we shall go into the marriage of the Lamb. (Rev 19:9) and we will live happily ever-after. A little girl was listening once with great interest to her mothers reading of the Christmas story. When it was over, she relaxed and sat for a while thinking. Then she asked, “ *Mummy, did the baby Jesus live happily ever after ?* ” My subsequent to Calvary Christ did, and in eternity He will live happily ever after with His redeemed people. Then we shall sing as never before,

***“ With mercy and with judgement
My web of time He wove
And aye the dews of sorrow
Were lusted by His love
I'll bless the hand that guided
I'll bless the heart that planned
When throned where glory
In Immanuel's land.”***