

Place: Lurgan Baptist 27:9::2005

Reading: Ruth 3:1-7

THE ROMANCE OF REDEMPTION

7. CONCERN FOR THE FUTURE !

Ruth is the name of one of the most delightful books in the Old Testament. Remarkable for its brevity, its eight five verses are easily read in twenty minutes. Precious for its deep unfolding of the person of God, the truth of redemption, the workings of providence, this charming and beautifully written story is both simple and sublime a gem of literature and a wonder of language. There are four outstanding scenes in the book of Ruth.

Scene No 1: Moab (Ch 1:1-18) Period about 10 years.

Scene No 2: The field of Boaz (1:19-2:23) Period several months possibly mid April to mid June.

Scene No 3: One day in Bethlehem and one night at the threshing floor. (Ch 3)

*Scene No 4: Bethlehem, the city. Period about 1 year.
(Ch 4)*

The book of Ruth contains 4 chapters. We could entitle ***Chapter 1: Weeping***, for throughout this chapter we see nothing but trouble and weeping. ***Chapter 2: could be called Working***, for here we see Ruth serving in the harvest field as a gleaner coming into contact with Boaz her husband to be. ***Chapter 3: is all about Waiting***, for after presenting herself to Boaz and asking him to fulfil his role as near kinsman (3:9) Ruth hears wise counsel from her mother in law, “ *Sit still, my daughter until thou know how the matter will fall.* ” (3:18) ***Of course (Ch 4) ends with the Wedding.*** So we go from Ch 1 which is filled with Sorrow to Ch 2 which is all about Service, to Ch 3 which is a beautiful picture of Submission to Ch 4, which is all about Satisfaction. Or to change it slightly *Ch 1, From the Forbidden Land.*

Ch 2 Into the Harvest Field. Ch 3 Onto the Threshing Floor. Ch 4 At the City Gate.

Now the story we are studying is deeply rooted in the culture of the Old Testament. From the very beginning of the Old Testament Scriptures, when God began to work with His people Israel, He always reminded them of two things He covenanted with them.

First, the Lord always told them they were *a Special People*. (Exod 19:5) and second He always told them they had *a Special Place*. (Deut 32:8) Even today that's true. There's a place called Israel which is at the very centre of everything that is going on in the world. And there is a people the Jews spread throughout every nation. Now with that in mind, come to the 3rd Chapter of the Book of Ruth, remembering again that this is a continuation of God's promise to His people concerning a place and a people. Now in order for us to understand this chapter two words need to be explained. The first word is "*levir*," meaning "*husband's brother or brother-in-law*," from which we get the word "*levirate*." In the O.T., in order to preserve the people of Israel, the brother of a man who had died without children would marry the deceased man's wife, and the first child born in that relationship would perpetuate the name of the man who had died. This was known as a levirate marriage, and its brought before us in (Deut 25:5-6) Now how do you fancy that ? You see, had you been living in those days and your brother died leaving no children, then your brother's widow had a claim on you. She is a widow now, and she can claim immediately one of her husband's brothers. Now suppose you say, "*Well, I warned my brother and I told him not to marry this girl, and I certainly don't want to marry her.*" Then she can bring you to court, and if you refuse to take her as your wife even in court, she can step up to you, take off your shoe, and spit in your face. That meant you would be disgraced.

Now the second word we need to keep in mind is "*goel*," translated "*redeemer*." The "*goel*," was a near kinsman who was to act as the redeemer of persons or property. We find this in (Lev 25:25-28) You see, every Jewish family had a piece of property that was theirs by virtue of their inheritance, and even if a person became totally poor and lost everything he had, a member of the family was supposed to buy that property on his behalf, until the year of Jubilee, an observance in which every seven years Jews got back everything they had lost. So when a person lost his property, one of the family members, the "*goel*," the redeemer would buy it back so that family would not lose its inheritance. So just as the "*levir*," perpetuated the people, so the "*goel*," perpetuated the place. Now if we keep this in mind it will help us understand this 3rd Chapter. Do you recall that when the two widows came to Bethlehem, their plan was that Ruth would take care of Naomi, and both of them would eke out an existence the best they could. But now Naomi has a new plan. Ruth is to marry Boaz and then all of them can live happily ever after.

In that day, it was the parents who arranged marriages, so Naomi was not out of place in what she did. Some of you here have tried to be matchmakers, tell me, did

your plans work out as well as this one ? For here we see Naomi launching a plan to bring Ruth and Boaz together. We have called this section, “ *Concern for the Future,*” and I want you to notice three things.

(1) A PURPOSE WE NEED TO MENTION

Do you see this in (3:1) Naomi’s purpose and objective for Ruth was that she might find rest. Perhaps all during the harvest season Naomi had been watching out the widow each evening and had seen Boaz and Ruth coming into Bethlehem together. It had been about six weeks. Now the barley was gathered, and the wheat was gathered, and Naomi notices that Ruth is very modest and is not making any claim on this man at all. She also notices the obvious, that he is in love with her. And so Naomi asks rest if she should rest for her. And the “ *rest,*” of course is marriage. We would render it like this, “ *My daughter, a term of affection shall I not seek a home for thee.*” Naomi’s desire was to see Ruth settled.

You see, this purpose illustrates to us something,

(a) *VERY NATURAL:*

The “ *rest,*” which Naomi sought was to be settled securely in a home with a suitable husband. As I have said it was the custom for Hebrew parents to arrange marriages for their children. (Gen 24:1-5) This “ *rest,*” spoke of the rest of Status: rest from reproach of not having children, the burden women in those days dreaded greatly. (Gen 30:1 1 Sam 1:6) It spoke of the “ *rest,*” of Security: rest from harm and danger, it spoke of the “ *rest,*” of Substance: rest from want. My if a woman was to have much of a life in those days she needed a husband. Rest, was her great need. Is this not the prayer and burden of many a parent’s heart ? Is it not the desire of our hearts that through our prayers, guidance, and instruction that our children might find “ *rest,*” in the homes of godly men and women ? There are few greater responsibilities in life than this, seeking to provide for the future well being of our children. I mean next to God’s salvation, the finding of a partner for life is of prime importance. Now you might feel that you would have liked to have lived in those days and had a primary part in choosing your children’s partners, yet through prayer and counsel you can still direct them ! Do you recall the charge that God levelled against Eli concerning his family ? Because old Eli let them sin to their heart’s content he came under the discipline of God, “ *I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not.*” (1 Sam 3:13) “ *My daughter shall I not seek rest for*

thee,” (3:1) Is this not God’s idea of marriage ? It should be the aim of every husband to have a home of rest and love. (Eph 5:25) Do you recall what the Lord said when He was instituting marriage ? “ *It is not good that the man should be alone I will make an help meet for him.*”

(Gen 2:18) The Rabbi’s used to say, that “ *the man is restless while he misses the rib that was taken out of his side, and the woman is restless till she gets under the man’s arms from whence she was taken.*” Is this not God’s concept of married life ? A rest, a place where love, patience and unselfishness is found. Yet so often our marriages are like the young couple that just got married. The first week she listened to him, the second week he listened to her, the third week, the neighbours listened to them both ! My what is your home like ? Is it a place of harmony or strife ? Rest or rebellion ?
Unity or bitterness ? (a)

(b) VERY SCRIPTURAL:

You see, ever since Boaz came into Ruth’s life Naomi has been a different person. Her concern is no longer for herself and her grief but for Ruth and her future. Here is a woman who is no longer seeking her own interests. Is this not what the Saviour did ? “ *I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.*” (Jn 5:30) “ *I do nothing of myself,*” “ *I seek not mine own glory,*” (8:28, 50) Is this not what Paul did ? He says to the believers at Corinth ? “ *Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*” (10:33) Is this not what Timothy did ? Writing to the church at Philippi Paul speaking of Timothy said this. “ *For I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.*” (2:21)

Timothy had a deep, genuine interest in the welfare of others. My its when we serve others that we ourselves receive the greatest joy and satisfaction. The martyred German minister Dietrich Bonhoeffer called the Lord Jesus “ *the man for others,*” and the title is appropriate. What about you ? Is this trait of love evident in your life ? For “ *love seeketh not her own.*”
(1 Cor 13:5) (a) (b)

(c) VERY DEVOTIONAL:

For Naomi’s proposal and Ruth’s purpose in going to the threshing floor and laying at the feet of Boaz was to establish a lasting relationship with him. Its interesting

that in (Ch 1) Ruth did not even know that Boaz existed. In (Ch 2) she saw him only as her benefactor, the one who fed her and protected her. Then she discovered that that Boaz was really a relative, a near kinsman who could redeem her. Now Ruth wanted to establish a permanent relationship with him. (3:9) She wanted him to be more than a benefactor who gave her gifts, she desired a bridegroom who would share his life and love with her. Do you know the problem with too of us believers ? We use the Lord Jesus to escape our problems, or to receive the blessings. Ruth however, wanted to give herself and her love completely to Boaz. Is this your objective as a Christian ? To totally commit yourself to the Saviour !

My our relationship with Christ must be more than just a casual affair for the sole purpose of receiving His protection, (2:9) provision (2:16) encouragement ! (2:17) We must desire deep, intimate fellowship with Him enjoying not only the gifts but the giver. The hymn-writer put it like this, “ *Once it was the blessing but now it is the Lord.* ” (a) (b) (c)

(d) VERY EVANGELICAL:

I wonder have you noticed the change in Naomi’s language ? Look back for example to (1:8-9) Here’s Naomi in a backslidden state wanting to send her daughters back to Moab, the land of idolatry and immorality. (Num 25:1 21:29) But now there is a change for she says “ *Shall I not seek rest for thee ?* ” Naomi was greatly concerned about Ruth’s needs ! Its interesting that when we are “ *in Moab,* ” out of fellowship with the Lord we have little concern for others, but when our hearts are right with the Lord the language on our lips is, “ *Shall I not seek rest for thee ?* ” By “ *rest,* ” Naomi meant a “ *union.* ” Tell me, is it the desire of your soul that “ *others,* ” find union with Christ who came from the line of Boaz and Ruth ? Or could it be that your lack of compassion for the lost is indicative of the fact that you are still “ *in Moab,* ” out of fellowship with the Lord ? (1)

(2) A PREPARATION WE NEED TO MAKE

Special occasions call for us to be at our finest. Certain events call for us to look our best, act our best, wear our best and be at our best. There are times when we would not like to be like the woman that made a mad dash out of her house when she heard the garbage truck was pulling away. She realised that she had not put the garbage out that morning. She grabbed the garbage and ran out the door. Her hair was wrapped in big curlers, her face was covered with face cream, and she was in her bathrobe and an old pair of slippers. She ran out on the street and yelled, “ *Am I too late for the garbage ?* ” The fellow on the back of the truck yelled back, “

Nope, hop right in.” Now the events that take place in (Ch 3) may seem strange to western minds. Some think that the plan of Naomi for Ruth was unconventional, immodest, and indiscreet, and that Ruth’s claim could have been a different time and place. But against this we see her confidence in God to carry out the instructions of the Word of God. Naomi acted as “ *a mother in Israel,*” Ruth was a virtuous woman, and Boaz was a man of absolute integrity. Did you notice that there were three things that were needed before Ruth could take her place at the feet of Boaz, and these things have a clear application to all believers today.

Ruth had to wash herself, then she had to anoint herself, and then she had to lay aside the garments of widowhood and put on garments suited for his presence. What does this say to us today ? It says we need to be,

(a) *Washed in order to WORSHIP:*

“ *Wash thyself,*” this was not ceremonial. Naomi just wanted to make sure Ruth was clean. There must be no stain upon her when she meets Boaz. My if we want to enter into a deeper fellowship with the Lord, we must
“ *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* ”

(2 Cor 7:1) Do you recall the Saviour’s teaching in His Upper Room Ministry ? Look at (Jn 13:10) Or “ *He who has a bath needs only to wash his feet his body is clean.*” Now do you see the distinction Christ is making between a body which is clean and feet which need cleansing. The one is an Initial Cleansing “ *ye are clean,*” the other is a Continual Cleansing, “ *wash his feet.*” The one is unrepeatable, the other is repeatable. The one refers to justification, the other refers to sanctification. Now without the first washing we have no relationship with the Lord, without the second washing we have no fellowship with Him. Without the bathing we are unsaved, without the rinsing we are unusable. My has your feet become soiled ? Has your mind become polluted ? Has your spirit become arrogant ?

Whenever we sin we must pray “ *wash me,*” (Ps 51:2) but sometimes God says to us, “ *wash you, make you clean.*” (Is 1:16) When we seek forgiveness God cleanses us, but God will not do for us what we must do for ourselves. Only we can put out of our lives those things that defile us, **and we know what they are.**

My this may mean cleaning out your library.

(Acts 19:18) What about your CD collection ? What about your magazine rack ? What about your T.V. viewing ? The Jewish people were conscious of the need of holiness as they came to worship God (Ps 15, 24) yet Christians today rush into

the presence of God without cleansing themselves of the sins that rob them of God's blessing. My is it any wonder that our worship is often an empty routine and that God's power is not in our midst ? (a)

(b) Anointed in order to WITNESS:

Look at (3:3) if you will. Eastern people used fragrant oils to protect and heal their bodies and to make themselves pleasant to others. A bride would especially take care to wear fragrant perfume that would make her " nice to be near." (S.S. 1:3, 12-14) So Naomi says to Ruth " *Get that little bottle of perfume out, you know that one that's called Midnight in Moab, and use it generously.*" My the gracious Holy Spirit is the anointing today. When we turn to the N.T. we discover that we are,

1. Anointed to Know.

Do you recall John's words ? " *Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things but the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.*" (1 Jn 2:20,27) The word " *charisma,*" rendered " *unction,*" and " *anointing,*" here means to rub with oil and is typical of the consecrating power of the Spirit. The consequence of this anointing is a spiritual insight into divine things. " *Ye know all things.*" 1.

2. Anointed to Preach:

Christ's opening words as He began his public ministry were these, " *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.*"

(Lk 4:18) While on earth Christ lived His life and did His work through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. My if the spotless Son of God needed the Spirit's power how much more do we ? Dare we pray in the energy of the flesh when the Spirit is present to assist us ?

(Rom 8:26) Do we try to witness for Christ without asking the Holy Spirit to help us ? (Act s 1:8) Dr. A.W. Tozer once said, " *If God were to take the Holy Spirit out of this world, much of what the church is doing would go right on, and nobody would know the difference.*" My we have so much in human resources available to us that we manage to serve the Lord without the power of the Spirit, but is that God wants ? (a) (b)

(c) *Clothed in order to WALK:*

Look at (3:3) In other words “ *Ruth put off your widows garments, and put on that special garment reserved for festive occasions.* ” In Scripture, clothing carries a spiritual meaning. Salvation is pictured as a change of clothes. (Lk 15:22 Is 61:10) And Christian living means taking off the “ *grave clothes,* ” of the old life and putting on the “ *grace clothes,* ” of the new life. (Col 3:1-17) Peter says, “ *be clothed with humility.* ” (1 Pet 5:7) Paul says, “ *walk worthy with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.* ” (Eph 4:12) “ *Ruth dress for the occasion.* ” My our dress and appearance are very important subjects and no more so than in this present age. Many believers “ *dress down,* ” for church and “ *dress up,* ” for work. Are there principles to govern our dress ? Paul says, “ *In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel.* ” (1 Tim 2:9-10)

The word “ *apparel,* ” conveys the idea of a garment that does not accentuate the precise figure of a woman’s body. Young folk, to be attractive to the opposite sex you don’t have to dress provocatively. God demands modesty and decency. My does your dress compliment your Christian profession ? Are you promoting sin by the way you dress ? Does your appearance glorify the Lord ? 1:2:

(3) A PLACE WE NEED TO MARK

Look at (3:4) The Hebrew word translated “ *mark,* ” here is found eight times in the Book of Ruth. It is translated “ *knewest,* ” (2:11) “ *known,* ” (3:3) “ *mark,* ” (3:4) and “ *know,* ” (3:11,14,18, 4:4) in the King James. Naomi is not talking about Ruth making a visible mark where Boaz was sleeping but rather about her being careful to observe where he was sleeping so that no mistakes would be made. “ *Mark the place where he shall lie.* ” My did you ever think about,

(a) *THE PLACE WHERE THE SAVIOUR LAY:*

You see, we should mark the places where the Saviour lay and seek to identify with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ ! Do you see Christ,

1. LYING IN A MANGER:

That's **His Stoop**: Do you recall the angels words to the shepherds ? “ *Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.* ” (Lk 2:12) Christ became poor. Oh, the marvel, majesty, meaning, and message of the manger. What an example to the Christian of humility. Writing to the believers at Philippi, during a time of personal difference between two sisters do you recall how Paul presents Christ ? “ *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus who was found in fashion as a man.* ” (Phil 2:5) My are too proud to go to your sister and apologise ? Then you have never seen the Lord of Glory in the manger !

2. LYING ON A PILLOW:

That's **His Humanity**: Mark says, “ *And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow.* ” (4:38) He was truly God, but He was truly a perfect Man. And because of that we have a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. (Heb 4:15)

Are you facing temptation ? He knows all about it ! Are you experiencing suffering ? Christ knows ? Are you being misunderstood ? He was there ! Do they revile you at work ? They did it to Him. Have you stood recently at the grave of a loved one ? So did He ! My “ *Jesus knows all about your struggles,* ” 1, 2,

3. LYING IN A GARDEN:

That's **His Submission**: “ *And He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O my Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.* ” (Matt 26:39) Oh, the mystery of Gethsemane. The sinless Saviour was soon to become the Bearer of sin. Was this not the cause of His sorrow in the garden ? He was looking ahead to that hour of deepest woe on Calvary ! Is it not amazing to think of all that Christ went through on your behalf ? Tell me, when you contemplate that, is it too much to ask you to remember Him at His Table ? 1, 2, 3,

4. LYING IN A TOMB:

That's **His Victory**: For the angel said to the women, “ *Come see the place where the Lord lay.* ” (Matt 28:6) My the One they sought, Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified, was not in the garden tomb. He was risen. His glorious work was completed, the mighty triumph had been won, and Christ had conquered death and the grave. *The place where He lay has been exchanged for the place where He sits at God's right hand in heaven.* (Heb 1:3) Surely as we mark these places where He lay and see His

Stoop, His Humanity, His Submission, His Victory, we should feel like shouting, “*Hallelujah, what a Saviour.*” (a) but let me close with,

(b) *THE PLACE WHERE THE SERVANTS LAY:*

Four times in (Ch 3) the phrase “*his feet,*” is used.
(3:4,7,8, 14) You see, here is,

1. *The Place of DEDICATION:*

Now Ruth had been at his feet when she met Boaz in the field (2:10) She had knelt to thank him for his gifts, but now she is coming to present herself to him. Is this not the kind of presentation that Paul appeals for in (Rom Ch 12) when he says, “*I beseech you therefore brethren*,” Have you got to the place of dedication ? Have you come to the feet of the Lord of the Harvest ?

2. *The Place of ILLUMINATION:*

Do you remember Mary of Bethany ? “*She sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His Word.*” (Lk 10:39) But she not only heard His Word, she received His Blessing. (10:42) But she not only received His blessing she saw His Face. Do you need to “*turn your eyes on Jesus and look in His wonderful face ?*” 1, 2,

3. *The Place of ADORATION:*

For its was when John was in the isle of Patmos, in the Spirit on the Lord’s day that he had a vision of the glorified Christ. John says, “*And when I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead.*” (Rev 1:17) Do you ever just fall at His feet in adoring wonder and worship ? Do you ever say with Ruth “*Why have I found grace in thine eyes ?*” (2:10) Do you ever fall before Him and tell Him that you love Him ? Say with the hymn-writer, “*take my love My Lord I pour at Thy feet its treasure store.*” My as we ponder the place where the Saviour lay, it will motivate us to the place where the Servants lay !

***“ So sitting at Thy feet my heart
Would all its love outpour
And pray that Thou wouldst teach me Lord,
To love Thee more and more.”***

