

'Ruth'. Rockville Bible fellowship. 22 April 2020.

This evening I want to consider with you the story and the character of 'Ruth the Moabitess', as she is described no less than five times¹ in the book which carries her name.²

For now, we have two short readings, both taken from chapter 1 of that book, the first commencing at verse 7 ...

She (Naomi, that is) set out from the place where she was [in Moab] with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go, return each of you to her mother's house.³ May the Lord deal kindly with you ... may the Lord grant that each of you will find rest⁴ in the house of her husband!' ...

And now down to the latter part of verse 14 ...

And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung ('kept close'⁵) to her.

And Naomi said, 'Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law'.

But Ruth said, 'Do not plead with⁶ me to leave you, to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.⁷ Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death separates you and me'.

And when Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said no more.

And that, most certainly, must rank as one of the greatest declarations of commitment in the whole Bible.

As you are no doubt aware, this young Moabitess, Ruth, is one of only two women who have the honour of having had their names attached to books of scripture, the other being a young Jewess who lived many centuries later⁸ – not in Israel, but in the Persian city of Shushan (or 'Susa'⁹); namely Esther.

And before we go any further, we may need to remind ourselves just how remarkable it is to find in our Bibles a book which bears the name of somebody who came from a pagan, immoral and idolatrous nation,¹⁰ indeed, who came from a nation with which God's people in the closing period of Old Testament history were expressly forbidden to associate.¹¹ And that here (and here only in all scripture) we find a book which bears the name of somebody who provided an essential link in the genealogy¹² of our Lord.¹³

The very first verse of the book which carries her name sets her story 'in the days when the judges ruled',¹⁴ a period, I believe, of some 320 years,¹⁵ spanning from the days of Othniel to the days of Samuel and his ungodly sons.¹⁶

The book of Judges itself records, in varying degrees of detail, the history and the exploits of twelve men¹⁷ who can be said¹⁸ to have 'judged' (who served as leaders, that is¹⁹) in Israel for differing periods of time and in different areas of the Promised Land ... this until the tragic death of Samson, recorded in chapter 16.

The remaining four chapters (from chapter 17 to chapter 21) are devoted to two distressing and shameful stories, which are designed to pull back the curtains on the appallingly low spiritual conditions and moral standards which prevailed during the Judges period.²⁰

That the story of Ruth is to be linked back in particular to these two stories which occupy the closing chapters²¹ is evident from the repeated reference to one specific location – to 'Bethlehem-Judah'²² – and to the way in which each of the three stories begins by speaking of someone who left there to find a home elsewhere. We read, in order, (i) of a young Levite²³ who became a bogus priest, equipped with his private sanctuary complete with idolatrous images,²⁴ (ii) of a local girl who became another Levite's concubine, and who was brutalised, raped and killed – a sordid tale which almost resulted in the extinction of a whole tribe in Israel,²⁵ and then (iii), most relevant to our study this evening, of a man named Elimelech.²⁶

In all likelihood, given some of the names mentioned there, the first two stories are set early on in the days of the Judges,²⁷ with the third story (that of Ruth) taking place rather later.²⁸

The first two stories, with their many examples of godlessness and unrighteousness, served only to sully and bring discredit on the reputation of the town,²⁹ whereas the story of Ruth, with the splendid examples of godliness and righteousness set by Boaz and herself, served rather to redeem and to bring honour to its name.

It would be hard to miss that each of the three double-references to Bethlehem-Judah³⁰ follow hard on the heels of the Spirit's thrice-repeated explanation for the days of lawlessness which largely prevailed throughout the book of Judges, namely, that 'in those days there was no king in Israel',³¹ an expression which occurs nowhere else.

And it would be equally hard to miss that the story of Ruth ends in a way which may seem rather strange to some, with the very last word of the book being a name,³² the name of Ruth and Boaz's great-grandson ... the name of a man destined to become Israel's greatest human king, spoken of by God Himself as 'a man after my heart, who will do all my will'.³³ That name is, of course, 'David'.³⁴

And with that one word (that one name) the Holy Spirit has built a verbal bridge between 'the days when the judges ruled' and the establishing of God-appointed kingship in Israel, as recorded in the following book, the First Book of Samuel.³⁵ And, not only that, but by means of that name, the Holy Spirit has pointed us forward to the coming of Him who would be called 'the Son of David',³⁶ to our Lord Jesus Himself.

And it is precisely there that Ruth's enchanting life-story fits into the main Bible storyline.

For, as we noted earlier, this young Moabitess proved to be the channel through whom God preserved intact that 'messianic line' which stretched from the Garden of Eden, through the likes of Abraham, Judah and David, to the long-awaited Bruiser (the Crusher) of the Serpent's head,³⁷ to the great Dragon-slayer,³⁸ to the Saviour of the world.³⁹ What a critically important part, therefore, Ruth's life and personal history played in the outworking of God's grand and eternal purpose.

Not that we can claim to know much of 'Ruth's life and personal history'. For, as far as the biblical record goes, from the time we first meet her properly on the road from Moab to Bethlehem, to the moment when she steps down from the stage with the birth of Obed, everything took place in little more than twelve months or so.⁴⁰ But, given the crucial role she played then, this brief period must rank as one of the most important years in the whole of Bible history.

The Jewish writer Flavius Josephus concluded *his* record of Ruth's story with the words, 'I was ... obliged to relate this history of Ruth, because I had a mind to demonstrate the power of God, who, without difficulty, can raise those that are of ordinary parentage to dignity and splendour, to which He advanced David, though he were born of such [lowly] parents'.⁴¹

Without doubting in any way that, in his words, the 'power of God' was demonstrated in the 'history of Ruth', I have to say that Josephus missed entirely the main lessons of her life and experience, not least the marvellous and mysterious way⁴² in which God's providence was then at work in the lives of His people, and at work, as so often, and indeed as normally, behind the scenes. And 'God's power' was evident, not so much in raising up 'those that are of ordinary parentage to dignity and splendour' (such as in the case of David), but in that, without that 'power' working providentially throughout the story, there would have been no David at all!

At no point in Ruth's history do we read of any miracle, nor of any angelic visitation.⁴³ And, although God is mentioned by name and title in almost a quarter⁴⁴ of her book's eighty-five verses, in point of fact we read of Him intervening on only two occasions: once towards the beginning of chapter 1, when He put an end to the famine in Israel,⁴⁵ and once towards the end of chapter 4, when He blessed Ruth with conception.⁴⁶ Not that these were unimportant interventions. Not by a long shot! For the first prompted Naomi to return to Bethlehem, which in turn brought Ruth there as well, and the second continued the vital genealogy which gave Israel a David and the world a Saviour.

But on all other occasions, God's name is heard only on the lips of the various characters. By way of example only, when Naomi,⁴⁷ Boaz,⁴⁸ and the people of Bethlehem⁴⁹ invoke His (God's) blessing on Ruth.

What we have in the life of Ruth is a case of what we might call 'the invisible hand of God', unerringly directing seemingly ordinary everyday events, which, with hindsight, we can now recognise to be the gradual unfolding of His great and gracious purpose.⁵⁰

I don't know how He does it, but, without in any way over-riding anybody's freedom in the process, without treating any man or woman as a mere puppet on a string, in His own unique way, He was weaving the decisions and actions, not only of Ruth, but also of Naomi, of Boaz and of all others, into the fabric of that purpose.

And to help us get some feel for just how precise were the workings of that divine providence, of that 'invisible hand of God', I want us to picture these workings as a chain composed of ten links.

I don't have time to say much about *any* of the ten links, each of which proved equally necessary to get us from 'the days when the judges ruled' (from the days when 'there was *no king* in Israel, and everyone did what was right in his own eyes', through to the name of *the king* after God's own heart, who would himself form a link in a much longer chain ... in that vitally important chain which would extend across more than a millennium to the coming of *'the King of Kings'*⁵¹ – to the coming of our Lord Jesus Himself.

Nevertheless, we ought at least run our fingers, as it were, quickly down the various links of this chain.⁵²

First,⁵³ we read of a famine in Israel, and of a man's decision to seek greener pastures in the neighbouring land of Moab.⁵⁴

And, although famines were by no means unknown in the land of Israel, we can be sure that it was no mere chance which caused a certain Elimelech, together with his family, to decide to jump ship, and to seek refuge in a land of proverbial fertility.⁵⁵ For, without that decision, there would have been no chain at all!

Second,⁵⁶ we find that, although Elimelech apparently intended to stay for just a short period in Moab, in the event, he ended up settling there. And it was while there that his one son, Mahlon, just happened to meet, and to marry, a young Moabitess by the name of Ruth. And it was when there that both Elimelech and his two sons just happened to die.⁵⁷ And so it is that a book which will *end* with one marriage and the celebration of the birth of a baby boy, begins with two marriages and the funerals of three grown men.

Thirdly, when the Lord ended the famine in Israel (so that there was now bread again in 'the House of Bread', the meaning of the name 'Bethlehem'), Elimelech's widow Naomi 'happened' to take the opportunity to return to her original home.⁵⁸

Our fourth link comprises Ruth's firm attachment to Naomi.⁵⁹ For, in spite of Naomi's fourfold plea that Ruth should 'return' with her sister-in-law Orpah to her homeland and family, the young Moabitess clung tenaciously to Naomi, and, with her six-fold pledge of loyalty, blessed all later generations with one of the most beautiful expressions of determined devotion ever recorded.

Naomi and Ruth just 'happened' to arrive at their destination (Bethlehem) 'at the beginning of barley harvest',⁶⁰ a timing which was to prove critical, for otherwise there would have been no gleaning at the time (by Ruth or anyone else), and therefore no 'chance' of Ruth ever meeting Boaz. And the chain would simply have broken at this point.

And when Ruth did go gleaning, she just 'happened' to choose the right 'part' of the right 'field'.⁶¹

Literally translated, the text here reads, 'her chance chanced on ('she happened to happen on', if you like) the part of the field belonging to Boaz'. Little did Ruth know that morning how much rested on her seemingly arbitrary choice – nor how big was the door which was to swing on such a small hinge!⁶²

I have read that Rowland Bingham, founder of the Sudan Interior Mission, was once seriously injured in a car accident. He was rushed to hospital in a critical condition, and the following day, when he regained consciousness, he asked the nurse what he was doing there. 'Don't try to talk now, just rest', she replied, 'You have been in an accident'. 'Accident!' Mr Bingham exclaimed, 'There are no accidents in the life of a Christian'.⁶³

No indeed, Mr Bingham, there are 'no accidents' ... no chance happenings ... only God-willed appointments.

One seventeenth century commentator expressed it well, if rather quaintly, when he said that the 'divine hand leads Ruth blindfold to the field of Boaz'.⁶⁴ I suspect that Naomi would later have said a hearty 'Amen' to that.⁶⁵

And then, lo and behold, right on cue,⁶⁶ the right man arrived, a man who just 'happened' both to feature in the Messianic line,⁶⁷ and to be a relative of Naomi's,⁶⁸ and who, for one reason or another, showed special favour and kindness to Ruth.⁶⁹

And, what is more, as Naomi was quick to note, this man (Boaz) was what was known as 'a kinsman-redeemer'.⁷⁰

The background to this particular description lies in the Law of God. Because, once the Promised Land had been apportioned between the tribes of Israel, each family took great pains to ensure that its allocated portion (its inheritance) remained within that family. Yet adverse circumstances (such as extreme poverty) could sometimes cause the land to be sold outside of the family. But the Law made provision for this by giving male family members the right and the responsibility to repurchase any family land which was sold. The nearest relatives to the original owner of the land were known as 'kinsman-redeemers'.⁷¹ And, in Naomi's case, Boaz just 'happened' to qualify for that role ... another essential link in our chain.

But it would be criminal for us to miss the delightful expression which Boaz used to describe Ruth's relationship to the Lord, picturing, as it does, a young bird snuggling up under its mother's wings for shelter and protection: 'the God of Israel, *under whose wings* you have come to take refuge!'

The next event was when Ruth consented to carry out Naomi's rather audacious scheme that, in accordance with an accepted custom,⁷² she (Ruth) should propose marriage to Boaz,⁷³ on the grounds, in particular, that he was 'a kinsman-redeemer'.⁷⁴ And I should stress, in passing, that there is no question of anything improper (still less immoral) having taken place in the threshing floor that night!⁷⁵

Boaz readily confirmed that he was indeed a 'kinsman-redeemer' to both Ruth and Naomi, but he needed to point out that Ruth's proposal raised two serious issues. The first was that it would involve him in more than simply marrying her;⁷⁶ for it would involve him also (as the very description 'kinsman-redeemer' implied) in 'redeeming' Naomi's land and inheritance. He would be required therefore, along with acquiring a wife for himself, to buy the family property.⁷⁷

The second serious issue was that there could well prove to be 'a legal impediment' to what she and Naomi had in mind, in that there was another male relative who was 'nearer' than Boaz, and who must therefore be offered first refusal.⁷⁸

But (as a further necessary link in our chain) Boaz made it clear to Ruth that, in the event of the 'nearer' relative's unwillingness to proceed with 'the package deal', he (Boaz) stood very ready to do so.⁷⁹

Which brings us to link number 9, and, having met Boaz previously in the harvest field in chapter 2, and at the threshing floor in chapter 3, we now follow him to the gate of the town in chapter 4. And there we join with the elders of the town to witness the unnamed 'nearer' kinsman's refusal to sign up to the full deal, in particular, to marrying a widow. For this would have meant that their first son would have inherited the redeemed property in the name of the deceased, and not in his name,⁸⁰ and that it (the property) would therefore wind up ultimately in the hands of Elimelech's family, rather than his own.

So, 'thank you, but no thank you', and, waiving his right to acquire both land and wife,⁸¹ the 'nearer' kinsman simply walked off the stage, or perhaps I should say, 'hopped' off the stage, having removed one of his sandals and handed it to Boaz – an ancient custom which signified that he relinquished his right to walk as an owner over the land which was now up for sale.

Phew, our last-but-one link remains intact!

And our final link brings us to the closing section of the book, which focuses, as I guess we should expect, to no small extent on happy Naomi. For, as we bid her farewell, we know that this dear lady is certainly no longer wanting to be addressed as 'Mara', her self-chosen name (meaning 'Bitter') back in chapter 1, which had broadcast her then belief that the Lord had dealt most 'bitterly' with her.⁸² But now she is well and truly 'Naomi' (meaning 'Pleasant') again, ready I have no doubt to herald the fact that now 'the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places'.⁸³

But, Naomi apart, the spotlight falls on three persons; on a bridegroom, on a bride, and (sometime later) on a baby. Ruth has come a long way; from the field of Boaz,⁸⁴ to the feet of Boaz,⁸⁵ and, now, to the family of Boaz;⁸⁶ from want to wealth; from poverty to plenty.

But, more important for our purpose this evening, Ruth, who had continued childless for many years when married to her first husband,⁸⁷ is now blessed by the Lord with conception.⁸⁸ And through her baby boy, Ruth is destined to become the great-grandmother of King David,⁸⁹ and, through him, herself to form a link in that golden chain which, as we noted earlier, stretches right on to the coming into the world of the Son of David,⁹⁰ to the coming of our great Kinsman-Redeemer,⁹¹ the Lord Jesus.

But surely we need to ask, 'What kind of young woman is this who was privileged both to have her name attached to one of the books of our Old Testament, and to have her name included in the opening chapter of our New Testament?' What beautiful traits of character, that is, do we find portrayed in the life of this converted Moabitess?

And I say 'beautiful *traits of character*' deliberately. For we are told nothing of Ruth's *physical* attributes and appearance. As far as the record goes, there is no evidence that she could match the staggering good looks⁹² (both in face and in figure) of a Rachel,⁹³ of an Abigail,⁹⁴ of a Bathsheba,⁹⁵ or of an Esther.⁹⁶ But we can say that Ruth possessed something of far greater value and importance than mere physical beauty; she possessed beauty of character.

And, when I scan through the biblical record, there are nine qualities and virtues which stand out to me above all others.⁹⁷

First, I observe her devotion and kindness to her mother-in-law Naomi.

Just think of Ruth's characteristic thoughtfulness and consideration which she showed for a lady now too old to remarry and to bear children,⁹⁸ and therefore presumably too old to stoop and to toil in any field. And this young Moabitess displayed complete disregard for herself as, in going herself to do the gleaning, she spared Naomi any reproachful or pitying gazes from those who had known her in her former days.⁹⁹

Yes, the women of Bethlehem were certainly right when they spoke to Naomi of Ruth's 'love' for her,¹⁰⁰ this, interestingly, being the only time that the word 'love' occurs in the whole book.¹⁰¹

And I note that Boaz himself explained to Ruth that, as far as he was concerned, his kindness to her simply reciprocated her kindness shown to Naomi.¹⁰²

And words simply fail me to speak of Ruth's earlier pledge of loyalty to her then-desolate mother-in-law.¹⁰³

Which leads me to note, secondly, her great personal courage.

For Ruth's devotion to Naomi involved her in no small cost. She left her own people to live in a foreign land, where, at best, she would be considered to be an outsider (as she was painfully aware¹⁰⁴), and, at worst, given the history of Israel's past military and religious encounters with the Moabites,¹⁰⁵ she would be considered to be an enemy.

And I observe that, when gathering and bringing her hoard of grain to Naomi, two small asides¹⁰⁶ serve to remind us that for a single woman to engage in such work (particularly, I guess, in the days of the Judges) was quite likely to expose her to *physical* danger.

Then, thirdly, I see more than one example of her willing submission to Naomi.

I note how Ruth would not so much as venture into a field to glean without the consent of her mother-in-law,¹⁰⁷ and how, later, in response to Naomi's audacious and somewhat hazardous plan, she simply replied, 'All that you say I will do'.¹⁰⁸

And this brings me – as number four – to admire her moral purity.

The fact that Naomi was prepared to urge on young Ruth the action she did is a measure of her confidence in her, as well as in her own near relative Boaz. Naomi knew that Ruth was made of very different stuff to some other young Moabite women of the past,¹⁰⁹ and, indeed, of very different stuff to the elder daughter of Lot, from whom Ruth was distantly descended.¹¹⁰

For number 5, I am impressed by Ruth's courtesy ...

... a quality in evidence from the moment she first entered the property of Boaz.¹¹¹

The Law of God provided for several categories of people who were authorised, during the harvest times in Israel, to glean (to gather and take away without charge) the ears of cereal grain (i) which were located at the perimeters or corners of the fields, (ii) which fell from the hands of the paid reapers, or (iii) which were simply overlooked and forgotten.¹¹² These categories were mainly the poor, the stranger (the foreigner, that is),¹¹³ and the widow.¹¹⁴

As you will have gathered, young Ruth met each of these criteria, possessing all three qualifications. And yet she took nothing for granted, and didn't presume to exercise her rights as a poor widow from a foreign land. By contrast, she made a point of, very respectfully, requesting prior permission before starting to glean, a point duly noted by the servant overseeing Boaz's property.¹¹⁵

And I note also the respect which she showed, in a manner appropriate to those days, to Boaz as the owner of the property where she was working.¹¹⁶

And courtesy and due respect¹¹⁷ cost no more in our day than they did in Ruth's ... and they often still count for a lot.

And, frankly, it would be difficult indeed for me to miss number 6; namely her diligence when busied with her chosen task.

For not only was she content to be the breadwinner for herself and Naomi,¹¹⁸ but she soon proved that she was no stranger to hard work. She made a good impression on her very first day by toiling all through its hours, stopping for only one short period, when the scorching heat of the mid-day sun compelled her to take cover in some shelter or lodge in the field.¹¹⁹

And I note that, having started 'at the beginning of barley harvest',¹²⁰ she worked right through until the end of wheat harvest,¹²¹ in all likelihood, a period of three months.¹²²

And, before leaving Boaz's property, I detect, as number 7, her modesty and her meekness.

When Ruth spoke to Boaz of her own unworthiness¹²³ (on the very first occasion they met), although we wouldn't realise it from our English translations, she actually engaged in a subtle play on words. For, whereas we probably read her words as 'Why have I found favour in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, a stranger?' (or something similar),¹²⁴ in point of fact, the words rendered 'take notice' and 'a stranger' sound very much alike¹²⁵ in Hebrew.¹²⁶

We might therefore loosely translate her question as 'Why have I found favour in your eyes, that you should *take notice* of me, *the unnoticed*'. But the main point for us to register is Ruth's modesty and self-confessed lack of status or importance.

And it is lovely to find that Ruth made no attempt to speak well of herself; others did that for her. Well does the Proverb say, 'Let another praise you, and not your own mouth'.¹²⁷

Again, even when she was later made aware of Boaz's relationship to Naomi and herself,¹²⁸ we do not read that she made any effort to exploit this to her own advantage, or to win any special favours.¹²⁹

And when I take stock of these seven sterling qualities, it comes as no surprise to me to find (and this is my number 8) that Ruth had a good testimony in the eyes of all around.

We can hardly miss that, although Ruth certainly wasn't an overseer in a local assembly,¹³⁰ and although her name wasn't Demetrius,¹³¹ she had a 'good report' from everyone outside.

At their very first meeting, Boaz could speak to Ruth of his having been told by others, not only of her kindness to Naomi since the death of her (Ruth's) husband, but also of how (Abraham-like¹³²) she had left her father's house and her native land, to emigrate to a place and a people which she had not known before.¹³³

In the closing chapter of the book, 'all the people who were in the gate',¹³⁴ together with 'the elders' of the town, go so far as to pronounce a blessing on Ruth, which, in one sense, raised her to the level of Rachel and Leah, who, together with their handmaidens, were the great mother figures in Israel.¹³⁵

And then, in the same chapter, the women of Bethlehem made it clear to Naomi that, in their estimation, Ruth was 'better' to her than seven sons.¹³⁶ And this, please note, in a culture in which sons were highly prized, and this, indeed, after Ruth had given to Naomi, in effect, 'a son' of her own.¹³⁷

But, in between (i) Boaz's first meeting with Ruth, and (ii) these (Ruth's two final commendations), he (Boaz) had assured Ruth that all his fellow townsmen had already come to recognise her as 'a virtuous woman',¹³⁸ as 'a woman of noble character',¹³⁹ 'a woman of excellence',¹⁴⁰ 'a woman of worth'¹⁴¹ (as the words have been variously translated).¹⁴²

Interestingly, that description of Ruth as 'a virtuous woman' is the same as the description given of 'the ideal wife' in the closing section of the book of Proverbs.¹⁴³ This is the section which assesses the value of such a wife as being 'far above rubies',¹⁴⁴ far above, that is, any jewels¹⁴⁵ or precious stones.¹⁴⁶

And, without a doubt, Ruth could easily have sat for a portrait of that ideal wife.¹⁴⁷ Small wonder Boaz married her! Following which, her husband, would, I am sure, have happily risen up to praise her in the words of that same inspired eulogy, 'Many women have done virtuously (or 'worthily, excellently' – the identical word again as is used of Ruth), but you excel ('you surpass', 'you eclipse') them all'.¹⁴⁸

And all this can be said, remember, about a young woman who came from a dark pagan background ... who came from among 'the people of Chemosh',¹⁴⁹ Chemosh being the principal deity of the Moabites,¹⁵⁰ to whom young children, among others, were sacrificed as offerings.¹⁵¹ But, happily for baby Obed, *his* life was safe, for his mother had long since 'turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God'.¹⁵²

And last, but by no means least, I must mention her faith.

Apart from Ruth's evident trust in her mother-in law, the actual text underscores her trust in the Lord, and, in particular, in the Lord as her refuge and protection. And we do well to listen to the words of the blessing which Boaz pronounced upon her: 'A full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge', or, as the King James Version and the Greek Old Testament render it, 'you have *come to trust*'.¹⁵³

And I find it fascinating that we owe *all four* Bible references to 'the shadow of' God's 'wings' to the pen of Ruth's great-grandson, David, in one or other of his psalms.¹⁵⁴

And, as we come towards the close of our meeting, I want to make something of an announcement. And you do well to listen carefully. 'The God of Ruth has not abdicated!' He is as much on the throne this evening as He was in the days of Ruth well over three thousand years ago.

But, just as Ruth at the time, so we today can see very little of the magnificent tapestry which God is weaving.¹⁵⁵

And He wants us to trust Him through the very darkest of times. In words attributed to Corrie Ten Boom, 'When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. *You sit still and trust the engineer*'.

And we can rest assured that, although, again as Ruth, we may not always be able to grasp the Lord's ways, we can always grasp His *hand!*

And, in bringing this evening's study to a close, I want to draw your attention once more to the words of Boaz concerning, 'the Lord God of Israel, *under whose wings you have come to trust*'.

I suspect that some of you at least will be familiar with a nineteenth century hymn¹⁵⁶ which builds on the picture of the believer abiding safely, as it were, 'under' the Lord's 'wings'.

The opening verse reads:

Under His wings I am safely abiding,
Though the night deepens and tempests are wild,
Still I can trust Him; I know He will keep me,
He has redeemed me, and I am His child.

Let us pray.

Notes

¹ Ruth 1. 22; 2. 2, 21; 4. 5, 10; cf. 1. 4; 2. 6.

² Three main characters: a destitute widow, a gentile foreigner, and a descendant of a prostitute. What a story!

³ We know that her father was alive when Ruth left Moab, Ruth 2. 11. As returning to a 'father's house' (Gen. 38. 11; Lev. 22. 13; Judg. 19. 2-3) would have been more usual, the reference here is probably to the women's quarters of the home where marriages might be arranged (Gen. 24. 28, 67; Song 3. 4; 8. 2).

⁴ 'Rest' here refers to the security in the ancient Near Eastern culture that marriage gave a woman.

⁵ This is the word of Ruth 2. 8, 21, 23; cf. the same word in 1 Sam. 14. 22; 31. 2 – and especially in 2 Sam. 20. 2.

⁶ See NIDOTTE, number 7003. This is the word of Isa. 53. 12 ('made intercession').

⁷ 'Your people ... your God'; cf. 2. 11-12.

⁸ Ruth's brief story is located sometime between 1370 BC and 1050 BC (probably towards the earlier part), whereas Esther's story occupies from 483 BC and 478 BC.

⁹ 'Susa' is the Greek name for the Hebrew 'Shushan'. Susa was the Persian winter capital. There were several other Persian capital cities, most notably that of Persepolis – which was the main residence of Xerxes (the 'Ahasuerus' of the book of Esther).

¹⁰ Num. 25. 1-2.

¹¹ Ezra 9. 1-2; 10. 10-11; Neh. 13. 23, 27.

¹² Pedantically 'an ancestress'.

¹³ Matt. 1, 5, 16.

¹⁴ Ruth 1. 1.

¹⁵ This spans from the date of Othniel's defeat of Cushan-rishathaim (1367 BC) to the time when Saul became king (1050 BC). The '320' years in the main text is slightly rounded.

¹⁶ See 1 Sam. 7. 6, 15; 8. 1-2. Although Samuel was born around the same time as Samson (about the beginning of the Philistine oppression), he outlived him by over 40 years.

¹⁷ This excludes, of course, Eli (1 Sam. 4. 18), Samuel and Samuel's sons, whose stories are all told in 1 Samuel.

¹⁸ Although not by scripture. Ehud, Gideon and Shamgar are not actually called 'judges', nor are they specifically said to have 'judged'. But I see no reason to exclude them from the category.

¹⁹ See Leon Wood, '*The Distressing Days of the Judges*', page 4.

²⁰ It was a time of apostasy, warfare, decline, violence, moral decay, and anarchy ... a time of moral and political chaos in Israel.

²¹ Josephus apparently reckons the Book of Ruth to be an appendix to Judges and does not count it separately in enumerating the total number of books in the Canon; he cites 'thirteen books' as covering 'from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes', *Contra Apion*, 1. 8.

²² Judg. 17. 7-9; 19. 2, 18; Ruth 1. 1-2.

²³ Probably a grandson of Moses; see Judg. 18. 30 and its textual variants.

²⁴ Judg. 17. 8, 12; 18. 19-20.

²⁵ Judg. 19. 1.

²⁶ Ruth 1. 2.

²⁷ See note 23 above. Also, in the second story, Phinehas, son of Eleazar was still high priest, Judg. 20. 28. Interestingly, neither story speaks of Ba'al worship, which was the primary sin of the period.

²⁸ With only three generations separating Boaz from David, Ruth 4. 13, 17. But I know of no supporting evidence for the claim made by Josephus: 'After the death of Samson, Eli the high priest was governor of the Israelites. Under him, when the country was afflicted with a famine, Elimelech of Bethlehem, which is a city of the tribe of Judah ... removed his habitation into the land of Moab', Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book 5, Chapter 9, Paragraph 1.

²⁹ The first story concerned mainly religion (a private sanctuary, images and improper priestly activity), and the second mainly sex and violence.

³⁰ Judg. 17. 7-8; Judg. 19. 1-2; Ruth 1. 1-2.

³¹ Judg. 17. 6; Judg. 19. 1; Judg. 21. 25.

³² The close of Ruth shows it was written not earlier than David's having become king which made his genealogy a matter of interest. An interval of perhaps 100 years therefore elapsed between the events and the record of them. By this time the custom mentioned in Ruth 4. 7 (of taking off the shoe) had fallen into disuse, so that the writer felt it necessary to explain the custom.

³³ Acts 13. 22; cf. 1 Sam. 13. 14. For David was God's choice of a king for His people, in contrast to Saul, who scripture makes clear was the people's choice.

³⁴ Ruth 4. 21-22.

³⁵ Which book, I note, contains no record of David's genealogy. It could be said therefore the story of Ruth provides the all-important connection between a time of near anarchy in Israel and the time of established monarchy there. 'The real issue in the biblical texts is what kind of monarchy was to exist or to be exercised, not whether Israel should have a monarchy or not. from the beginning, God had designs for kings in the lineage of Abraham', David M. Howard, Jr., *The Case For Kingship In The Old Testament Narrative Books And The Psalms*, TrinJ 9:1 (Spring 1988) 19+.

³⁶ Matt. 1. 1 – a connection which spans from the first chapter in the New Testament to the last, Rev. 22. 16.

³⁷ Gen. 3. 15.

³⁸ See John 12. 31.

³⁹ John 4. 42; 1 John 4. 14.

⁴⁰ As far as I can tell the whole of the recorded (enthraling and enchanting) story of Ruth was all over in twelve months or so:

(i) Time travel from Moab to Israel ... up to 10 days.

(ii) Beginning of barley harvest to end of wheat harvest ... about nine weeks. (Begin barley harvest, 1. 22 to begin of firstfruits, Lev. 23. 11. To end of wheat harvest, 2. 23. Seven weeks between begin of Passover and of Pentecost. Pentecost is the "the first-fruits of the wheat harvest", Lev. 23. 17. But longer to the 'end' (*) – probably 9 weeks in total.

(iii) Marriage proposal, acceptance, marriage and conception of child ... Not long, Ruth 3. 13, 18; 4. 1, 10, 13..

(iv) To birth of Obed ... nine months.

Total about one year.

(*)... or Barley harvest spanned many weeks, as did wheat harvest – so it may have been therefore weeks longer than seven. 'The barley harvest began as soon as the men had returned from the festivals of Passover (Abib 14th), Unleavened Bread (Abib 15-21st) and Firstfruits (on the day after the Sabbath with the 7 days of Unleavened Bread). The Feast of Weeks/Pentecost was fifty days after Firstfruits. The wheat harvest began after the men returned from the festival and probably continued through the next month and a half. It can be estimated that at this time Naomi and Ruth had been in Bethlehem at least three months',

http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/Ruth/Ruth_Lesson_2.htm ... and ... According to the Midrash Rabbah (5:11), R. Samuel b. Nahman said: From the beginning of the barley harvest until the end of the wheat harvest is three months. http://images.shulcloud.com/618/uploads/PDFs/Divrei_Torah/midrashonruth2.pdf.

[But see ... 'On the 50th day took place the Feast of Pentecost, also called the Feast of Weeks (Exo_34:22, Deu_16:10), the Feast of Harvest (Exo_23:16), and the Day of First-fruits (Num_28:26). It thus took place at the end of the reaping season, when all the wheat and barley had been cut and gathered, and marked especially the termination of the wheat harvest (wheat being the last of the cereals to ripen in Palestine)'. A. W. F. Blunt, in Hastings BD.]

⁴¹ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 5, Chapter 9, Paragraph 4.

42 Compare the words of William Cowper's hymn:

*God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform ...*

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
*Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*

43 In the book of Judges, the angel of the Lord appears (i) to rebuke idolatry, 2. 1-4, (ii) to call Gideon, 6. 11-22, and (iii) to consecrate Samson, 13. 3-21.

44 'God' occurs three times, and 'Lord' eighteen times.

45 Ruth 1. 6.

46 Ruth 4. 13.

47 Ruth 1. 8.

48 Ruth 2. 12.

49 Ruth 4. 11.

50 There is no event in the book of Ruth where a secular historian would recognize God's intervention or supernatural activity. Yet this is precisely the point: God brings about His plan by directing seeming ordinary events in unseen ways.

51 Rev. 19. 16.

52 The chain consists, in order, of:

1. A famine in Israel, and Elimelech's decision to go to Moab – Ruth 1. 1.
2. The marriage of Elimelech's son Mahlon to Ruth the Moabitess, and the death of the three Israelite menfolk – Ruth 1. 2-4.
3. The Lord's ending the famine in Israel, and Naomi's consequent decision to return to the land of Judah – Ruth 1. 6.
4. Ruth's devotion and attachment to Naomi – Ruth 1. 7-22a.
5. The timing of Naomi and Ruth's arrival at Bethlehem; 'in the beginning of barley harvest' – Ruth 1. 22.
6. Ruth's 'accidental' choice of the right 'part of' the right field – Ruth 2. 3.
7. The timely arrival of Boaz, who just happened to be both in the Messianic line and a close relative of Naomi's, and the favour which he showed to Ruth – Ruth 2. 4-20.
8. Ruth's willingness to carry out Naomi's instructions about proposing marriage to Boaz, and his (conditional) acceptance of her proposal – Ruth 3. 1-18.
9. The refusal by the 'nearer' kinsman to exercise his prior right to purchase Naomi's land and with it to marry Ruth – Ruth 4. 1-10.
10. Ruth's conception, and the birth of a son – Ruth 4. 13.

53 Ruth 1. 1.

54 The Holy Spirit does not comment on what Elimelech did. But the Rabbis would not permit somebody to emigrate even to escape pangs of famine. 'Our Rabbis taught: One should always live in the Land of Israel, even in a town most of whose inhabitants are idolaters, but let no one live outside the Land, even in a town most of whose inhabitants are Israelites; for whoever lives in the Land of Israel may be considered to have a God, but whoever lives outside the Land may be regarded as one who has no God. For it is said in Scripture, To give you the Land of Canaan, to be your God. Has he, then, who does not live in the Land, no God? But [this is what the text intended] to tell you, that whoever lives outside the Land may be regarded as one who worships idols. Similarly it was said in Scripture in [the story of] David, For they have driven me out this day that I should not cleave to the inheritance of the Lord, saying: Go, serve other gods [1 Sam. 26. 19]. Now, whoever said to David, 'Serve other gods'? But [the text intended] to tell you that whoever lives outside the Land may be regarded as one who worships idols', *Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Kethuboth. Folio 110b* – accessed at ...

http://www.come-and-hear.com/kethuboth/kethuboth_110.html#PARTb.

- ⁵⁵ Isa. 16. 6-10. 'The fertility of [Moab] in ancient times is indicated by the numerous towns and villages known to have existed there ... the land [was] good pasture ground for cattle and sheep', The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia.
- ⁵⁶ Ruth 1. 2-4.
- ⁵⁷ We must not overlook the importance of the three deaths. Obviously if Mahlon hadn't died there would have been no marriage between Ruth and Boaz. But neither would there have been that marriage if Chilion had not died. Because, according to the Law, it would have been for him to marry Ruth that the firstborn should continue Mahlon's name, Deut. 25. 5-6 – and then, no Boaz (this assumes that, in these circumstances, the Lord would permit a man to have more than one wife). It is impossible to speculate what would have happened if Elimelech had not died, but it is unlikely that Ruth would have accompanied the couple back to Bethlehem – even if they had gone back – or that she would have then gone gleaning.
- ⁵⁸ Ruth 1. 6. Some may feel that Naomi should have said to them what Moses said to his father-in-law, 'Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel' (Num. 10:29, KJV).
- ⁵⁹ Ruth 1. 7-22a.
- ⁶⁰ Ruth 1. 22.
- ⁶¹ Ruth 2. 3.
- ⁶² It makes me think of how one Bible translation renders the first verse of Proverbs 27 ... 'Each day brings its own surprises', Prov. 27. 1 CEV.
- ⁶³ <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/christia/cancer.htm>.
- ⁶⁴ Bishop Hall, '*Contemplations on the Historical Passages of the Old and New Testaments*'.
- ⁶⁵ Ruth 2. 20.
- ⁶⁶ For other examples of 'perfect timing', see Gen. 24. 15; 45. 7; 2 Sam. 15. 32; Esther 6. 1.
- ⁶⁷ Matt. 1. 5, 16.
- ⁶⁸ Ruth 2. 1, 20.
- ⁶⁹ Ruth 2. 4-20.
- ⁷⁰ Ruth 2. 20 ESV.
- ⁷¹ Lev. 25. 25-34.
- ⁷² Ezek. 16. 8; cf. Deut. 27. 20. 'Spreading a skirt over someone was a customary way of committing to marry and to provide for someone in that culture', Thomas Constable. 'The custom of placing the corner of a garment over a maiden as a symbol of marriage is known among the Arabs', *Expositor's Bible Commentary*.
- ⁷³ Given that the two harvests were now over, Ruth 2. 23, in one sense it was now or never. Ruth's request signalled her willingness to become his wife.
- ⁷⁴ Ruth 3. 9.
- ⁷⁵ Unlike the case of Lot in Genesis 19, this is not a case of a man in a drunken stupor, but a contented man at peace. Given the spiritual climate in Israel in the period of the Judges, many men might have welcomed the night visit of a woman and accepted her presence as an offer of sexual favours. But not so Boaz.
- ⁷⁶ Mahlon's brother was dead, of course, so that there was no brother to fulfil the requirements of Deut. 25. 5-6. Boaz was therefore able to step in and to marry Mahlon's widow – after the 'nearer' relative stood aside. To any Jew it was a dreadful prospect to die without a son to carry on his name; see Jer. 11. 19; Psa. 83. 4 – and cf. Isa. 53. 8 (now His name is remembered!) For, if there were no sons to carry on his name it would be as if he had never lived ... his name would go down into the dust with him. Although specifically expressed in relation only to brothers, it apparently extended to other male relatives as well, when no living brothers were available to raise up children of the childless relative. Tamar (like Ruth an ancestor of the Messiah) was rewarded in requesting her father-in-law to be her kinsman-redeemer when no brothers were available, Gen. 38. 11, 14, 26.

⁷⁷ Ruth 4. 3-5. Although the required Levirite marriage (following the death of one of two brothers) and the required redemption of the property of a poor (not deceased) family member were two entirely separate matters in the Law (Deut. 25. 5-6 – a biological brother; to continue a name – and Lev. 25. 25 – nearest male relative, to keep the property in the family), clearly they were tied together in this instance. Apart from any other considerations, Boaz's statement was not contested by either the other kinsman or the town's elders. This means either that the linking of the two was now generally accepted by all, or that Naomi had stipulated this as a condition of sale of her property. (Note especially the tying of the two together at the close of verse 5; the marriage was necessary to provide a son who could inherit the property in his father's name.) In Ruth 3. 12-13 it is made clear that marrying Ruth involved redeeming the land; in Ruth 4. 5 it is made clear that redeeming the land involves marrying Ruth. That is, that apparently the marriage rights are tied to ownership of the land of the deceased husband. ". . . it had become a traditional custom to require the Levirate marriage of the redeemer of the portion of the deceased relative, not only that the landed possession might be permanently retained in the family, but also that the family itself might not be suffered to die out." Keil and Delitzsch, p. 482. The family line of Elimelech lacks an heir and therefore teeters perilously on the brink of annihilation.

The background details are unclear. The impression given is that Naomi still possessed the land. But why did Naomi wait until now to sell it, and why did Ruth need to stoop to gleaning to support them? The latter most likely because they had arrived at the time of harvest, when it was far too late to sow any seed and they therefore had no food. Also Naomi may well have been physically unable to cultivate the land because there was no man in the family and she couldn't afford to employ workers. The land may well have been left to go wild over the years; Elimelech had not expected to be absent for long – 'went to sojourn', v. 1.

It is just possible that Naomi had already sold it (it is claimed that the Hebrew of Ruth 4. 3 will allow this) and that it now needed to be redeemed back to the family; the situation envisaged in Lev. 25. But when? If before she and Elimelech had left Bethlehem, it was Elimelech who would have sold it. On her return then? But if she had received a purchase price why had Ruth needed to glean? If the land now needed to be 'redeemed' from a third-party, why does the 'wife of the deceased' issue surface now, and not at the time of the original sale?

I think it most likely that she is now having to sell it. (Note Thomas Constable's comments on Ruth 4. 1-6.)

⁷⁸ Ruth 3. 12-13.

⁷⁹ Interestingly in this section of the book both Naomi and Boaz are used by the Lord to set in train the answers to their earlier prayers: Ruth 3. 1 with Ruth 1. 9; and Ruth 3. 9, 13 with Ruth 2. 12 (where the words 'wings' and 'skirt' translate the same Hebrew word).

⁸⁰ Compare, 'Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother". But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his. So whenever he went in to his brother's wife he would waste the semen on the ground, so as not to give offspring to his brother', Gen. 38. 8-9.

⁸¹ He then 'waved' farewell to the page of scripture and to history.

⁸² Ruth 1. 20-21. Notice where Naomi had then focused. In these two verses she refers to herself eight times; "me, me, me, I, me, me, me, me". She had lost her spouse, her sons, her home, and her means of income. When life feels empty, it's easy to lick our wounds.

⁸³ Psa. 16. 6 – where the word 'pleasant' is effectively the same as the name 'Naomi'. See NIDOTTE, number 5838 in volume 3 on pages 121-122.

⁸⁴ Ruth 2. 3.

⁸⁵ Ruth 3. 7.

⁸⁶ Ruth 4. 13.

⁸⁷ Ruth 1. 2-5. The Hebrew is not clear whether the two sons lived in Moab for ten years or whether they were married for ten years before their deaths.

It is important to note, that, if Mahlon had not died childless, there would have been no need for a kinsman redeemer to raise up a son to carry on his name.

⁸⁸ Ruth 4. 13.

⁸⁹ Ruth 4. 17, 21-22.

⁹⁰ Cf. God's 'Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh', Rom. 1. 3. Also 2 Tim. 2. 8.

⁹¹ Heb. 2. 14-15; 9. 12.

⁹² Natural attractiveness.

⁹³ Gen. 29. 17.

⁹⁴ 1 Sam. 25. 3.

⁹⁵ 2 Sam. 11. 2.

⁹⁶ Esth. 2. 7.

⁹⁷ Ruth's qualities and virtues which stand out most to me:

1. Her devotion and kindness.
2. Her great personal courage.
3. Her willingness to submit (to Naomi).
4. Her moral purity.
5. Her courtesy.
6. Her diligence.
7. Her modesty.
8. Her good testimony.
9. Her faith.

⁹⁸ Ruth 1. 12.

⁹⁹ Cf. Ruth 1. 19.

¹⁰⁰ Ruth 4. 15.

¹⁰¹ Although it is a very common word in the Old Testament, occurring 212 times.

¹⁰² Ruth 2. 10-11.

¹⁰³ Ruth 1. 16-17.

¹⁰⁴ Ruth 2. 10.

¹⁰⁵ Num. 25. 1; Judg. 3. 14.

¹⁰⁶ Boaz said to Ruth, '... have I not charged the young men *not to touch you?*', Ruth 2. 9; Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, 'It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, *lest* in another field *you be assaulted*'. Ruth 2. 22.

¹⁰⁷ Ruth 2. 2-3.

¹⁰⁸ Ruth 3. 4-5.

¹⁰⁹ Num. 25. 1.

¹¹⁰ Gen. 19. 31-37. Interestingly, the action of the old man in Judges 19. 24, of offering to bring out his daughter, and of the action of the Levite in actually bringing out his concubine, v. 25, were both reminiscent of the action of Lot back in Gen. 19. 8 – and Lot was a distant ancestor of Ruth.

¹¹¹ Ruth 2. 6-7.

¹¹² It was God's way of taking care of the poor and needy people of that day. He didn't encourage them to beg, or make them recipients of charity. He gave them something to do. They had to work for what they got. charitable giving needs to be wise so as not to encourage recipients to be idle.

¹¹³ Lev. 19. 9-10; 23. 22.

¹¹⁴ Deut. 24. 19.

¹¹⁵ Ruth 2. 7a.

¹¹⁶ 'She fell on her face, bowing to the ground', Ruth 2. 10.

¹¹⁷ Notice also the respect she showed to Boaz; 'she fell on her face, bowing to the ground', Ruth 2. 10.

¹¹⁸ Ruth 2. 2.

¹¹⁹ Ruth 2. 7b; cf. Isa. 1. 8.

¹²⁰ Ruth 1. 22.

¹²¹ Ruth 2. 23.

¹²² According to the Gezer calendar—the oldest-known calendar yet found in Palestine—barley harvest was the eighth month of the agricultural calendar (i.e., April/May). Passover (22-23 April 2016) marks the start of the barley harvest in Israel. <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/holidays/passover>.

¹²³ Ruth 2. 10; Cf. 1 Sam. 18. 18; 2 Sam. 7. 18.

¹²⁴ Boaz may have been influenced by the fact that one of his ancestors (not his mother!) was Rahab, the prostitute of Jericho in Canaan, Matt. 1. 5.

'Not his mother' ... We know that, from the Exodus to the birth of David was 406 years, because it was 480 years from the Exodus to the 4th year of Solomon, 1 Kings 6. 1, and we must take away 70 years for David's life (2 Sam. 5. 4), and 4 years of Solomon's reign). Therefore it was 366 years from the conquest/end of the wilderness to the birth of David. But, if the genealogy of Ruth 4. 21 is complete, we have only four 'generations' to cover the 366 years; viz. Salmon up to the age at which he begat Boaz, Boaz up to the age at which he begat Obed (though, in his case, he was not a young man), Obed up to the age at which he begat Jesse, and Jesse up to the age at which he begat David. That is, on average these four men must have been 94 years old before the begat their firstborn son. This requires four Abraham-type miracles! Moses saw 70 as the normal life expectancy of a man, Psa. 90. 10, and David died aged 70. The evidence is that there are some 7 or 8 missing generations – giving 11 or 12 in all – each begetting on average at a little over 30 years of age (although some allowance must be made for Boaz fathering Obed late in life).

As I see it, the wording of Ruth 4. 17 requires direct and immediate descent from Boaz to David. Therefore the missing generations MUST come between Salmon and Boaz. That is Rahab was Boaz's quite distant ancestor, and certainly not his mother! (Cf. just as Eve was not immediately 'the mother of all the living', Gen. 3. 20.)

"The Greek verb translated "was the father of" ['begat', KJV]... does not require immediate relationship but often means something like "was the ancestor of" or "became the progenitor of", D. A. Carson, Matthew, The Expositor's Bible Commentary.

See ... <http://www.addeiglioriam.org/commentary/ot-history/ruth-genealogies.htm>.

Also it has been noted that:

"There are many parallels between the story of Boaz and Ruth, and the story of Perez's parents, Judah and Tamar (Gen. 38) [Matt. 1. 3]:

- Ruth and Tamar were both foreigners who had married into Israel.
 - The first husbands of both women died leaving them widows.
 - Both women participated in levirate marriages.
 - Tamar seduced Judah under the cover of a disguise, but Ruth encouraged Boaz under the cover of night.
 - When Judah and Tamar appeared before a public tribunal, they were ashamed and condemned, but when Boaz and Ruth did so, they received praise and blessing.
 - In both cases, the husbands were considerably older than the wives.
 - Both women, however, bore sons in the Davidic messianic line: Ruth honourably and Tamar dishonourably. Tamar bore Perez, and Ruth bore Obed (lit. "he who serves"; v. 21).
- Like Perez, Boaz was the descendant of an Israelite father, Salmon, and a Canaanite former prostitute, Rahab (Matt. 1:5)".

¹²⁵ Paronomasia is a form of word play that exploits similar-sounding words.

¹²⁶ See the *Cambridge Bible* on Ruth 2. 10.

¹²⁷ Prov. 27. 2; cf. 2 Cor. 10. 18.

¹²⁸ Ruth 2. 20.

¹²⁹ See Ruth 2. 23.

¹³⁰ 1 Timothy 3. 7.

¹³¹ 3 John 12.

¹³² Gen. 12. 1, Acts 7. 2-3; Heb. 11. 8. Both were 'strangers', Gen. 23. 4; Ruth 2. 10.

¹³³ Ruth 2. 11.

¹³⁴ And that expression 'all the people that were in the gate' may well indicate that these were the influential folk in the town.

¹³⁵ Ruth 4. 11.

¹³⁶ Ruth 4. 15.

¹³⁷ Ruth 4. 17. Naomi didn't realise it, but the baby which she nursed would not only keep alive her family name, but his name would actually feature on the pages of the 'sacred scriptures' – of both Old and New Testaments.

¹³⁸ Ruth 3. 11.

¹³⁹ NIV.

¹⁴⁰ NASB.

¹⁴¹ JND.

¹⁴² Interestingly, the same Hebrew word describes Boaz in Ruth 2. 1. Ruth, that is, was a suitable wife for Boaz. They were two of a kind.

¹⁴³ The oracle taught to King Lemuel by his mother, Proverbs 31. 10-31, forms an acrostic poem. Each verse begins with one of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet in order. Such a device aided the Hebrew reader in memorizing this passage.

¹⁴⁴ KJV, NKJV, RV, JND, ASV, JPS, YLT. This translation is favoured by the use of the word in Lam. 4. 7 ...'they were more *ruddy* in body than *rubies*'.

¹⁴⁵ ESV, ISV, NASB, GNB. The word is translated 'pearls' in the Geneva Bible and by K&D.

¹⁴⁶ LXX.

¹⁴⁷ 'She works willingly with her hands ... provides for her household ... strength and dignity are her clothing ... the law of kindness is on her tongue ... she does not eat the bread of idleness', Prov. 31. 13, 15, 25, 26, 27.

¹⁴⁸ Prov. 31. 28-29.

¹⁴⁹ Num. 21. 29; Jer. 48. 46.

¹⁵⁰ Ruth 1. 15. 'Chemosh the abomination of Moab', 1 Kings 11. 7; 2 Kings 23. 12.

¹⁵¹ 'The sacrifice of children as a burnt-offering was part of his worship (2 Ki. 3:27)', IVP New Bible Dictionary, page 182. 'Chemosh required human sacrifices as god of war; [King] Mesha, after taking Ataroth, offered all the warriors in sacrifice', *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*, article Chemosh.

¹⁵² 1 Thess. 1. 9; Ruth 1. 16; 2. 12.

¹⁵³ Ruth 2. 12.

¹⁵⁴ The references are:

(i) 'Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of your wings', Psalm 17. 8 ('of David').

(ii) 'The children of men put their trust under the shadow of your wings', Psa. 36. 7 ('of David').

(iii) 'My soul trusts in you: yea, in the shadow of your wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities pass by', Psa. 57. 1 ('of David'). [Note that David's confidence lay in God's protection, and not in 'the cave!']

(iv) 'Because you have been my help, therefore in the shadow of your wings will I rejoice', Psa. 63. 7 ('of David').

Cf. Psa. 91. 4.

¹⁵⁵ But, although His ways are inscrutable, Rom. 11. 33, His work is perfect, Deut. 32. 4.

¹⁵⁶ The lyrics of the hymn 'Under His wings' were written by William Orcutt Cushing (31 December 1823 to 19 October 1902). Mr Cushing once gave all of his life savings (\$1,000) to a blind girl in order for her to receive an education. The tune for the hymn was composed by Ira Sankey. The hymn itself sprang out of Mr Cushing's personal suffering, and was largely suggested by the words of Psalm 17, 8, 'Hide me under the shadow of your wings'. See ... <http://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/william-o-cushing-sought-to-follow-christ-11630395.html>.