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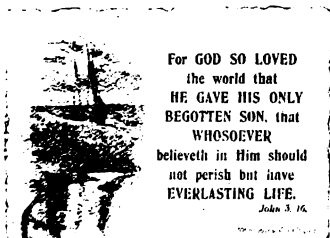
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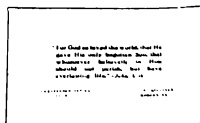
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THE BOOK OF RUTH.

CHAPTER II.

RUTH LOVED.

IN the preceding chapter we have considered, somewhat in detail, the various circumstances which led up to the finding of Ruth the Moabitess.

We will now devote ourselves to the study of Ruth herself, for the remaining portion of the sacred record is taken up with the details of the happenings of her life.

Naomi's faithfulness in warning these two Moabish maidens is amply rewarded in the sevenfold confession of allegiance from the lips of Ruth.

**Intreat me not to leave thee,
Whither thou goest—I will go.
Where thou lodgest—I will lodge.
Thy people shall be—my people.
And thy God—my God.
Where thou diest—will I die,
and there will I be buried.** (Ruth 1. 16, 26.)

Would that there was more of this spirit about to-day! How delightful it is to find those of the younger generation stedfastly cleaving to those older in years and spiritual experience, especially when the latter are in happy communion with the mind of their Lord. May those of us who are "the younger" ever seek the closest fellowship with those whom God has been pleased to place as elders in our midst. This characteristic of Ruth is even more marked as we proceed, for whereas in chapter i. her words are full of I; "I will go," "I will lodge"; in the subsequent chapters we find her will entirely subservient to Naomi's, for only with her consent and approval does she embark upon her varied ways. See c. 2. v. 2. "Let me now go." c. 3. v. 5. "All that thou sayest unto me I will do." We know from the end of the story how her obedience was

honoured by God, for she was brought into untold blessing, and her name has been recorded upon the page of Holy Writ. Dear young christian, or older one too for that matter, do you always seek the counsel, fellowship and advice of your fellow believers before taking any fresh step in your life's pathway? It is a course which carries with it the blessing of the Lord.

So they two went until they came TO Bethlehem . . . All the city was moved. (C. 1. v. 19.)

Naomi, who was verily "OF" Bethlehem now comes "TO" Bethlehem. She was "OF" Bethlehem all the while she was in Moab, but to come "TO" that city altered her entire life. We here see the difference between **being** a Christian and **living** the Christian life. Every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ **is** a Christian, but let my reader answer personally, as before the Lord, this question:

Do I LIVE the Christian life?

Just as all the city was moved on their account, so in Heaven there is rejoicing over the backslider restored or the lost one found (Luke 15. 7). They reached Bethlehem at the beginning of Barley Harvest, which was a very suitable moment, indeed. Not only as far as they were personally concerned, but also as a type, for it has a most striking message. The Barley was the first of the harvests, and in accordance with God's command in Lev. 23. 10 the people would be offering the Sheaf of the First-fruits when Ruth and Naomi arrived at **THE BEGINNING** of Barley harvest. This sheaf of firstfruits was always offered on the morrow after the Sabbath following the Passover and it spoke of Resurrection. For was it not on the first day of the week (the morrow after the Sabbath) immediately following the Passover feast, that the blessed Saviour rose from the Tomb, and in 1 Cor. 15. 20-23, we read

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

He Himself is called "The First-fruits." This season of the year was typical in the Divine plan of the Resurrection of Christ, and thus upon the ground of Resurrection, Ruth takes her place in the land.

We have previously noted that under the Law, Ruth had no claim nor place in Bethlehem, but there was a provision made for the poor and the stranger in the time of Harvest, and she casts herself entirely upon the Grace of God in thus providing ears of corn for those who had NO RIGHT to the full harvest.

"When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest . . . thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger. I am the Lord your God." (Lev. 19. 9,10.)

"And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, 'Let me now go to the field and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace'." (Ruth 2. 2.)

How good is the Lord even to those who are not His people. Those who are unconverted have much to thank God for, for He gives the sunshine and the rain, He provides their food and clothing, yet how ungrateful oft-times they are.

In the first chapter of our Book, Ruth is found in Moab. In the second we find her learning something about a person. In chapter three she is at the feet of that person, and in chapter four he purchases her unto himself (Ruth 4. 10). May I suggest that the experience of God's dear people to-day oft-times, if not always, in a greater or lesser degree, follows this course. First we are found of God and by His Holy Spirit exercised as to our standing and condition before Him. Then, over a course of time, perhaps weeks, months or maybe years, we gradually and slowly get to know and appreciate in some measure the Person whom God has set forth as the Saviour—the Lord Jesus Christ—His only begotten Son. The degree of that knowledge doubtless varies in each individual case, according to our environment and Christian surroundings. With many of us, as we shall see was the case with Ruth, we

found ourselves much in the company of His reapers and even at times we were present at those gatherings where the Lord Himself was, but whilst all that tended, as in the case of Ruth, to instruct us more and more in a knowledge of our Kinsman Redeemer yet it took us a long while before we finally decided to cast ourselves solely and wholly at His feet and leave our case entirely in His able hands. It is just possible that the one now reading these lines, has not yet even gone to that extent. You have probably been brought up in a Christian home, at any rate you have had the benefit of Christian environment and you have oft-times been with "the reapers of the whitened harvest." You have heard them speak well of their Lord, and whilst you know that you really are a stranger to grace and to God, yet you are deeply concerned about these matters and you have a yearning after better things. May the unfolding of these divine truths lead you, as it did Ruth to the feet of the One who is both ABLE and WILLING to save. We do well to observe the way that Ruth's acquaintance with Boaz grows and how that he does not redeem her the first time she meets him. He deals with her as seems best to himself and the redemption comes in its own place. We, alas, oft-times as Gospel preachers are much too eager to get to the redemption point, not that one would belittle such an important matter, but do we not overlook the fact that **men** and women to-day, as ever, need to **know** something about the One who is offered to them as their Saviour before they can be expected to yield themselves to Him. Do we sufficiently tell them **about** the Person of the Saviour, or do we merely urge them to "Come to Jesus"?

It was the growing knowledge that Ruth had of Boaz that finally brought her to her decision, and one ventures to suggest that if, on the Gospel preacher's part there was more expounding of the wonderful Person and Love of Christ, there would, on the sinner's part, be more ready response. We

should see men and women coming to Christ for salvation, not in response to some emotional appeal, or strong persuasive conversation, but out of sheer desire to have such an One as their Saviour. This, I believe, is the true message of the 2nd chapter of our study. Ruth discovers that although she is a stranger and barred by Law from much, yet there is a person in whose eyes she has found grace, yea, and Who, wonder of wonders, really loves and cares for her. Let us then seek to see how all this came about.

And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and her hap was to light on the part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech. (Ruth c. 2, v. 3.)

HER HAP WAS.

In other words, "it so happened." We should have called it "a chance happening." "A coincidence" perhaps, but it was in reality one of those Divine over-rulings which alter the very course of our lives. They come to all of us, to reader and writer alike. Perhaps the very fact of this little book coming into your hand is one of these divine over-rulings, for its message may mean in your life what the "lighting on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz" meant to Ruth (c. 2. v. 3). May it be so, is the writer's sincere prayer.

Who was this Boaz, and what has he to do with the story? He was of the kindred of Elimelech. In other words, he was a relation by birth of that one who departed from Bethlehem-Judah for a strange country, but whilst he was indeed a kinsman by birth, yet he was in no way linked with Elimelech in his disastrous choice to go down to Moab. Boaz did not depart from the land, he remained in it and kept his inheritance complete, whilst Elimelech forfeited his. These two characteristics were the essential qualifications of a Kinsman-redeemer according to the Law of the Lord. He had

- (1) To be related by birth.
- (2) Not related to the catastrophe.

We shall have more to say about this topic in chapter III., for the present it will suffice us to observe that this one named Boaz is a most clear type of the Lord Himself, and these two qualifications, as we shall see presently, are fulfilled in the Person of the Saviour in a glorious manner. The very name of Boaz, meaning "In him is strength," clearly speaks of Christ.

Ruth now finds herself in the fields of Boaz and with the approval and consent of the reapers she gleans her ears of corn. May I suggest that this illustrates in a very beautiful manner the case of an earnest-seeker after light finding his or her way into a place where believers gather together either for worship, Bible study or the preaching of the Gospel. That one asks to be allowed to come and hear what there is to be said and seeks to gather up gleanings from such gatherings; for, after all, gleanings they can only gather. There will be much which to them is strange and unintelligible, but here and there, there will be something which will prove as gleanings to the gleaner.

"WHOSE DAMSEL IS THIS?"

Just here may we say a word to those who are "set over the reapers." In other words, to those who are elders in the Church of God. Doubtless, "the servant that was set over the Reapers" speaks firstly of the Holy Spirit of God who is ever acquainted with all and everything that enters any assembly of God's people, for He knows every heart and them that are His, and watches with a jealous care the coming of the stranger into such a gathering. But in a secondary sense "the servant" typifies the elders in the assembly who "care for the flock." May I lovingly entreat them to consider this aspect of our subject. If our Lord, the Divine Boaz, was to ask of you "whose damsel is this?" concerning any newcomer into the local gathering, could you give as clear and concise an answer regarding the history of that one as did this servant

of old? One fears that in many cases, especially with regard to the worship meeting, there is not sufficient care exercised in finding out, as the servant did here, the past history of any stranger who may come in.

And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, it is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab. (Ruth c, 2, v, 6)

Whilst there is a place at the Lord's Table for every true child of God, yet none but His own blood-bought people have a place there. Others may come but they must take a stranger's place, and by an observation of the feast they may be brought into a blessed knowledge of the truth and an acknowledging that God is verily in our midst.

If therefore the whole church be come together into one place . . . if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all : And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest ; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. (1, Cor, 14, 23—25.)

May there be, then, a more careful eye upon the stranger, for John in his day had to write concerning some

They went out from us, but they were not of us ; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us ; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. (1 John, 2, 19.)

Boaz asked his question for two reasons:—

- (1) His care for his reapers.
- (2) His interest in Ruth.

So to-day we should all have a care for the flock of God, guarding it from any inroads of Modern Theology, and at the same time a loving interest in all seekers after truth.

Ruth has thus far been in touch with the reapers, and the servant set over them, but now she is to hear a word specially for herself from the lips of Boaz.

Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter ? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens : (Ruth 2, 8.)

What words of cheer and comfort, and how they must have encouraged the stranger in her gleanings. The fact that Boaz addresses Ruth as "my daughter" should not be taken as typifying Ruth as a child of God, for we do not even find him addressing his reapers in such language, nor must we forget that at this point of our story Ruth has not been redeemed. Naomi uses a very similar expression in c. 3. 1 and 18, and in her case it was more in accordance with the true circumstances, for was she not her lawful daughter-in-law? Rather can we not see in the remark of Boaz something akin to the words of the Saviour in Matt. 11. 28, and other similar passages. "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest," etc. They are words to encourage the true seeker in his or her quest for real satisfaction, and as in the case of Ruth so in many a case since, the knowledge of the Saviour's tender and gracious manner with those who are strangers to Him, has encouraged them to continue their earnest seeking after that for which their heart yearns, even though thus far they have not reached that moment, when, without any reservation they cast themselves entirely at the Saviour's feet. This comes later as we shall see, but meanwhile Ruth acknowledges that she is in a place of special favour, and her position is one of grace. Truly a picture of growth in divine things.

For the unconverted person to seek after higher and better things oftentimes means much persecution at the hands of others, and the bearing of the taunts and jeers of fellow travellers to a lost eternity. In some cases it means separation from all that is nearest and dearest by the ties of nature. How many there are, especially in heathen lands, who when even attending Christian mission halls and chapels have been cut off by their friends and loved ones, but they feel that they must bear this in seeking after light, and so we see here that Ruth

had left much and her present position had by no means been lightly taken up. She had weighed up the cost, and decided to leave father and mother and the land of her nativity for a people which she knew not heretofore. But Boaz was not unmindful of this and wishes for her a full reward and divine recompense, and Ruth, as we shall see, was rewarded a hundredfold eventually for anything she may have given up (see c. 2, v. 12). Hence, if my reader, even at this time is not fully persuaded as to the Christian pathway, but yet in your seeking for knowledge and light in these matters you are enduring much persecution, let me tell you that the blessed Saviour knows all about it, and when you finally make Him your choice, you will be more than satisfied, and He will be a complete recompense.

When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up. (Ps. 27. 10.)

And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's. But he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life. (Mark 10. 29—30.)

We next observe another step forward in Ruth's knowledge of Boaz and his ways, for there comes a time that day when with his reapers she partakes of the meal he has provided, and from his own hand Ruth receives parched corn which she eats, and is satisfied and leaves. Some may see in this a picture of the Lord's Supper for those who are His own, but may I suggest rather that it typifies a Bible reading of the Lord's people around His Word. There, gathered with them, is one seeking a like portion but who, so far, has not tasted of the redemptive work of Christ. That one has a true yearning for soul satisfaction and as the Holy Spirit, through the lips of those thus gathered, unfolds the glories of the riches of Christ, it drinks in the truth with real pleasure and delight, and realises that here is

something which has long been sought after, and to that hungry soul it is as parched corn. The satisfaction derived is more than has been known for many a long day, and the result is that when that one gets away from that scene it is just bubbling over with the fulness of the feast it has had, and as Ruth takes home to Naomi that which she had reserved after she was sufficed (c. 2. v. 14), so that soul must tell out to others something of this wonderful treasure that it has just begun to learn something about. As this seems to be the deciding point with Ruth (for it is when Naomi learns of this that she tells Ruth to cast herself at the feet of Boaz) so, as we observed on page 16, the more the seeking soul knows of the fulness of the Person and work of Christ so it gets nearer the moment when the will is cast, and that one decides unreservedly and wholeheartedly to give themselves to the Lord. Thus may we plead yet once again with those who proclaim the glorious tidings of the Gospel, whether in open-air, Gospel hall, Sunday School, or any other place, to seek to unfold the Scriptures, to describe the Person and Work of the Saviour and the riches of His grace in such a way that the sinner may be attracted thereby. This will be far more effective than the constant re-iteration of such expressions as "Come to Christ," "Accept the Saviour now," "Get saved whilst you may," and so on. Such words of wisdom have, of course, their proper place, but many addresses to-day consist of little else. It was the gracious manner of Boaz, and his rich provision for the stranger that attracted Ruth, for it told her that here was someone who really cared for her and who really showed affection for her. So, in the New Testament, we read that it is the goodness of God that leadeth to repentance (Romans 2. 4), and John 3. 16 has probably won more sinners to the Saviour than any other verse in the Bible. Why? Because it tells mankind that God loves them.

From the foregoing remarks our readers may be saying, well all this seems to portray salvation rather as a process than an instantaneous act. If such are your thoughts, my friend, let me assure you once for all that the matter of your salvation, your passing out of nature's darkness into God's wonderful light is absolutely instantaneous. In the history of every soul that becomes a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a moment when the line of decision is crossed and that moment means a change

<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
Darkness	Light
Death	Life
Despair	Satisfaction
Sorrow	Joy
Broad Way going to Hell.	Narrow Way going to Heaven.

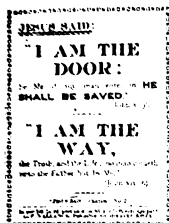
It takes place, as we shall see in a few moments, directly the will is cast in favour of the Saviour. John 3. 16 does not say **whosoever** shall be saved, but it does say **whosoever believeth**, and that is vastly different. Rev. 22. 17 does not say **whosoever** may take of the Water of Life, but it does say **"Whosoever will"** may take thereof. That deciding factor—the will—makes the final decision, and until that is made salvation is unknown. But whilst this is gloriously true, yet as we have been seeking to show, there is, in the experience of many (if not all) a process of growth in the knowledge of divine things. The child first at the mother's knee, and later in the Sunday School, acquires an elementary knowledge; and then varying according to circumstances this is deepened and broadened in many ways, some of which we have sought very briefly to describe, but also in others which will present themselves to the mind of the diligent Bible student.

Ruth, having received the parched corn and being temporarily satisfied thereby, is now counselled by

Naomi to keep fast by the maidens of Boaz, and she herself pledges to seek rest for Ruth that it may be well with her (3. 1). She told her further how, according to the custom of the land, to approach Boaz with a view to his fulfilling for her the part of a kinsman redeemer, and Ruth's response from her heart is, "All that thou sayest unto me I **will** do." Note the "I will" about it. Her will gives the final choice, and we next see her at the feet of Boaz, who assures her heart with these gracious words, "Fear not, I will do to thee all that thou requirest" (3. 11).

This unfolds itself thus in the soul's experience to-day. That seeking one who has learned something of divine things and realized that satisfaction is only to be found in Christ, seeks one in whom it can confide, one who has its entire confidence, such as Naomi had, and when it has poured out its soul's yearning, that true Christian friend counsels the seeking soul to continue in these paths, abide where such food is obtainable; and promises, as Naomi did, to seek rest of soul on its behalf. This is done by secret intercession alone with God, and who can tell how much the prayers of God's people can accomplish in such cases? In their counsel they tell the anxious one how to approach to God in order to obtain the benefit of the finished work of Calvary. They point to the Cross of Christ and a place at the feet of Jesus. Sooner or later this will result, as with the jailor of old, in the cry "What must I do to be saved?" or in the words of Ruth, "All that thou sayest unto me I will do." To such words there is only one answer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." This is the moment to urge decision, the time to plead for the final step to be taken, and as Ruth did all that her mother-in-law bade her (c. 3. v. 6) so the seeking soul will now be ready and prepared to say "I will believe, I do believe, that Jesus died for me," and the work of salvation is that moment done.

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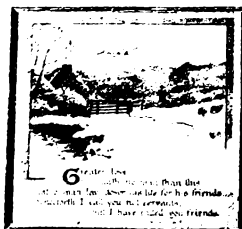
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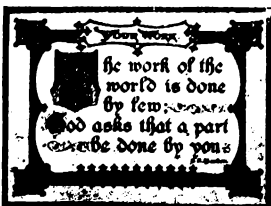
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