LIFE-STUDY OF RUTH

MESSAGE ONE

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD

Scripture Reading: Ruth 1:1-5; 2:1-2; 3:1; 4:9-10, 13, 21-22; Matt. 1:5-6

In this message we will give a brief introductory word to the Life-study of Ruth.

I. RUTH BEING AN APPENDIX TO THE BOOK OF JUDGES, CONTEMPORARY WITH THE FIRST HALF OF JUDGES

Ruth is an appendix to the book of Judges, contemporary with the first half of Judges. Judges is a book of Israel's miserable history, dark and stinking; Ruth is the record of a couple's excellent story, bright and aromatic. The main role in this story is like a lily growing out of brambles and a bright star in the dark night.

II. THE BOOK OF RUTH BEING AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST

The book of Ruth is also an important part of the genealogy of Christ (Matt. 1:5), which is the record that concerns the incarnation of Christ.

In the whole universe, there is nothing greater than the incarnation of Christ. After the eternal God created man, He was nearly silent for four thousand years. During that time no one knew what God was doing. The angels did not know, and the men in the Old Testament, such as Abraham, Moses, and David, did not know. Then the eternal God came out of eternity and entered into time. He came out of eternity with His divinity in order to enter into humanity to make Himself, the Divine, one with man, the human, to become a God-man. This is the greatest thing in the entire universe. The short

book of Ruth, containing only four chapters, is related in a particular way to the incarnation of Christ.

III. THE WRITER

According to the contents of Ruth, its writer should be Samuel, as is the case also with the book of Judges.

IV. THE TIME

According to the word "Jesse begot David" (4:22), the time of writing must have been after the rule of the judges and in the time of the kings. The time of the history covered in this book comprises eleven years, from about 1322 B.C. (1:4) to about 1312 B.C. (4:13).

V. THE PLACE

The history recorded in the book of Ruth took place in Moab and Judah (1:1, 22).

VI. THE CONTENT

The content of this book concerns a Moabitess, Ruth. Ruth belonged to the tribe of Moab (v. 4). Moab was the son of Lot, the fruit of Lot's incestuous union with his daughter (Gen. 19:30-38). According to Deuteronomy 23:3 the Moabites were forbidden to enter the congregation of the Lord, even to the tenth generation. Thus, as a Moabitess, Ruth was an excluded one. Nevertheless, she was brought into the holy elect of God and became an important ancestor of Christ through her marriage with Boaz, the great-grandfather of King David (Ruth 4:21-22; Matt. 1:5-6), which became a factor that ushered in the incarnation of Christ (Matt. 1:5-16). From this we see that Ruth became an important ancestor to bring Christ into humanity. This ushered in the marvelous incarnation, which made God one with man. This is the intrinsic significance of the content of the book of Ruth.

VII. THE CENTRAL THOUGHT

The central thought of the book of Ruth is that a Gentile, even a Moabitess, could be joined to God's holy elect and become an heir to partake of the holy inheritance through

her union with the one of the holy elect who redeemed her. This is not merely a type but a complete prefigure of the Gentile sinners' being brought, with Israel, God's elect, into the divine inheritance through the redemption of Christ in their union with Him.

VIII. THE SECTIONS

The book of Ruth has six sections.

A. Elimelech's Swerving from the Rest in God's Economy

The first section (1:1-2) shows us that Elimelech, one of God's elect, swerved from the rest in God's economy.

B. Naomi's Returning to the Rest in God's Economy

The second section (1:3-7, 19-22) concerns Naomi's returning to the rest in God's economy. Whereas Elimelech swerved from this rest, Naomi returned to it.

C. Ruth's Choosing for Her Goal

Some expositors speak of Ruth's resolution or determination. What we see in Ruth, however, is not just her resolution or her determination but her choosing for her goal. This is described in the third section of the book (1:8-18).

D. Ruth's Exercising of Her Right

The next section of this book (ch. 2) covers Ruth's exercising of her right. After she made a choice regarding her goal, she exercised her right.

E. Ruth's Seeking for Her Rest

The fifth section of this book (ch. 3) covers Ruth's seeking for her rest. Once she exercised the right that came to her through her choosing for her goal, Ruth, in wisdom, sought for her rest.

F. Ruth's Reward for God's Economy

Because Ruth was absolute for God's economy, she received a reward from God. Ruth's reward for God's economy is covered in chapter four, the last section of this book.

LIFE-STUDY OF RUTH

MESSAGE TWO

ELIMELECH'S SWERVING, NAOMI'S RETURNING, AND RUTH'S CHOOSING

Scripture Reading: Ruth 1

In this message we will consider Ruth 1, a chapter that covers Elimelech's swerving, Naomi's returning, and Ruth's choosing.

I. ELIMELECH'S SWERVING FROM THE REST IN GOD'S ECONOMY

In verses 1 and 2 we see that Elimelech swerved from the rest in God's economy. He was in the good land and had a portion of it, and he should have remained there. Remaining in the good land that God has promised and given is the real rest. Elimelech foolishly swerved from this wonderful rest.

A. Israel Living in the God-promised Land for the Carrying Out of God's Economy

Israel, as God's elect, was living in the God-promised land for the carrying out of God's economy. This means that staying in the good land is not just for us to earn a living but for us to participate in the carrying out of God's economy.

B. Israel's Rest Being Related to Their Situation with God in His Economy

Israel's rest, their prosperity for their enjoyment and their contentment, was related to their situation with God in His economy. For an Israelite to leave the good land meant that he was cutting himself off from God's eternal economy.

The book of Ruth speaks of Christ being brought into

mankind through incarnation. This is the real rest. Ruth is thus a book of rest. As we will see, after Ruth married Boaz, they brought forth a child, Obed, and Ruth enjoyed a rest with an absolute satisfaction and full expectation for her descendants. The following generations enjoyed rest under David. Then after one thousand years, they enjoyed the real rest with the Lord Jesus. Two thousand years later, this rest will be enjoyed in a fuller way in the millennial kingdom with Christ as the King. After the millennium, the enjoyment of this rest will consummate in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth for eternity. This matter of rest is the key to the book of Ruth.

C. From Bethlehem in Judah

Elimelech's mistake was to swerve from the ground, the standing, which gave him the opportunity to enjoy the rest in the good land. He swerved from Bethlehem in Judah.

1. Bethlehem, the City of David

Bethlehem, the city of David, was designated as the birthplace of the coming Christ (Micah 5:2; Luke 2:4-7). In the eyes of God, Bethlehem was a very special place, for it was the place where He, through incarnation, would be born to be a man.

2. Judah

Judah was the land of the royal tribe among Israel (Gen. 49:8-10). Of all the tribes, no tribe had a higher allotment of the land than Judah. It was the top part of the God-promised land (Exo. 3:8b), the top part of the good land (Deut. 8:7-10), and the top part of the land of Immanuel (Isa. 8:8). How mistaken Elimelech was in swerving from this land!

D. To Moab

Elimelech swerved from Bethlehem in Judah to Moab, a place of incest rejected and condemned by God. Moab was a country of the descendants of Lot through his incest (Gen. 19:30-38). It was also a country of the people who were not

allowed to enter into the assembly of Jehovah because of the incest of their forefathers (Deut. 23:2-3) and because of their mistreatment of Israel (v. 4). Furthermore, Moab was a country of people whose peace and prosperity God would not allow Israel to seek all their days forever (v. 6). Finally, Moab was a country of idolatry (Judg. 10:6).

E. In the Days of the Rule of the Judges

Elimelech left in the days of the rule of the judges, under Israel's forsaking of God and under their degradation, confusion, and corruption.

F. Due to a Famine in the Good Land

Elimelech left due to a famine in the good land, a lacking of life supply for living and satisfaction as a punishment of God (Lev. 26:26; Ezek. 14:13). We may wonder how there could be a famine in the good land since God had promised that it would be a land flowing with milk and honey. God sent a famine to His people as a serious punishment. He punished them by stopping their food supply. Because they had forsaken Him as their source and Husband and had gone to idols, He let them go to their idols for food as well. There was no food from God and no food from the illegal husband of their harlotry.

G. With His Wife and Two Sons

Elimelech left the good land with his wife and two sons, who were good for the increase of the kingdom of God.

H. God's Chastisement in Moab over the House of Elimelech

Ruth 1:3 and 5 speak of God's chastisement over the house of Elimelech. Elimelech was punished by God with death upon himself and his two sons. This left his wife, Naomi, as a widow with two daughters-in-law in a foreign country. That was the pitiful result of Elimelech's swerving from the rest in God's eternal economy.

II. NAOMI'S RETURNING TO THE REST IN GOD'S ECONOMY

In verses 4 through 7 and 19 through 22 we see Naomi's returning to the rest in God's economy.

A. From Moab

Naomi returned from Moab, the country of idolatry.

B. To Judah

Naomi returned to Judah, the land of Immanuel.

C. Having Been Stripped by God of Her Husband and of Her Two Sons

Naomi returned because she had been stripped by God first of her husband and then of her two sons, leaving her and her two daughters-in-law as widows without children (vv. 5, 20-21). Naomi returned also because she had heard that Jehovah had visited His people by giving them food (v. 6). In the Lord's recovery, we also have experienced the Lord's merciful visitation. During the last several years He has blessed us and supplied us with rich food.

D. With Ruth, Her Daughter-in-law

Naomi returned with Ruth, her daughter-in-law given to her by God for the accomplishment of His economy concerning Christ (v. 22a).

E. Arriving at Bethlehem

Naomi arrived at Bethlehem, the birthplace of the coming Christ (vv. 19a, 22b).

F. All the City Being Stirred

All the city was stirred because of Naomi and Ruth, and the women said, "Is this Naomi?" (v. 19b). Naomi said to them, "Do not call me Naomi [meaning 'my pleasantness']; call me Mara [meaning 'bitterness']; for the All-sufficient One has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, but Jehovah has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, when

Jehovah has afflicted me and the All-sufficient One has dealt harshly with me?" (vv. 20-21).

III. RUTH'S CHOOSING FOR HER GOAL

In verses 8 through 18 we have an account of Ruth's choosing for her goal.

A. Naomi's Proposal to Her Two Daughters-in-law for Their Future

Naomi made a proposal to her two daughters-in-law for their future. She said to them, "Go and return, each of you, to your mother's house. May Jehovah deal kindly with you, just as you have dealt with the dead and with me. May Jehovah grant you to find rest, each of you in the house of your husband" (vv. 8-9a). Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voice and wept, saying to her, "No, we will return with you to your people" (vv. 9b-10). Naomi told them to return and then asked them, "Why should you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Return, my daughters, go; for I am too old to have a husband. If I said, I have hope; even if I had a husband tonight and even bore sons; would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from having a husband? No, my daughters; it has been far more bitter for me than it should be for you, for the hand of Jehovah has gone forth against me" (vv. 11-13). When the daughters-in-law heard this, they lifted up their voice and wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. Naomi said to Ruth, "Your sister-in-law has now returned to her people and to her gods; return with your sister-in-law" (vv. 14-15).

B. Ruth's Choosing to Go with Naomi

Ruth said to Naomi, "Do not entreat me to leave you and turn away from following after you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you dwell, I will dwell; and your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Where you die, I will die; and there will I be buried. Jehovah do so to me, and more as well, if anything but death parts me from

you" (vv. 16-17). When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she ceased speaking to her about it (v. 18).

Ruth chose the goal of participating with God's elect in the enjoyment of Christ, and she even became a top ancestor of Christ who helped bring forth Christ into mankind. This was more than just a resolution on the part of the Moabite widow; it was a goal, a choosing. Ruth chose God and His kingdom for the carrying out of God's economy concerning Christ. Hallelujah for such a goal and for such a person choosing this goal!

LIFE-STUDY OF RUTH

MESSAGE THREE

RUTH'S EXERCISING OF HER RIGHT

Scripture Reading: Ruth 2

After Ruth's husband died, she had two choices: remain in Moab or go with Naomi to be a foreigner in Israel. Ruth chose to go to the land of Israel because she probably had heard a great deal concerning God, God's promise, and the good land. She had heard the good news sufficiently for her to make a wonderful choice. After arriving in the land of Israel with Naomi, Ruth exercised her right. This matter is covered in chapter two.

I. GOD'S COMMANDMENT TO ISRAEL THAT TAKES CARE OF THE NEEDY ONES AMONG HIS ELECT CONCERNING THE REAPING OF THEIR HARVEST

God's commandment concerning the reaping of the harvest was that Jehovah would bless the children of Israel if they left the corners of their fields and the gleanings for the poor, the sojourners, the orphans, and the widows. Concerning this, Leviticus 23:22 says, "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not completely reap the corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien." A similar word is found in Leviticus 19:9-10. Deuteronomy 24:19 says, "When you reap your harvest in your field and you forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not turn back to gather it; it shall be for the sojourner, the orphan, and the widow, in order that Jehovah your God may bless you in all your undertakings." This shows not only the lovingkindness of God and how great, fine, and detailed He is, but shows also the rich produce of the good land.

God wanted to bless the harvest of the Israelites in the

good land, but this blessing had a condition—that something would be left for the poor. The people would not be allowed to reap completely the corners of their field. However, in the ordinance of the law given by God through Moses regarding reaping, the size of the corners of the field was not specified. The size depended on the landlord's faith in Jehovah. The larger one's faith in Jehovah was, the larger the corners of the field would be. I believe that it was the practice of Boaz to obey this ordinance. He must have had great faith in Jehovah. Under God's sovereignty this ordinance seems to have been written for one person—Ruth.

II. NAOMI RETURNING TO BETHLEHEM WITH HER DAUGHTER-IN-LAW RUTH AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BARLEY HARVEST

Naomi returned to Bethlehem with her daughter-in-law Ruth at the beginning of the barley harvest (Ruth 1:22b). Barley, which ripens earlier than other grains, typifies the resurrected Christ (John 6:9-10, 56-58).

III. NAOMI HAVING A RELATIVE OF HER HUSBAND'S, A MAN OF GREAT WEALTH, BY THE NAME OF BOAZ

"Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a man of great wealth, from Elimelech's family; and his name was Boaz" (Ruth 2:1). God is sovereign, and in His sovereignty He brought Ruth from Moab to the city of Bethlehem. Before she arrived there, He had prepared a rich, generous man by the name of Boaz.

IV. RUTH GAINING NAOMI'S PERMISSION TO GO GLEANING

Ruth gained Naomi's permission to go gleaning (vv. 2-3). Ruth asked Naomi to let her go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight Ruth had found favor. Naomi told Ruth to go, and she went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, happening to glean in a portion of the field belonging to Boaz.

V. BOAZ BECOMING ACQUAINTED WITH RUTH

Boaz eventually became acquainted with Ruth (vv. 4-7).

He came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "Jehovah be with you," and they said to him, "Jehovah bless you" (v. 4). When Boaz asked the young man who was set over the reapers concerning Ruth, the young man told him that she was the young Moabite woman who had returned with Naomi from the country of Moab and who had asked to glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves. His word to Boaz regarding Ruth indicates that he was happy with her, considering her a woman of fidelity and virtue.

VI. BOAZ'S WORD OF GRACE TO RUTH

In verses 8 through 13 we have Boaz's word of grace to Ruth. He said to her, "Do not go to glean in another field, and also do not pass from here but stay close to my young women. Keep your eyes on the field that they reap; follow after them. I have charged my young men not to touch you. And when you are thirsty, you shall go to the vessels and drink of what the young men have drawn" (vv. 8-9). When Ruth heard these words, she fell upon her face, bowed herself to the ground, and asked Boaz, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you regard me, though I am a foreigner?" (v. 10). Boaz replied that all that she had done for her mother-in-law since the death of her husband Elimelech had been made known to him. He also had learned how she had left her father and mother and the land of her birth and had come to a people whom she had not known before. Then he said to her, "May Jehovah recompense your work, and may you have a full reward from Jehovah, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge" (v. 12). In response, Ruth asked that she would find favor in his sight, for he had comforted her and had spoken kindly to her (v. 13).

VII. BOAZ'S GENEROSITY TOWARD RUTH

Boaz not only spoke kindly to Ruth but also showed generosity to her (vv. 14-16). At mealtime Boaz told her to eat some food, extending some parched grain to her, and she ate and was satisfied. When she rose up to glean, Boaz charged his young men to let her glean among the standing grain and not to rebuke her. Then he went on to say to them,

"Also pull out some from the bundles for her, and leave it for her to glean; and do not rebuke her" (v. 16).

VIII. RUTH TELLING THE STORY TO NAOMI

Upon returning from the field, Ruth told the story of her experience with Boaz to Naomi, her mother-in-law (vv. 17-21). When Ruth told Naomi that she had gleaned in the field of Boaz, Naomi said to her, "Blessed be he of Jehovah, whose lovingkindness has not failed for the living and for the dead" (v. 20a). Then Naomi told Ruth that the man was close to them, one of their kinsmen (v. 20b).

IX. NAOMI CHARGING RUTH

In verse 22 Naomi charged Ruth, saying, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, so that others do not meet you in any other field." As we will see when we come to chapter three, what was on Naomi's heart was not only that Ruth would partake of Boaz's riches and be satisfied, but also that she would gain Boaz himself as her husband and bring forth a son for the name of Elimelech.

X. RUTH STAYING CLOSE TO BOAZ'S YOUNG WOMEN

Ruth stayed close to Boaz's young women and gleaned until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law (v. 23).

XI. RUTH EXERCISING HER RIGHT TO PARTAKE OF THE RICH PRODUCE OF THE INHERITANCE OF GOD'S ELECT

In all this Ruth, as one who had returned to God from her heathen background, exercised her right to partake of the rich produce of the inheritance of God's elect. Ruth, a Moabitess, had come to the good land as a sojourner. According to her threefold status as a sojourner, a poor one, and a widow, she exercised her right to glean the harvest. Although she was poor, she never became a beggar. Her gleaning was not her begging; it was her right.

The book of Ruth portrays the way, the position, the qualification, and the right of sinners to participate in Christ

and to enjoy Christ. According to God's ordination, we have been qualified and positioned to claim our right to enjoy Christ. This means that today we do not need to beg God to save us. We can go to God to claim His salvation for ourselves. We have the position, the qualification, and the right to claim salvation from God. This is the highest standard of receiving the gospel.

XII. TYPES IMPLIED IN THIS AROMATIC STORY

As a narration, the book of Ruth is lovely, touching, convincing, and subduing. In the aromatic story in chapter two, four types are implied.

A. Boaz, Rich in Wealth

Boaz, rich in wealth (2:1), typifies Christ, who is rich in the divine grace (2 Cor. 12:9).

B. The Field of the God-promised Good Land

The field of the God-promised good land (Ruth 2:2-3) typifies the all-inclusive Christ, who is the source of all the spiritual and divine products for the life supply to God's elect (Phil. 1:19b).

C. Barley and Wheat

Barley and wheat (Ruth 2:23) typify Christ as the material for making food for both God and His people (Lev. 2; John 6:9, 33, 35).

D. Ruth, a Moabitess, a Heathen Sinner

Ruth, a Moabitess (Deut. 23:3), a heathen sinner, alienated from God's promises (Eph. 2:12), given the right to partake of the gleaning of the harvest of God's elect typifies the "Gentile dogs" who are privileged to partake of the crumbs under the table of the portion of God's elect children (Col. 1:12; Matt. 15:25-28).

LIFE-STUDY OF RUTH

MESSAGE FOUR

RUTH'S SEEKING FOR HER REST

Scripture Reading: Ruth 3

Chapter one shows Ruth's choosing, chapter two shows Ruth's exercising of her right, and chapter three shows Ruth's seeking for her rest. We need to enjoy Christ to such an extent that we have rest. In order to have rest, we surely need a home. No place can give us as much rest as our home. In chapter three Naomi proposed and even pushed to gain a home for Ruth.

The steps taken by Ruth correspond to our spiritual experience. Before we were saved, we all had our own taste and choice. Under the Lord's sovereign arrangement, we heard the gospel and made a resolution to become a believer of Christ. Our choice was to believe in Christ. By believing in the Lord Jesus, we were organically joined to Him. Now He is in us and we are in Him. With this intimate, organic union, we must begin to pursue Christ in order to gain, possess, experience, and enjoy Him. This is typified by Ruth's exercising of her right to gain and possess the produce of the good land. Just as Ruth had the right to enjoy the produce of the good land after coming into the land, so we have the right to enjoy Christ as our good land after believing in Him.

It is a tragedy that Christianity, both Catholicism and Protestantism, has not seen this matter of enjoying Christ. The Lord Jesus said, "He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me" (John 6:57). Our Savior can be eaten; He is our heavenly food and manna. According to Revelation 2, whoever overcomes may eat of Christ as the tree of life and as the hidden manna (vv. 7, 17). The Bible reveals that Christ is not only our food but also our drink, clothing, and breath. He is our daily necessities. Every day we need to enjoy Him.

We must be like Ruth and exercise our right to enjoy Christ. Every morning we should "glean" from the "field" of the Bible.

However, after our gleaning we still need a home so that we can have a settled rest. This kind of rest can come only through marriage. In Ruth 3:1 Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, I must seek some resting place for you." Naomi wanted to find a way to establish a home for Ruth. If Ruth was to have a home for her rest, she needed a husband. Naomi realized that the proper person to be Ruth's husband was Boaz, who typifies Christ.

I realize that many of us love the Lord Jesus, but have we taken Him as our Husband? Have you ever had a time with the Lord when you said, "Lord, You are my Husband"? Even though you are saved and you love the Lord, you will not have a home for your rest until you marry the Lord Jesus, taking Him as your Husband.

In these messages on Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, the Lord has given us a clear view of how we should take Christ as our unique Husband. After the people of Israel entered the good land under Joshua, there was a history of miserable chaos because Israel was not faithful. She left God as her Husband to go to many husbands, to many idols. In this modern age there are many idols, such as entertainment, sports, and shopping, which cause Christians to be unfaithful. It seems as if they have never been married to Christ, that they have never actually taken Him as their Husband. As a consequence, they are roaming, wandering from place to place with no rest.

The place to find our Husband is in our home, the church. Christ is the Husband in the church. To have a husband is not sufficient. We must also have a home. Without a home we have no rest. If we have Christ, enjoy Christ, and experience Christ, yet we do not have the church, we are still homeless. Therefore, we must stress not only Christ as our Husband but also the church as our home. Christ as our Husband and the church as our home are a complete unit for us to have a proper and adequate rest.

Ruth was enjoying her life with Naomi, but Naomi was clear that Ruth needed to be married to Boaz. Although

according to God's law the Jews and the Moabites were to be separated, in His sovereignty God had a way to bring Ruth, a Moabitess, and Boaz together. By the time of chapter three, Ruth and Boaz had already met in the field where Ruth was gleaning, and they were prepared, qualified, and ready to be married. I believe that Boaz loved Ruth and that she loved him. But this love was entirely inward, with no outward expression. Since this was the situation, there was the need for Naomi, as the person in the middle, to push Ruth and Boaz to get married.

My burden today is like Naomi's. I am seeking a resting place for you, and the only way for you to have rest is to take Christ as your Husband. Thus, I am here as a person in the middle to push you to marry Christ. I am quite concerned that you have never known Christ as your Husband and that you have not yet found a home for your rest. You may know Christ as your Redeemer, Savior, Master, and Lord. You may even know that He is your food, drink, breath, and clothing. But do you know Him as your Husband? Perhaps you glean daily in His field and recognize Him as the Landlord. You need to do more than to glean in His field—you need to take Him as your Husband. My burden, therefore, is to push all of us to marry Christ. I am pushing us to marry Christ so that we can build up a home and enjoy Him in this home, which is the church.

Nothing is more intimate than marriage. Taking Christ as our Husband is a most intimate matter. If we marry Christ, taking Him as our Husband, our life will be changed. We will realize that we must have a wife's fidelity, and we will learn how to enjoy Christ as our life, walking and behaving in oneness with Him. Then we will become those who gain Christ and enjoy Christ, loving Him, staying at home with Him, and living with Him at home, in the church. If we do this, we will truly know the church life in the Lord's recovery.

Now that we have seen the intrinsic significance of chapter three of Ruth, let us consider this chapter in more detail.

I. PROMOTED BY HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

In 3:1-5 we see that Ruth's seeking for her rest was promoted by her mother-in-law Naomi.

A. To Seek Some Resting Place for Ruth

In verse 1 Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, I must seek some resting place for you, that it may go well with you."

B. Instructing Ruth What to Do

Naomi instructed Ruth what to do (vv. 2-4). She told Ruth to wash herself, anoint herself, put on her best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor where Boaz, their relative, was winnowing the barley. She further instructed Ruth not to make herself known to the man until he had finished eating and drinking. Then Naomi told her to notice the place where he lies down and go there, uncover his feet, and lie down. Naomi concluded by telling her that Boaz would tell her what she should do.

C. Ruth's Obedience

Ruth was obedient to her mother-in-law, saying to her, "All that you say, I will do" (v. 5).

II. CARRIED OUT BY RUTH

A. According to Her Mother-in-law's Charge

Ruth went down to the threshing floor and did all that her mother-in-law had charged her (v. 6).

B. Approaching Boaz Based upon the God-ordained Way

Verses 7 through 9 give an account of how Ruth approached Boaz. Her approaching him was based upon the God-ordained way (4:5; Lev. 25:25; Deut. 25:5-10).

III. ACCEPTED BY BOAZ

In Ruth 3:10-15 we see that Ruth was accepted by Boaz.

A. Boaz's Promise

When Ruth identified herself and asked Boaz to spread his cloak over her, he said, "Blessed be you of Jehovah, my daughter. You have shown your latter kindness to be better than your first by not going after the choice young men, whether poor or rich" (v. 10). Then he promised to do all that she had said. He continued by explaining that although he was a kinsman, there was a kinsman closer than he. Boaz went on to say that if that other kinsman was not willing to do the kinsman's duty for Ruth, then he would do it for her.

B. Boaz's Generous Care

In verses 14 and 15 we see Boaz's generous care for Ruth.

IV. RUTH'S REPORT TO HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

According to verses 16 through 18 Ruth gave a report to her mother-in-law.

A. The Good News

Ruth reported the good news concerning all that Boaz had done for her. In particular, she spoke of the six measures of barley that he had given to her.

B. The Mother-in-law's Faith

Verse 18 reveals the mother-in-law's faith. Naomi had the faith that Boaz would not rest until he had sought rest for Ruth.

V. FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE GENEALOGY TO BRING IN CHRIST

If we consider Matthew 1:5-6 and 16, we will see that Ruth's seeking for her rest was actually for the continuation of the genealogy to bring in Christ.

VI. THE EVALUATION OF BOAZ

Chapter three of Ruth presents a high evaluation of Boaz. This chapter indicates that he was high in morality (vv. 8-11),

that he was pure in conduct (v. 14), that he was wise in decision (vv. 12-13), and that he was faithful in keeping God's ordination (Lev. 25:25; Deut. 25:5-10).

LIFE-STUDY OF RUTH

MESSAGE FIVE

RUTH'S REWARD FOR GOD'S ECONOMY

Scripture Reading: Ruth 4

In this message we will consider Ruth's reward for God's economy. We have seen that Ruth made a choice for her goal and that she exercised her right to enjoy the rich land. Under the prodding of Naomi, Ruth sought for a resting place, and finally she received a reward, a gain, for God's economy. A real seeker after God, Ruth eventually gained what she sought after. She chose her goal, she exercised her right, and she sought for a husband and a home as a resting place.

I. GAINING A REDEEMING HUSBAND

According to chapter four, there are four aspects of Ruth's reward. First, in verses 10 through 13 she gained a redeeming husband (typifying Christ as the redeeming Husband to the believers—Rom. 7:4). Ruth's gaining of such a husband was witnessed and blessed by the people and the elders in the gate (Ruth 4:11-12), and it was also blessed by God (v. 13b).

We need to be impressed with the fact that Ruth's reward was for God's economy. Man was created by God with a purpose according to His eternal economy. This economy is not a common plan or merely a small arrangement. In the universe the divine and eternal economy is second only to God Himself. According to His economy God created the heavens, the earth, and man. But God's enemy came in to attempt to break the line that joins man to God and God to man. In Genesis 3 Satan cut this line, but eventually Christ as the promised seed of the woman (v. 15) came to repair the line by redeeming man back to God.

In the books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, there were not many on earth who had linked themselves to God. At the

time of Ruth the line between God and man was very thin. It was thin to such an extent that it consisted mainly of two persons, a couple—Boaz and Ruth. This couple was brought together in a marvelous and sovereign way. Although Boaz was born an Israelite and Ruth was born in Moab, an incestuous country, Ruth was brought to the good land, even to Bethlehem, the city of David.

Ruth had the right to glean from many different fields, but she went to Boaz's field. When Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, learned that Ruth had gleaned in Boaz's field, she was very happy. Desiring to find a resting place for Ruth, Naomi instructed her about what to do (3:2-4). Ruth followed Naomi's direction, and she and Boaz were brought into a courtship. When they were at the threshing floor, she applied to be his wife. He said to her, "All that you say, I will do for you; for all the assembly of my people know that you are a worthy woman. And now it is true that I am a kinsman, yet there is a kinsman closer than I. Stay for the night; and in the morning if he will do the kinsman's duty, fine; let him do it. But if he is not willing to do the kinsman's duty for you, I will do it for you, as Jehovah lives" (vv. 11-13). In a very kind way Boaz was indicating that he would act in accordance with God's ordinances (Lev. 25:25; Deut. 25:5-10). Their courtship led to their marriage. Through that marriage Ruth, a Moabite widow, gained the holy citizens' citizenship, becoming one among God's elect.

The crucial point here is that, as part of her reward for God's economy, Ruth gained a redeeming husband, who typifies Christ as the redeeming Husband to the believers. Only Christ can be both our Husband and our Redeemer. Before we were saved, we were in trouble and could not get out of trouble. Now as believers in Christ, we have a Husband who is our eternal, present, and daily Redeemer, rescuing us, saving us, delivering us, from all our troubles. What a gain this is!

II. REDEEMED FROM THE INDEBTEDNESS OF THE DEAD HUSBAND

In addition to gaining a redeeming husband, Ruth was

redeemed from the indebtedness of the dead husband (Ruth 4:1-9). This typifies being redeemed from the sin of the believers' old man. Ruth's dead husband had sold his field, and the indebtedness of that transaction had fallen upon her in the marriage union and needed to be redeemed. Boaz said to the kinsman who was closer than he, "On the day you buy the field from Naomi's hand, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead man, in order to raise up the dead man's name upon his inheritance" (v. 5). That kinsman replied, "I cannot redeem it for myself, or else it will mar my own inheritance. Redeem for yourself what I should redeem, for I cannot redeem it" (v. 6). Boaz did so, redeeming Ruth from her indebtedness.

Our Husband, Christ, is not merely capable; He is almighty. He has redeemed us from the indebtedness of our dead husband. According to Romans 7 the dead husband, our old husband, is our old man. God created us to be His wife, but we rebelled against Him. We gave Him up and assumed the position of the husband for ourselves. Our sinful husband encumbered us with many debts. But on the day we married Christ, we received a Husband who is our almighty, omnipotent Redeemer. We all need Christ to be such a Husband to us. Having Him as our Husband, we should come to Him and simply say, "Lord Jesus, I need You."

III. BECOMING A CRUCIAL ANCESTOR IN THE GENEALOGY TO BRING IN THE ROYAL HOUSE OF DAVID FOR THE PRODUCING OF CHRIST

Another aspect of Ruth's reward is that she became a crucial ancestor in the genealogy to bring in the royal house of David for the producing of Christ (Ruth 4:13b-22; Matt. 1:5-16). This indicates that she had an all-inclusive and all-extensive gain with the position and capacity to bring Christ into the human race. She is thus a great link in the chain that is bringing Christ to every corner of the earth. We all are indebted to Ruth, for without her Christ could not have reached us. But wherever we may be on earth, Christ has reached us through Ruth.

The burden of this ministry is to produce Christ in the believers. This means that the goal of this ministry is not to teach you to be humble or merely to glorify God in your behavior. Rather, the goal of this ministry is to "inject" you with Christ, to impart Christ as an "antibiotic" to you. The more we receive such an injection, the more we will be able to sing, "Christ liveth in me, / Christ liveth in me; / Oh! what a salvation this, / That Christ liveth in me" (*Hymns,* #507). On the one hand, this injection of Christ will kill our old man; on the other hand, it will make us producers of Christ, those who minister Christ to others.

IV. TO CONTINUE THE LINE OF THE GOD-CREATED HUMANITY FOR THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

Ruth not only became a crucial ancestor in the genealogy for the producing of Christ, but she also continued the line of the God-created humanity for the incarnation of Christ (Matt. 1:5-16). The incarnation of Christ was a matter of His being brought out of eternity into time with His divinity. In a practical way, this needs to take place in our daily living. Every day of our Christian life should be a continuation of Christ's incarnation, with Christ being brought forth in order to be born into others through our ministering Christ to them. In order for this to happen, we all need to speak for Christ, to speak forth Christ, and even speak Christ to others. Ministering Christ in this way will surely change us.

V. FIRST SAMUEL TO MALACHI BEING A LONG RECORD OF THE GENERATIONS FOR THE PROLONGED LINE OF HUMANITY FOR CHRIST'S INCARNATION

First Samuel to Malachi is a long record of the generations for the prolonged line of humanity for Christ's incarnation (Matt. 1:17).

LIFE-STUDY OF RUTH

MESSAGE SIX

BOAZ AND RUTH TYPIFYING CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Scripture Reading: Ruth 2:1, 14-16; 3:15; 4:9-10, 13

In these messages on Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, my emphasis has been on our gaining Christ, experiencing Christ, and enjoying Christ so that we may be the church. In this message we will consider how Boaz and Ruth typify Christ and the church. Boaz is a type of Christ, and Ruth is a type not only of the seeking saints but of the church. Ultimately, Ruth typifies the church.

I. BOAZ TYPIFYING CHRIST

A. Two Prominent Persons Typifying Christ

At the beginning and at the end of the portion of Israel's history from Joshua to Ruth are two prominent persons typifying Christ (Josh. 1:1; Ruth 4:21). These persons are Joshua and Boaz, who signify two aspects of one person.

1. Joshua at the Beginning

At the beginning Joshua typifies Christ in bringing God's chosen people into God's ordained blessings (Josh. 1:2-4; Eph. 1:3-14). As typified by Joshua, Christ has brought us into the good land, has taken possession of the land for us, and has allotted the land to us as our inheritance for our enjoyment. Christ has gained the good land for us, and eventually He is the good land for us to enjoy.

2. Boaz at the End

At the end Boaz typifies Christ in other aspects. In particular, he typifies Christ as our Husband for our satisfaction.

B. The Aspects in Which Boaz Typifies Christ

Boaz typifies Christ in two aspects.

1. As a Man Rich in Wealth and Generous in Giving

As a man, rich in wealth and generous in giving (Ruth 2:1, 14-16; 3:15), Boaz typifies Christ, whose divine riches are unsearchable and who takes care of God's needy people with His bountiful supply (Eph. 3:8; 2 Cor. 12:9; Phil. 1:19b).

Sadly, in their experience many of today's Christians do not have Christ in His riches, and they do not have Him as the Husband. In the church we have Christ as our riches, and we also have Him as our Husband. In Ephesians Paul speaks of the unsearchable riches of Christ (3:8). He speaks also of Christ as the Husband of the church (5:23-32). In Revelation our Husband is unveiled as the Lamb, the redeeming God (21:2, 9). The Bible reveals, therefore, that Christ with His unsearchable riches is our Husband. In the last two chapters of the Bible, we see that Christ, the Lamb, is our Husband and that we, the believers in Christ, are the Lamb's wife.

2. As a Kinsman of Mahlon

As a kinsman of Mahlon, the dead husband of Ruth, who redeemed the lost right of Mahlon's property and took Mahlon's widow, Ruth, as his wife for the producing of the needed heirs (Ruth 4:9-10, 13), Boaz typifies Christ in redeeming the church and making the church His counterpart for His increase (Eph. 5:23-32; John 3:29-30).

II. RUTH TYPIFYING THE CHURCH

A. Ruth, Being a Woman in Adam in God's Creation and a Moabitess in Man's Fall, Thus Becoming an Old Man with These Two Aspects

Ruth, being a woman in Adam in God's creation and a Moabitess in man's fall, thus becoming an old man with these

two aspects, typifies the church, before her salvation, as men in God's creation and sinners in man's fall being "our old man" (Rom. 6:6). Ruth became a Moabitess not *because* of man's fall but *in* man's fall. The Moabites, an incestuous people, typify all sinners, because all sinners were born of incest (John 8:41, 44a). This means that Ruth was not the only one with an incestuous background. We all have the same background. Adam and Eve joined themselves to Satan; that is, they married Satan. As human beings created by God, we should have married our Creator, taking Him as our Husband (Isa. 54:5), but instead we married a fellow creature, Satan. This is incest.

B. Ruth, Being a Widow Redeemed by Boaz, Who Cleared the Indebtedness of Her Dead Husband for the Recovery of the Lost Right of Her Dead Husband's Property

Ruth, being the widow of the dead husband, redeemed by Boaz, who cleared the indebtedness of her dead husband for the recovery of the lost right of her dead husband's property, typifies the church with her old man as her crucified husband (Rom. 7:4a) redeemed by Christ, who cleared away her old man's sin for the recovery of the lost right of her fallen natural man created by God.

We need to realize that the believers' old man consists of a natural part created by God and a fallen part corrupted by sin. In God's creation we are good—we are "doves"; but in the fallen Adam we are evil—we are "serpents." The natural part is good and desires to do what is good, whereas the fallen part practices what is evil (Rom. 7:19, 21). From this we see that in the old man typified by Ruth, we have two natures and that one of these natures is good and the other is evil. The evil nature, acting with the good one, assumed to be the husband, and together they became the old man, our incestuous husband.

Our old man has been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6). Christ's crucifixion destroyed the fallen part of our old man, but it redeemed the created part. Christ did not redeem the fallen part of our old man; on the contrary, He terminated

it. However, He redeemed our created part in order to recover us. Therefore, Christ's death on the cross terminated the fallen part of our old man and redeemed the part created by God.

C. Ruth, after Being Redeemed by Boaz, Becoming a New Wife to Him

Ruth, after being redeemed by Boaz, becoming a new wife to him typifies the church, after being saved, through the regeneration of the church's natural man, becoming the counterpart of Christ (Rom. 7:4b). Just as the redeemed Ruth became a new wife to Boaz, so the saved and regenerated church has become His new wife, His counterpart, in the organic union with Him.

D. Ruth Being United with Boaz

Ruth being united to Boaz typifies the Gentile sinners being attached to Christ that they may partake of the inheritance of God's promise (Eph. 3:6).

The more we consider these aspects of Ruth as a type of the church, the more we can know our status as believers in Christ today. First, we were created by God. Second, we became fallen persons. Third, we were redeemed by Christ. Fourth, we were regenerated by the pneumatic Christ as the life-giving Spirit. Thus, we may summarize our status in four words: created, fallen, redeemed, and regenerated.

Let us now consider further how, in typology, the various aspects of Ruth's situation apply to us today. In God's creation Ruth was good, but she became fallen in Adam. When she turned to Israel, she believed in the saving God and was redeemed. Then, having become a new person, she married Boaz and became his new wife.

As signified by the type of Ruth and her dead husband, Ruth's natural part created by God and her fallen part cooperated to assume to be the husband, forsaking God as the Husband. This husband was the main part of her old man, which was composed of her God-created part and her fallen part. The old man as the illegal husband made many mistakes and incurred a great deal of debt, thereby selling

himself and losing his right as a God-created being because of his sins. After Ruth's husband died, she was not only a widow but was also in a condition of indebtedness. The only way out of this condition was to be united in marriage to the proper person. When Ruth married Boaz, she was redeemed from her indebtedness, and she became his new wife for the producing of the needed heirs.

This is a picture of our situation today. Christ, our Husband, died to redeem us and to clear the indebtedness caused by the sins of our old man. Then in resurrection He, as the life-giving Spirit, regenerated us to make us, as created, fallen, and redeemed persons, a new creation married to Him. Now, in the organic union between Christ and us, we can bring forth Christ and spread Christ for His increase.

At this juncture, I would ask you to note the following five matters related to Ruth typifying the church. I hope that these matters will help us to grasp the intrinsic significance of Ruth as a type of the church.

1. The believers' old man is composed of two parts: the natural part created by God and the fallen part corrupted by sin. This old man of ours has been crucified with Christ. This crucifixion of Christ has redeemed our natural created part and destroyed our fallen part and cleared our sin caused by this fallen part.

2. Our natural man was created by God to be God's counterpart taking God as our Husband and Head, but in our fall our natural man put God aside and made himself our husband and head, thus becoming the main part of our old man.

3. After being redeemed and regenerated, our natural man, not including our fallen part, becomes our new man and takes Christ as our new Husband in the divine organic union with Him (Rom. 7:4).

4. Ruth's old husband typifies our fallen part of our old man, and his indebtedness typifies our sin caused by our fallen part. Ruth herself typifies our natural man created by God and redeemed and regenerated to be the new man as the counterpart of Christ.

5. The first kinsman of Ruth's husband typifies our

natural man who cannot and will not redeem us from the indebtedness (sin) of our old man. Boaz, the second kinsman of Ruth's husband, typifies Christ, who partook of blood and flesh (Heb. 2:14) to be our Kinsman and who can redeem us from our sin, recover the lost right of our natural man in God's creation, be our new Husband in His divine organic union with us, and take us for His counterpart for His increase.

Some may say that Christ has redeemed our fallen man, but this kind of speaking is ambiguous. Actually, Christ will not redeem anything that is fallen. Within fallen man is a part that was created by God and that can still be used by Him. Christ redeemed this God-created part of the old man, destroying the fallen part and clearing away the sin caused by this fallen part. Therefore, with respect to the believers' old man, Christ's crucifixion accomplished three things. It redeemed the God-created part of our being, it destroyed the fallen part of our being, and it cleared away our sin, which was caused by this fallen part.

Christ can be regarded as our Kinsman because He partook of blood and flesh to be a man. However, as our Kinsman He is not as close to us as our self, our natural man—our first kinsman. The natural man created by God is the first kinsman, and Christ is the second. Because the first kinsman, typified by Ruth's closest kinsman, did not have the capacity to redeem us, Christ came as the second one to redeem us, to recover our lost birthright, to become our new Husband in the divine organic union, and to take us for His counterpart for His increase.

LIFE-STUDY OF RUTH

MESSAGE SEVEN

RUTH'S STATUSES TYPIFYING THE STATUSES OF THE BELIEVERS IN CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Ruth 1:16-17; 2:2, 11-12; 4:9-13

The book of Ruth tells us a very famous story. In this story the central role belongs to Ruth, and this role has ten statuses. Although I began to study this book more than sixty years ago and although I was taught by others regarding it, I have found it difficult to find out the various statuses of Ruth. Only recently have I seen a clear view of these statuses. In this message, therefore, I have the burden to speak a very brief word concerning Ruth's ten statuses and concerning how they are a type of the statuses of the believers in Christ today.

RUTH'S TEN STATUSES

Ruth's first status was that of a God-created person who was very good (Gen. 1:27, 31). Second, she was a fallen person in Adam who was condemned by God and constituted a sinner before God (Rom. 5:18a, 19a). Third, she became an old man to be, by forsaking God as her Husband, an old husband to herself (Rom. 6:6a; 7:2) who brought her into indebtedness. Fourth, she became a debtor in the sin of her old husband. Fifth, she was a Moabitess, an incestuous Gentile abandoned by God (Deut. 23:3). Sixth, she became one who joined God's elect, Israel, in partaking of God's promises (Eph. 2:12-13; 3:6). Seventh, she was redeemed by her kinsman, Boaz, to be a new wife to him, her new husband (Ruth 4:5, 13). Eighth, she was one who kept the line of Christ's incarnation (Matt. 1:5b). Ninth, she was the great-grandmother of David who brought forth the royal family of the God-ordained government on the earth. Tenth, she became a crucial ancestor of

Christ who brought forth Christ, the embodiment of God, to men on earth.

We may summarize Ruth's statuses by saying that she was a natural, God-created person; a fallen, corrupted person; an old wife to an old husband—a person in the old man involved with sin, with indebtedness; a person who joined God's elect; a redeemed person; a new wife; a person who brought in the royal family of the divine government on earth; and one of the crucial ancestors of Christ who brought Christ to the human race. Stated simply, Ruth was a natural person, a fallen person, a person involved in sin, a redeemed person, a person united to a new husband, and a person who brought Christ to humanity.

A TYPE OF THE BELIEVERS' STATUSES

Now we need to see that in her ten statuses Ruth typifies the believers in their statuses. First, as a God-created person with her status of a natural person with its rights by birth, Ruth typifies the believers as a natural man. Second, by her status as a fallen person—as a Moabitess, a descendant of an incestuous race—Ruth typifies the believers as the fallen man with all his corruption in nature. Third, in her status as the wife of her old husband with his indebtedness—that is, as a person involved with sin and indebted because of it—Ruth typifies the believers as the old man composed of the natural man and the fallen man. Fourth, in her status as a person redeemed by her kinsman, Ruth typifies the believers as those who have been terminated by the cross in the fallen part of their old man and redeemed back to God in the God-created part, with all the indebtedness of sin cleared up and with the birthright recovered. Fifth, in her status as the wife of Boaz in the marriage union, Ruth typifies the believers in God's new creation as parts of the new man to be the counterpart of Christ in the organic union. Sixth, in her status as an ancestor of Christ to bring forth Christ to the human race and to minister Christ to all the people on earth, Ruth typifies the believers as ministers of Christ, who bring and present Christ to all men, supplying them with Christ universally.

From the typology of Ruth's statuses, we can see that as a natural man, we became fallen and involved with sin. Because of this, we needed Christ as our Kinsman to be our Redeemer. After we were redeemed, we became a new wife to Christ, our new Husband in God's new creation. As such, we have become the ministers of Christ.

May we all be impressed with the fact that in these great things Ruth typifies us, the believers in Christ: in God's creation, in man's fall, in the old man's living, in Christ's redemption, in God's new creation, and in Christ's ministry. Today we are ministers of Christ, bringing Christ forth and ministering Christ to people everywhere.

LIFE-STUDY OF RUTH

MESSAGE EIGHT

A CONCLUDING WORD

Scripture Reading: Judg. 13:24-25; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 16:28-30; Ruth 1:16-17, 20-21; 2:10-16; 3:1, 7-13; 4:9-15

In this concluding word on the book of Ruth, I have the burden to cover a very crucial point in Joshua, Judges, and Ruth.

GOD'S MOVE IN THE SPIRIT OF POWER AND GOD'S MOVE IN THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

This crucial point is that these books show us one picture with two sides. One side concerns God's move in His economical Spirit, the Spirit of power; the other side concerns God's move in His essential Spirit, the Spirit of life. With all the judges, and even with Joshua and Caleb, we can see only the work, the move, of God in power. In the books of Joshua and Judges it is hard to find even a hint of God's move in His life.

SAMSON AS A TYPICAL ILLUSTRATION

Samson is a typical illustration of one who moves in the Spirit of power but not in the Spirit of life. Samson was very powerful, even at the time of his death (Judg. 16:28-30), yet with him we cannot see anything of life. Yes, he was a Nazarite, keeping his hair long as a sign that he submitted to God as his Head, not drinking wine, and not eating unclean food. However, this was his following the divine regulations; it did not indicate that he had anything of the divine life. Even though Samson was a Nazarite, he did not know how to restrain the lust of his flesh. The matter of sex was a great stumbling block to him, and both among God's holy people in the Holy Land and among the Gentiles, he practiced

the indulging of his lust. This shows that he was not a person in life.

Furthermore, the account of Samson, as the last judge, the conclusion of the judges, indicates that the entire situation of the judges consummated in the exercising of power without anything of life. It is difficult to understand how a Nazarite could be such a fleshly person. He was full of power and also full of lust. In his case, these two things went together.

This picture answers a question that I have had for many years. A number of Pentecostal preachers have been reckless, without any restraint, or control, of the lust of their flesh. Yet at the same time they have been genuinely powerful in their preaching. On the one hand, they powerfully preached the fundamental gospel concerning Christ, the Son of God, as our Savior; on the other hand, they were living in fornication. I have known a number of cases like this both in China and in the United States. For a long time I could not understand how there could be such a situation. Now I realize that these preachers are today's Samsons. Jehovah's Spirit came upon Samson (Judg. 13:25; 14:6, 19); there is no doubt that he had the real power of God. Nevertheless, he and so many of the judges had no control over their indulgence in lust, such as Gideon, who had seventy-two sons of many wives (8:30-31; 9:5); Jair, who had thirty sons (10:3-4); Ibzan, who had thirty sons and thirty daughters, and brought in thirty foreign daughters from abroad for his sons (12:8-9); and Abdon, who had forty sons and thirty grandsons (12:13-14).

THE BOOK OF RUTH BEING A BOOK OF LIFE

In contrast, the book of Ruth is a book not of power but of life.

The Example of Naomi

Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, was punished by God because he did not live according to God's eternal economy. He did not commit fornication; on the contrary, it seems that he just made a little mistake in leaving the Holy Land. But when he left the good land due to the famine, God came in

and dealt with him, leaving his wife and his two daughters-in-law with nothing, as widows without children. I believe that before going to Moab, Elimelech mortgaged all his property, including the inheritance of his two sons. Eventually, Naomi, a widow with two widowed daughters-in-law, returned from the land of Moab, owning nothing. Nevertheless, Naomi did not rebel against God's dealing. Instead, admitting that God had dealt not only with her husband but also with her, she said, "The All-sufficient One has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, but Jehovah has brought me back empty" (Ruth 1:20b-21a). From her speaking we can see that she was a godly woman. She believed in God, regarded Him, and feared Him.

When Naomi came back to the Holy Land, she came back to the rest in God's economy to participate again in the enjoyment of the God-promised land, where there would be the possibility of being related to Christ's genealogy. Her returning was a great thing, yet it was not accomplished by power. Rather, she came back as a poor beggar who sent her daughter-in-law Ruth to glean in the field.

The Example of Ruth

Ruth was outstanding in life. The purpose of the book of Ruth is not to tell us anything concerning power but to reveal the things of life to the uttermost. Naomi made it clear to Ruth that she had no capacity to produce a husband for her who could redeem her and bring forth a descendant for her father-in-law, Elimelech. Feeling that the situation was hopeless, Naomi encouraged Ruth to return to her mother's house in order to have a future. Ruth's reply was full of life. She would go with Naomi forever, being with her in poverty. Ruth said to Naomi, "Do not entreat me to leave you and turn away from following after you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you dwell, I will dwell; and your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Where you die, I will die; and there will I be buried. Jehovah do so to me, and more as well, if anything but death parts me from you" (vv. 16-17). This is the real spirit of the New Testament believers—to follow Jesus by forsaking everything: parents,

children, relatives, houses, and so forth (Matt. 10:37; 19:29; Mark 10:29-30; Luke 14:26). This is the way of life revealed in the New Testament.

The Example of Boaz

Like Naomi and Ruth, Boaz was a person in life to the uttermost. Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, I must seek some resting place for you, that it may go well with you" (Ruth 3:1). Then Naomi charged her to wash herself, anoint herself, put on her best clothes, go down to the threshing floor, and, at the proper time, make herself known to Boaz. Eventually, Ruth identified herself to Boaz, saying, "I am Ruth, your maidservant. Spread your cloak over your maidservant, for you are a kinsman" (v. 9).

In his contact with Ruth at the threshing floor that night, Boaz was absolutely restrained, not moved, in his lust, absolutely different from the lust-indulging judges. Boaz blessed Ruth and highly appraised her. Then he told her that he was willing to bear his responsibility according to God's ordinance to redeem Elimelech's inheritance, yet he would not overstep the one who was ahead of him in this matter (vv. 12-13). Here Boaz seemed to be saying, "Daughter, wait until tomorrow. Yes, I am your kinsman, and we are free in God. But there is another kinsman who is closer to you than I am, and he must be allowed to go ahead of me. If I do not care for him in this matter, the holy people of God will condemn me for overstepping. Let the other kinsman go ahead of me. If he is not willing to do the kinsman's duty for you, I will do it for you." Boaz was lawful in every way, and his being lawful was based not on power but on life. This shows that Boaz had the highest standard of life.

TAKING THE WAY OF LIFE IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY

In the Lord's recovery, should we take the way of the judges to be powerful and to do a great work? If we take the way of the judges instead of the way of life, whatever we accomplish will mean nothing. Not one judge was a forefather of Christ. The judges had nothing to do with keeping the line in humanity to bring in God in His incarnation. It was Ruth

and Boaz who participated in keeping this line. However, they did not fight a war; they did not exercise any power.

It is crucial for us to see that only life can bring Christ forth. Only life can keep the lineage, maintaining the thin line to bring God into humanity, to produce Christ and to minister Christ and to supply the entire human race with Christ. This was done not by the judges but by Ruth and Boaz, who took the way of life.

In the Lord's recovery, I have very much promoted the gaining of the increase, but I do not mean that we should try to gain the increase by being a Samson or a Gideon. I would rather have no increase and keep my genuineness in life. I would rather be without any power, without any result from the work, and remain in the line that brings forth Christ out of eternity into time, that brings forth Christ with His divinity into humanity.