

The Book of Ruth is arguably the most charming narrative in the entire Bible. Beyond its spiritual significance, it is frequently studied in university literature courses for its structural elegance and poetic economy. In many respects, it is the ultimate love story—not just because of the romance between Ruth and Boaz, but because it mirrors a greater love story written in blood on a Roman cross two thousand years ago.

For the Church, Ruth is one of the most significant books in the Old Testament. Traditionally, rabbis read it during the Feast of Pentecost—the very day the Church was born. It explains, with unparalleled clarity, the role of the *Goel*, or Kinsman-Redeemer, providing an essential prerequisite for understanding the "Title Deed of the Earth" in Revelation 5.

The Four Stages of Love

The book unfolds in four distinct movements:

1. Chapter 1: Love's Resolve – Ruth cleaves to Naomi.
2. Chapter 2: Love's Response – Ruth gleans in the fields.
3. Chapter 3: Love's Request – The pivotal scene at the threshing floor.
4. Chapter 4: Love's Reward – The redemption of the land and the bride.

From Famine to Faith

The story begins "in the days when the judges ruled," a dark period of Israel's history marked by spiritual chaos. Famine drives a family from Bethlehem to Moab. The names here are telling: Elimelech means "God is my King," yet he leaves the Bread-house (Bethlehem) for a pagan land. His wife is Naomi ("Pleasant"), and their sons are Mahlon ("Sickly") and Chilion ("Puny").

Within ten years, all the men are dead, leaving Naomi destitute in a foreign land. When she hears that the Lord has visited Bethlehem with food, she decides to return. While her daughter-in-law Orpah remains in Moab, Ruth ("Desirable") utters one of the most famous vows in history:

"Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." (Ruth 1:16)

The Law of the Field

In Chapter 2, Ruth begins "gleaning"—a form of biblical welfare. According to the Law, harvesters could only pass through a field once; whatever was missed was left for the poor and the widow. By "hap," Ruth ends up in the field of Boaz ("In Him is Strength"), a wealthy and righteous landowner.

Boaz is immediately struck by her character. He instructs his young men to protect her and tells them to "drop handfuls of purpose" for her to find. This connection is vital because Boaz is a *Kinsman* to Naomi's late husband.

The Mystery of the Threshing Floor

In Chapter 3, Naomi realizes they have an opportunity for redemption. She instructs Ruth to visit the threshing floor at night. In ancient culture, the "hem" of a garment represented one's authority and identity. When Ruth asks Boaz to "spread your skirt over me," she isn't acting immodestly; she is formally invoking the Law of the Levirate Marriage, asking him to take her under his protection and redeem her family's line.

Boaz is honored but notes a legal hurdle: there is a "nearer kinsman" with the first right of refusal. He sends Ruth home with six measures of barley—a "down payment" and a signal to Naomi that he will not rest until the matter is settled.

The Public Redemption

The climax occurs at the city gate. Boaz confronts the nearer kinsman regarding Naomi's land. The kinsman is willing to buy the land, but when Boaz mentions that the deal includes marrying Ruth the Moabitess, the man balks, fearing it will "mar his own inheritance." He hands Boaz his shoe—a legal symbol of relinquishing his right.

Boaz then "purchases" Ruth as his bride. From this union comes a son, Obed, who becomes the grandfather of King David. This lineage is a miracle of grace: Ruth was a Gentile from a cursed nation, yet she becomes the great-grandmother of Israel's greatest king and an ancestress of the Messiah.

The Typology: A Shadow of Christ

The Book of Ruth serves as a prophetic "type" of the Gospel:

- **Boaz is the Kinsman-Redeemer (The Goel).** To qualify, he had to be:
 1. A blood relative.
 2. Able to pay the price.
 3. Willing to redeem.
- **Naomi typifies Israel:** Mourning and out of the land, she is eventually brought back to her inheritance through the work of the Redeemer.
- **Ruth typifies the Church:** The Gentile bride who finds grace in the eyes of the Lord of the Harvest.

What the Law could not do (represented by the first kinsman who could not redeem without ruining his inheritance), Grace did through Boaz.

Just as Ruth had to move toward Boaz at the threshing floor, we are invited to respond to our Redeemer. He is our Advocate, our Intercessor, and our Goel.