

**DHW**  
**BIBLE STUDY CLASS**  
**LESSON 4**  
**RUTH 4**

***INTRODUCTION***

This last chapter of Ruth brings the historical drama which began with a sad and sorrowful note to a very happy and joyful finale to the praise and glory of the LORD God Almighty! But the best is yet to come. The last section of the chapter serves as a bridge to the books of Samuel in which we shall witness David, the grandson of Obed, the son of Boaz and Ruth, being chosen and anointed to be the king of all Israel by the prophet Samuel who was commanded by the LORD. Elimelech brought his family to Moab hoping for a better life because there was famine in Bethlehem. He thought that relocating was in the best interest of his family. He did what was right in his own eyes just like the other Israelites. His decision almost brought his wife, Naomi, to the brink of ruin. He could not foresee this happening. But by the providence of the LORD when Naomi heard that the famine in Bethlehem had ended, she returned to her hometown with her daughter-in-law, Ruth, who willingly and wholeheartedly committed to follow her and her God.

It is possible that there are Christians who profess to fear and

obey God and yet walking and groping in darkness and having no light.<sup>1</sup> Elimelech and Naomi were such children of God. God calls on His children to trust Him and be faithful to Him for He seeks the good for His children. Naomi learned the lesson in a hard way to trust in the name of the LORD and stay upon Him. When Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem, Naomi bitterly lamented that she had gone away “full” but now came back “empty.” We have seen through the first three chapters the hidden hand of the LORD working behind the scenes to bring about together “for good to those who love Him” and who do His will. In this concluding chapter, Naomi was ecstatically full of joy and hope for her life had turned around for good and she would be adequately provided for the rest of her life.

This concluding chapter, shows Boaz skilfully and successfully resolved the hindrance that could have robbed him of the option of marrying Ruth. The problem was amicably resolved before the ten witnessing elders of the city. Consequently, Boaz took Ruth as his wife. The LORD gave her conception, and she gave birth to a son. The townfolks celebrated with them. Naomi was very happy.

The chapter can be divided into the following sections:

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 50:10 Who *is* among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh *in* darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.

- (1) Boaz seeks the transfer of the rights of a kinsman-redeemer to him (4:1-6)
- (2) The transfer of the rights is formally solemnized. (4:7-10)
- (3) The people and the elders bless Boaz.(4:11-12)
- (4) A son is born with Naomi rejoicing (4:13-17)
- (5) The ancestry of King David is established (4:18-22)

In the final analysis, we see God's wonderful working in the lives of His people. He turned around the embittered Naomi's emptiness to fullness; He blessed her Moabite daughter-in-law Ruth to be happily married to Boaz, and became the great-grandmother of the Israel's greatest king, and He blessed Boaz with a wonderful wife happily married.

### **STUDY THE WORD**

#### **Boaz Seeks for the Rights of a Kinsman-Redeemer**

Boaz lost no time to resolve the matter regarding the other nearer kinsman whether he would redeem the late Elimelech's estate in accordance with the levirate law. He went to *the gate* of the town. The town *gate* was a reasonably large public area near the entrance to the city, where tradesmen met for business transactions, and also where leaders of the town met to adjudicate and decide on legal matters. Boaz went there because it was the most likely place for him to find his kinsman who would come through the

town gate. As expected, Boaz saw him, and called: "Ho, such a one..." (today's equivalent would be 'Hi, Mr So and So') to come and sit with him.<sup>2</sup> Why Boaz did not call him by name is not given. Some conjecture that they were not on good terms. Others suggest that Boaz had a diminished respect for him because he knew the kind of person he was. Being a man of influence and wealth, it was not difficult for Boaz to call ten elders of the town to sit with him and his kinsman. The ten elders were to be witnesses who were to adjudicate the case which Boaz would present before them. In this way it would render the proceedings as proper and legal.

Boaz went straight to the point. He began by presenting that Naomi had come back from Moab and had sold a piece of land which formerly belonged to "our brother Elimelech" (v.3). In the presence of the town inhabitants and the ten elders, Boaz posed to the kinsman that he had the first option to redeem Elimelech's land. And if he declined to do so, Boaz would redeem the land as he was the next in line. The kinsman answered right away that he would redeem it (v.4) It seems that Boaz was not surprised but immediately introduced the full implications of other kinsman decision. Boaz in no uncertain terms stated to him that if he bought the land, he had to marry Ruth, the Moabite, the widowed wife of Mahlon, the son

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<sup>2</sup> The New International Version translated the phrase as "my friend" which is contrary to the original script. An accurate translation is imperative.

of Elimelech, and maintain the name of the deceased with his property (v.5). The kinsman then replied that since he could not redeem the land for himself and that it would also put his own estate at risk, he would abrogate his right and pass it to Boaz to redeem the land (v.6). This was precisely what Boaz wanted. It is interesting and easy to understand why the kinsman changed his mind—initially he said that he would buy the land, and the next moment he reversed his decision and said that he would not redeem it. The kinsman could have thought that when he bought the land, it would belong to him permanently, and most likely Naomi could not bear any more children. The unnamed kinsman was thinking only of profit and loss financially. Buying the land on this term would be a plus for him. But when Boaz mentioned that in buying the land he was obligated to marry Ruth in order to maintain the name of the Elimelech and his property, he unhesitatingly refused to do so. As we have thought the unnamed kinsman was selfishly thinking in terms of profit and loss. It is evidenced by the fact that he was not thinking of the future welfare of Naomi and Ruth, and the family name of Elimelech. He further thought that such a decision might even jeopardize his own estate. The option to redeem the land plus having to marry Ruth to maintain the name of the deceased was less attractive. This cleared the way for Boaz to redeem the land and marry Ruth. Boaz must have been a very happy man indeed! His strategy of

presenting the case to the kinsman paid off. He did not burden the kinsman with too much to think about but lead him to make a quick decision. So he presented the case to him one step at a time. The unnamed kinsman did not have to spend much time to make up his mind to buy the land which was good for his selfish purpose. Then when Boaz told him that he had to marry Ruth, emphasizing her ethnic origin, a Moabite, a widow, and raising an heir to the property of the dead, the kinsman was led to focus on the negative aspects of the option, and he quickly reversed his initial decision. Boaz was shrewd and wise and knowing the character of his kinsman, he used it to great advantage. There was nothing Scripturally wrong with his method. He knew what he wanted and he did it in a proper and legal manner.

### **The Transfer of the Rights Is Formally Solemnized**

The next important step that needed to be done so that Boaz could exercise this given right was its formal and legal transfer. It was done in the following manner: the kinsman would take off his sandal and gave it to Boaz indicating the transfer pertaining to the redemption. Actually, Ruth should be the one to take off the kinsman's sandal, spit at his face, and rebuke him for not willing *to build up his brother's house*.<sup>3</sup> Ruth was not there and

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<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 25:9 Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So

therefore the kinsman was spared the ordeal. He himself took the sandal off his foot and gave it to Boaz and confirmed the transfer by telling him (Boaz) that he could redeem for himself (8). Although the “letter of the law” was partially fulfilled, it was the “spirit of the law” that was upheld. Boaz solemnized the moment by saying to the ten adjudicating elders: “Ye are witnesses this day.” This was repeated at the end of his speech (v.9). Boaz confirmed two things with regard to the transfer. The first one was that he had purchased the whole estate that belonged to Elimelech including his two sons, Chilion and Mahlon, and also Naomi. The second one was that he had purchased Ruth, the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon (this is the first time we are informed that Ruth was married to him) to be his wife, and to keep the name of the family and its inheritance so that its name would not be cut off from among his brethren (vv. 9, 10).

### **The People & Elders Bless Boaz**

All the inhabitants who were at the town gate and the elders gathered together affirmed, saying, “We are witnesses” (v.11). There being no other contestants, Boaz now formally received the rights of a kinsman-redeemer. He gave his acceptance speech. He had fulfilled Naomi’s confidence in him that he would not rest until the matter concerning the kinsman-redeemer was resolved. Boaz

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shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house.

was motivated by lovingkindness for the family of the late Elimelech, in particular, the only two surviving members, Naomi and Ruth, who were both widows. Boaz chose to take upon himself the responsibilities that he was not obliged in the first instance to exercise. In so doing, he won Ruth as his wife.

The people blessed Boaz and Ruth, his soon-to-be wife. First, they blessed Ruth that the LORD would make her to be like Rachel and Leah. These two women had produced a great line of descendants, yea, even the house of Israel—for out of them came forth the twelve tribes of Israel. The LORD might bless Ruth and make Israel great. A second blessing was directed to Boaz that he might be famous in Ephrathah (the ancient name of Bethlehem). And the third blessing was that the house of Boaz and Ruth would be like that of Pharez, whose family was considered the most important family line within Judah. Pharez was the direct ancestor of Boaz, who was from the tribe of Judah.<sup>4</sup> This was the prayer of blessing by the Bethlehemites!

### **A Son Is Born**

So Boaz married Ruth. The marriage was consummated. A year had passed. The LORD “gave her conception” and she gave birth to a son. The purpose having been achieved, Boaz and Ruth took no more

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<sup>4</sup> Genesis 46:12 And the sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah, and Pharez, and Zerah: but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And the sons of Pharez were Hezron and Hamul.

verbal part in the subsequent flow of events from now onwards. Of course, Boaz and Ruth lived happily ever after. We learn that the LORD is the One who gives children. Without Him there will be no conception and no life. With regard to Ruth, it was significant because she did not have any child from her previous marriage.

Now the women of Bethlehem, who earlier had whispered in astonishment, “Is this Naomi,” when she came back to the city, blessed the LORD for her. The LORD had not left her without a kinsman and that his name might be famous. And that he would be “a restorer of life” and a “nourisher of thine old age” (v.15). And they added that her daughter-in-law, who loved her, and gave birth to a grandson, was better for her than “seven sons” (the ideal number of every Hebrew family). The “kinsman” these women were referring to was her grandchild and not Boaz. The “restorer of life” and “the nourisher of thine old age” was this grandchild. Every time when Naomi looked at her grandson, she would be reminded of her own redemption and her future was assured. The grandchild would be a great encouragement to her even beyond the necessities of life. There was no doubt about that because the child would have inherited the qualities of both his parents, Boaz and Ruth, who displayed qualities of tenacity, love, kindness, and loyalty. Naomi joyfully took the child and carried him in her bosom and nursed him. What a contrast to the feelings that she expressed at the time when she

was back in Bethlehem-Judah from the land of Moab. The LORD be praised for He was gracious and kind to Naomi. Of course, she was not his wet-nurse, who was obviously Ruth. They named the child “Obed” (Hebrew, means “serving”). Obed grew and became the father of Jesse who was the father of David who became the greatest king the nation Israel ever had. In other words, Boaz and Ruth were the great grandparents of King David!

### **King David’s Ancestry Is Established**

This last section of the book of Ruth gives the genealogy of David, who was to become the greatest king the Israelites had ever known. Modern Israel has the blue star of David as the emblem of the nation. Ten generations are given here although the listing is not necessarily in chronological order. The generation given here ending in David began with Pharez (Perez). He was the direct son of Judah.<sup>5</sup> He too was an offspring of a “levirate” marriage, and thus linking the genealogy with the account in this book. The divine writer knew that Obed was going to be the grandfather

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<sup>5</sup> Genesis 38:26 And Judah acknowledged *them*, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more. 27 And it came to pass in the time of her travail, that, behold, twins *were* in her womb. 28 And it came to pass, when she travailed, that *the one* put out *his* hand: and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first. 29 And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, How hast thou broken forth? *this* breach *be* upon thee: therefore his name was called Pharez

of King David whom Naomi, Ruth and Boaz did not know.

This section (vv. 18-22) legitimately establishes the genealogy of David. It serves as a bridge to the books of Samuel in which David was chosen and anointed by God through the prophet Samuel to be the king of Israel. It also shows how the LORD works in blessing His people through their co-operation and prayers. God's people had shown love and kindness to one another reflecting God's lovingkindness. As a result the whole nation of Israel was blessed because of this family. Eventually, through David, a greater Son of him would become the Kinsman-Redeemer in keeping with God's plan and purpose to bring hope and a future not just to the nation Israel, but to the whole world. Centuries later in the fullness of time, the great news came to a company of "country shepherds abiding in the field (of Bethlehem!), keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2:8). The angel who appeared to them said, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." His name would be called "Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Jesus Christ is our kinsman because "He was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7); and our redeemer because He has purchased us with His Blood (Acts 20:28). The account of Ruth illustrates that salvation comes to the poor and needy who turn to the LORD and are saved!

### **PRACTICAL VALUE**

Someone commented that the book of Ruth mirrors the heart and mind of God. Having read and studied the book, we can all agree with his comments. God's dealings with Naomi, Ruth and Boaz demonstrate His grace, mercy, love and kindness towards ordinary people who love and obey Him. Naomi and Ruth were in bereavement and yet they never renounced their belief and trust in God, although Naomi had expressed that God had "dealt very bitterly" with her, while Ruth determinedly affirmed her faith and love for the God of Israel despite a bleak foreseeable future for her. They had honoured God and He was pleased with them, and He worked in a wonderful and mysterious way to bring joy, security, and a bright future for them. It was not by pure "luck or chance" that Ruth happened to glean in the field that belonged to Boaz, who was a kinsman of Naomi. The friendship and bond which began in the field between Ruth and Boaz blossomed unexpectedly resulting in marriage, which was celebrated by the people of Bethlehem-Judah. Naomi was old and faced a hopeless future, Ruth was young but a Moabitess despised by the Israelites, and Boaz, though wealthy and influential was in his fifties, no wife or a family. But in the end all things worked for good to the three of them because they loved God (expressed by being obedient to Him), who led and blessed them to fulfil His purpose. And so through them we see the lovingkindness and tendermercies of God. If God had

dealt with them in this way, does it not comfort us and encourage us to love, obey and serve Him? The God of Boaz, Naomi and Ruth is the only one true and living God, who is the God whom the Lord Jesus Christ came to manifest, and whom we believe! He is the LORD God Almighty, let us walk before Him blameless, and He will bless us.<sup>6</sup>

Another glaring lesson which we ought to learn and express in practical terms, is to be like Boaz and his workers, Ruth and Naom, and the people of Bethlehem. Boaz was a powerful and wealthy man but he was kind and generous. He was a godly man and he treated his workers in a way that glorified and honoured God. How he prayerfully wished them “the LORD be with you.”! He is an example for us to emulate to be kind and generous to those who are poor and in need.

His workers in turn followed his example by prayerfully wishing him “the LORD bless you.” They were exemplary too as Boaz’s workers. They co-operated with him when he instructed them to treat Ruth, the Moabite, kindly. They did not raise any dissenting voice by saying that she was a Moabite but obeyed him unquestionably trusting the good judgment of their master. This is a good model for leaders and members of a church to practise. Members who

have elected their leaders should co-operate with the deliberation and decisions of their leaders at least during their term in office, unless there is something that seriously contradicts the Word of God. This mutual trust and co-operation is essential in building a strong, united, and vibrant church.

Naomi recognized that the LORD had dealt bitterly with her, and yet there is not one moment which we can detect that she renounced the LORD whom she believed and trusted. Deep down in her heart she must have prayerfully hoped that the LORD would be merciful and gracious to her. And when she knew that Boaz was her kinsman, she quickly acknowledged the goodness of the LORD! Consequently, with this knowledge, she did not sit down and do nothing but take full advantage of the opportunity given by the LORD. She gave Ruth valuable and specific instructions what to do. Should we not be like Naomi, despite all the sufferings and sorrows that we are experiencing, and still hope and trust in the LORD God? God is no debtor because He will care for His children, if we do not give Him up. How many people are angry with God and give Him up; and yet expect Him to bless them? This ought not to be so.

Ruth was humble, sincere and resolute in her belief in the LORD God. She was willing to do the back-breaking work of gleaning the field. Her demeanour was one of courtesy and humility towards the other workers and Boaz. She was prepared to take

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<sup>6</sup> 2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

the risks by obeying her mother-in-law because she (Naomi) was thinking of her welfare, and also complying with the levirate law which was according to the Holy Scripture. None of the risks happened and indeed this is a testimony of the unseen providential hand of God working on behalf of Ruth and Boaz. The lesson we learn is that character traits like Ruth in this regard build strength and fortitude. And when there are some risks involved in doing the work of God, we are confident that He will protect and preserve us.

The inhabitants of Bethlehem-Judah were typical of what people in general are. One moment they will criticise and the next moment they will applaud. Did not the people whisper among themselves in disbelief when Naomi came back to Bethlehem—"Is this Naomi?" They should have organized a "Help Naomi" action group but they did not. After that we hear nothing of them. Then when Naomi was blessed with the birth of a grandson, Obed, they even praised the LORD for her. They were absolutely right with regard to their observation and praise. But that sentiment towards Naomi did not commensurate in the beginning when Naomi returned to Bethlehem. We should be consistent in our attitude towards people who are in dire need, and refrain from an attitude that sways according to the winds of circumstances. Looking down at someone when circumstances do not look good, and looking up when circumstances are good. We should

behave the same in our heart and mind whatever the circumstances.

Finally, we must not be like the unnamed kinsman whom Boaz called to perform his obligations according to the levirate law. The unnamed kinsman would only perform his obligation provided he got all the benefits for himself. He was motivated by dollars and cents. He had no consideration for the plight of Naomi and Ruth. This is a very selfish way of living. As Christians we should not be like him; rather we should be like Boaz. And once again, we learn that when we reflect the character of God by being kind, sincere, honest and true, caring for those in need, God will recompense us in many varied ways. If God did it for Boaz, He would do the same for us. AMEN