

Ruth From 'The Numerical Bible'

by F.W. Grant

The Book of Ruth shows us how God's salvation can go forward among the Gentiles, even in times of Israel's failure, and how the remnant of Israel will come to Christ.

Scripture: Leviticus 25:25, Deuteronomy 25:5, Psalm 116:16, Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 41:8, Ezekiel 18:27, Luke 12:37

Topics: "Gods Salvation", "Redemption Through Faith"

Description

F. W. Grant preaches on the Book of Ruth, highlighting the historical context during the times of the judges and its connection to David and the kingdom. The story shows how God's salvation can progress even among the Gentiles, as seen through Ruth's inclusion in the genealogy of Christ. The spiritual sense reveals the remnant of Israel coming back to God through grace, preparing for the future kingdom. Ruth's journey symbolizes the Gentiles finding redemption through Christ. The sermon emphasizes the need for redemption, the role of grace in salvation, and the restoration of Israel through faith in the coming King.

Transcript

The Book of Ruth, from "The Numerical Bible"

SCOPE AND DIVISIONS OF RUTH

The Book of Ruth is plainly a history of the times of the judges, while as plainly it looks on to David and the kingdom. Thus it naturally stands between Judges and Kings (Samuel). Its spiritual meaning as plainly connects these together.

In its literal sense it shows us how, spite of Israel's failure, God's salvation could go forward, even among the Gentiles themselves. For He does not leave Himself without witness, and where there is a heart susceptible to His grace, there will His grace be found by it. Thus Ruth, this Gentile woman, and under the ban of the law (a Moabitess), finds yet her place in the genealogy of Christ - is one of those who can say, "To us a child is born, to us a son is given" (Isa. ix. 6). Nor only this, but in this grace to her the Israelite also is built up again out of his ruin: only through such grace as this can the nation be at last restored and blessed.

The spiritual sense, as it is founded upon the literal, follows this very closely. For Judges having shown us the failure of the heavenly people (which results on the one hand in the Lord gathering his own up to Himself in heaven, and on the other in the rejection of the now lifeless profession upon earth), Ruth shows

us now the remnant of Israel coming like a mere Gentile, all claim forfeited, and under the ban of the law, converted, received, and built up in Christ (Boaz). And this prepares us for the view of David and Solomon as the double type of Christ in His coming kingdom.

For us also, Ruth may display the grace of God in salvation to the Gentiles, going on through all the time of failure depicted in the Judges. But the application here is only partial, and needs to be used with care. It is only the working of God's grace, being always in principle the same, and ministering to the same need, that makes the one case necessarily analogous to the other.

There are three divisions: which in a book so small as Ruth, and so connected, would class rather as sections.

Sec. 1. (Chap. i.) Left Alone.

1. (vs. 1-5) The barrenness of one's own way.
2. (6-18.) Separation and adherence
3. (19-22) The return to the land.

Sec. 2. (Chap. ii.) Help in humiliation: gleanings in the fields of him "in whom strength is."

1. (vs. 1-17) Power and grace.
- 2 (18-27.) Confirmation and progress: a glimpse of redemption

Sec. 3. (Chaps. iii., iv.) Redemption realized.

1. (iii) The claim of barrenness.
2. (iv. 1-8.) The legal kinsman
3. (9-22.) "The resurrection of the name upon the inheritance."

NOTES

It has been already noticed that the place of Ruth, in the present Hebrew canon, is quite different from that which it occupies in our own arrangement, which is that of the Septuagint and of our common Bibles. Enough has been said as to this, probably, there being nothing to assure us of any divine warrant for the incongruous mixture of books in the Kethubim, while the historical place of Ruth cannot be doubted. The spiritual significance is in complete accordance with this also, as will be perfectly evident as we go through the book.

Spiritually, the place of Ruth is clearly that of a supplement to Judges, - it not being meant by this that its lesson is of inferior importance, which, being the salvation side, it cannot be. Judges, as we have seen, has given us the failure of the heavenly people, - of Christianity, looked at as a dispensation. It is not, of course, meant that God's purposes in it could fail. He never ordained it to "bud and blossom, and fill the face of the earth with fruit"; but has expressly assured us that Israel shall do so. (Isa. xxvii. 6.) Of course people may, if they will, say that Christians are the true Israel of God, and inherit their promises; but the passage cannot be found in which Scripture asserts this. On the contrary, it is just the apostle of the Gentiles, after Christianity as a dispensation had already begun, who tells us that to Israelites his "kindred

according to the flesh" - as if he would not allow any escape from his assertion - "pertain the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises" (Rom. ix. 3,4), - manifestly the Old Testament ones. Thus nothing can be much plainer than that Isaiah's words refer to no other than the nation now for their sins broken off and disowned. Israel's blessings are all upon earth. Christians are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." (Eph. i. 3.)

Christians are therefore taught "to wait for the Son of God from heaven," and that "those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" shall then, together with the dead saints raised, "be caught up to meet the Lord in the air," and so, it is added, "shall we be ever with the Lord." (1 Thess. i. 10; iv. 15-17.) But this by no means ends the history of the world: it is plainly beyond this that Israel's promises are to find their fulfillment. "For I would not have you ignorant," says the apostle again, "that blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved." (Rom. xi. 25, 26.) That is to say, when God's purpose in the gathering of the Gentile Church shall be accomplished, and its number therefore complete, Israel will pass out of their present condition of partial blindness into, that of a people all holy (see Isa. iv.), a nation wholly the Lord's, such as has never yet been seen. For this, then, plainly, the present dispensation must have passed away: "as it is written, there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins." (vs. 26, 27.) Read that new covenant in Jeremiah (xxxi. 33, 34), and how plainly does this new condition of the people appear! "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord:" - just what we are doing now, - "for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Thus, indeed, shall "all Israel" in that day "be saved." But what will accomplish this? "The coming of the Deliverer out of Zion," replies the apostle. But is not Christ the Deliverer? - and has He not come? Yes; but not "out of Zion." He has come out of Bethlehem. and out of Nazareth, and, thank God, out of the grave also; but not yet out of Zion: for Zion is the royal city. David's city; and when the King of kings reigns there, then, indeed, shall Israel's deliverance be accomplished. Clearly it stands written, that Israel's conversion nationally shall never be completed "until," says their gracious Lord, "they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son: . . . in that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." (Zech. xii. 10; xiii. 1.)

Now if one ask still, May not this be accomplished without any personal coming of Christ, by the preaching of the gospel? - the answer is given in Revelation (i. 7): "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they who pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." This is just Zechariah's prophecy, and "all kindreds of the earth" is exactly what might be rendered "all the tribes of the land."

Thus it is when He comes in a way visible to all, that Israel will, as a whole, find forgiveness and blessedness: then, and not before. Nationally, they will not be converted by any preaching of the gospel now, and so says the apostle, again, "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes: for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

The change of dispensation, then, is obvious, when Israel is brought back; and the book of Zechariah, in the context of the passages quoted, and with many another prophecy, shows us that there will be a time of trouble, out of which they will be delivered only by the Lord's appearing, and which will be the time of their travail and new birth. In the midst of this it will be that a remnant which at last becomes the nation, will have their preparation, and in poverty and need find their way to Christ. This remnant, in their search and finding, have their fitting symbol in Ruth the Gentile: for on the ground of Gentile grace alone can they stand. For nearly two thousand years they have rejected the Lord: they have abode, according to Hosea's prophecy, "without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim," - Gentiles in practical condition, disowning and disowned of God; with an empty profession, however which may enable us to understand their picture to be that of the Moabitess. All the fitness of the history so allegorized will appear as we take it up in detail, until in Boaz is found the Kinsman-Redeemer, in union with whom riches and establishment are found. This, too, is our Redeemer; and many a precious view of Him shall we enjoy as we go through the book. To Israel is, as has been said, the first application; and the only way of true profit as to all Scripture is in maintaining the divinely intended meaning. Among the sheaves there will be found, for us as for Ruth, much more than a gleanings.

RUTH

SECTION 1. (Chap. 1.)

Left Alone.

Israel in her faithlessness, her exile from her land, her widowed condition, is first presented to us in Naomi. All is in ruin with her: she is bereaved and desolate. To her, however, Ruth attaches herself; to share her fortunes. The meaning of this will be found in Micah (ch. v. 3). Israel's travail-time of sorrow is there referred to - the fruit, on the one hand, of the gathering of the nations against Zion (ch. iv. 11, sq.); but, in a deeper sense, the fruit of the Judge of Israel having been smitten on the cheek (v. 1). Then we have, parenthetically, the glory of the insulted Judge: it is He who comes forth out of Bethlehem to be Ruler in Israel. This is the passage that the scribes quoted to Herod in answer to the question of the wise men at the birth of Christ; but they did not go on to speak of the great glory that is revealed here as His: "whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." He is Israel's divine-human King, yet rejected: and being rejected, He rejects: "therefore doth He give them up." Here is the secret of their condition as a nation since, - a secret still, to them, alas, though so plainly declared; and here is the reason of their final sorrows. But there is a limit: He cannot always give them up: His promises to the fathers must find their fulfillment; so it is added, "He shall give them, up, until." What is the limit? - "until she which travaileth has brought forth." Their sorrows are the birth-throes of a people, to be born as in one day; and "then shall the remnant of His brethren return unto the children of Israel."

What this last statement means should not now be difficult. If we have but intelligently grasped the Scriptures that have been before us, it will be plain that those whom the Lord counts His brethren, that is, those who do the will of His Father which is in heaven (Matt. xii. 50), have, during the time of His rejection of Israel, been outside of Israel. Even Jews by birth, when converted to Christ, and baptized of the Spirit into one body, necessarily give up Jewish hopes, although for better ones.

When, however, the fullness of the Gentiles is come in, and this part of God's purposes has found its consummation, then Israel will be again, and more really than ever, the people of God; and those who are brethren of the King (according to the standpoint of the prophet, Israelite-born) will return to Israelite hopes

and heritage.

Now if Naomi stand for Israel as connected with her sorrowful past, and yet with the land to which she is returning, we can easily see in Ruth's clinging to her the return just spoken of; of the children of the King. Yet, at first, all seems wrecked and hopeless: the return is in bitterness and sorrow: then comes the gleaning in strange harvest-fields, where the Lord of the harvest is met and becomes known in His bounty; and finally, redemption, and marriage-songs: and by Ruth, through the grace of Boaz, Naomi is "built up."

1. (vs. 1-5) The barrenness of one's own way.

And it was in the days that the judges ruled, and there was a famine in the land. And there went a man of Bethlehem-judah to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. And the man's name was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi, and the names of his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion: Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab and continued there. And Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them Moabitish wives: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the second, Ruth; and they dwelt there about ten years. And they died both of them, Mahlon and Chilion: and the woman was left of her two children and of her husband.

(i.) Fixing our eyes, then, upon Naomi as the central figure at the first, we find that her name is "pleasant," - a terrible contrast, as she realizes it, to the Lord's dealings with her. Her husband is Elimelech, "my God," or, in the form here, "my Mighty One is King." Another contrast: for a famine in the land makes him leave it for the heathen land adjoining, and there he dies.

Thus Israel, self-exiled from her land through unbelief, - for the famine would not suffice for one who had heard the promise, "Dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed," - has lost her enjoyed faith as well as her land and is in Moab, the place of mere profession.

The names of the sons - Mahlon and Chilion - have been quite differently, indeed oppositely, interpreted: generally, in accordance with their brief lives, Mahlon as "sick," and Chilion as "pining." But it has been urged against this that in this sense they would be unlikely names enough to be bestowed by their parents in their happier days; and it might be urged more conclusively that they are not in keeping with those of their father and mother, both of them in contrast with their after-lot. Cassel proposes, therefore, to derive Mahlon (properly, Maclon) from machol, a "circle-dance" and Chilion from calal, to "crown," - thus "crowned." A third view is possible: that there may be a real ambiguity in the words, which we are intended to leave there, and which points the contrast between the beginning and the end in a way quite easy to be understood.

The names of the wives - Ruth and Orpah - are similarly in dispute. Orpah is taken by most to be the same Ophrah, "a fawn," but this is merely conjectural. Without the transposition it could hardly mean anything in Hebrew but "her neck," literally "the back of her neck"; and to give the back of the neck means to turn the back, either in stubbornness or in flight. Orpah's desertion of her mother-in-law cannot but make us incline to such a connection.

Ruth can only be understood as having a letter omitted by contraction. If this be an aleph, then it means "appearance," which has been freely taken as "beauty." if the letter dropped be ain, then it is taken as "friendship, female friend." This seems to agree with the story, but certainly adds nothing to it; while with a similar derivation it may mean "tended," as by a shepherd: this would seem every way appropriate.

That in the generation of Israel, to which Ruth typically belongs, there will be a portion that will turn their back upon the true national hopes and heritage, becoming finally apostate followers of Antichrist, is plainly predicted in the prophets. Orpah would naturally stand for these, as Ruth for the true remnant. Both widowed, - their first hopes ended, in the time of their distress they turn their several ways, and are separated forever.

2. (6-18.) Separation and adherence.

"And she arose, she and her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab that Jehovah had visited his people to give them bread. And she went forth from the place where she had been, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and as they were going on the way to return to the land of Judah, Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother's house; Jehovah deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me: Jehovah grant you that ye may find rest, each in the house of her husband. And she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, [Nay,] but we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Return, my daughters: why will ye go with me; are there still 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 should say, I have hope, should I even have a husband to-night, and should I also bear sons, would ye then tarry till they were grown? Would ye stay on that account from having husbands? Nay, my daughters; for I am in much more bitterness than you: for Jehovah's hand is gone out against me. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave to her. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back to her people and to her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried: Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me. And when she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, she ceased speaking to her."

(ii.) This is what we have in the next sub-section. Naomi, hopeless as to herself, yet drawn by her affections, sets her face to return to Bethlehem from the country of Moab. But she is unbelieving and bitter of soul, and manifests that strange self-contradiction which, in such states, is so common an experience. Herself on her way back to the land of which she had heard that Jehovah had visited His people to give them bread, she sees nothing for her daughters-in-law but that they must return to their people and to their gods, and prays Jehovah to give them rest, each in the house of a heathen husband! This is the confusion of a darkened soul; for in darkness all is confusion. All that she is clear about is the ruin in which she is, and she can give counsel of nothing but her despair. Orpah, after a faint resistance, goes back; but with Ruth neither precept nor example can avail to turn her heart from the pursuit of what appeals to her with a power above all difficulties. It is truly with the heart that man believeth and how manifest is the heart in that touching devotion of hers! "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

This is not the language of natural affection simply, that stops short of this last. And where this can be said, though it may come in in a subsidiary way, yet it cannot be a secondary thing. The faith of Ruth is, indeed, a beautiful thing to contemplate; and a striking proof of how that which God has planted can flourish in the midst of contrary circumstances and oppositions of all kinds. How little does Naomi here commend her God of whom Ruth speaks! The famine in Bethlehem, mocking it as the "house of bread"; the withdrawal of Elimelech, denying what his name expressed; his death; the Moabitish marriages, one of

them her own; then the quick widowhoods; how the mother-in-law's appeal to go back, as Orpah had gone back, to her people and her gods: this is all we know of her surroundings, but which of them is favourable faith? Ah, it is God that favours it and upholds it and all the opposition only rouses it into a passion of longing and resolve. There might be little encouragement: was there not all the more a deep and deepening necessity, which found only in Israel's God the possibility of satisfaction, if not yet the satisfaction itself? Could such longing go without satisfaction, or could He who alone could meet it be a dream, or afar off from the need created?

And thus will a remnant be drawn to the God of Israel in times now surely drawing nigh, when around them faith will have vanished from the earth, when darkness covers it, and gross darkness the peoples. (Isa. lx. 2.) Brethren of the King, though as yet little deeming themselves that, they will cleave to the nation in its sorrows and widowhood, and following it be drawn into the land.

3. (19-22) The return to the land.

And they two went on till they came to Bethlehem; and so it was, when they came to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went, out full, and Jehovah hath brought me home again empty. Why call ye me Naomi, when Jehovah hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath done evil to me? So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, that returned out of the country of Moab; and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley-harvest.

(iii.) So Naomi returns, and Ruth with her, at present only to feel the bitterness of this return. She owns that Jehovah has brought her back empty, and that in doing this He has testified against her. But there is no light beyond. No Father's arms welcome her. No Father's house opens to let her in. She comes back, as Israel will come back, to have the finger pointed at her, and the question uttered aloud, is this Naomi? And yet the cry, "I have sinned." is heard; and Bethlehem shall answer to its name. The fields are white, and the reapers ready: it is the beginning of barley-harvest.

SECTION 2. (Chap. ii.)

Help in humiliation: gleanings in the field of him "in whom strength is."

In the next section we have help found for Ruth, and are introduced to the redeemer Boaz, the plain figure of Christ. Not at once is redemption found, however, nor even known about. Ruth is at first merely a gleaner in his fields, soon learning, indeed, his bounty, and receiving from his hand, but in humiliation. It is a middle state that souls often pass through, before the realization of redemption; and with Israel's remnant in the day to come, such a gradual dawning of light, as to Christ, and their relationship to Him is natural, if not inevitable. The story of Joseph's brethren presents this to us from the side of conscience and their guilt in relation to him. Ruth gives us rather the attraction of heart with light gradually breaking in - a gentler and quieter story, though not without connection with the older one.

1. (vs. 1-17) Power and grace.

And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a mighty man of valour, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me go now to the field, and glean among the ears of corn after him in whose eyes I shall find favour. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. So she went; and she came and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and her hap was to light upon the

portion of the field which belonged to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and he said unto the reapers, Jehovah be with you. And they answered him, Jehovah bless thee. And Boaz said unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? 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; and she said, Let me glean, I pray you, and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came and continued from the morning even until now: her sitting in the house hath been but little.

And Boaz said unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence; but abide here with my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men not to touch thee? And when thou thirstest, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found favour in thine eyes, that thou shouldst regard me, and I a stranger?

And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath been fully shown me, all that thou hast done to thy mother-in-law, since the death of thy husband, and that thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy birth, and art come unto a people that thou knewest not heretofore. Jehovah recompense thy doing, and may thy reward be full from Jehovah the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to take refuge. And she said, Let me find favour in thine eyes, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken to the heart of thy handmaid, though I be not like one of thy handmaidens.

And Boaz said unto her at meal-time, Come hither and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers; and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat and was satisfied, and left [some] over. And when she arose to glean, Boaz charged his young men, saying, Let her glean even between the sheaves, and reproach her not; and draw out also out of the bundles, and leave it for her to glean, and check her not. So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned; and it was about an ephah of barley. (i.)

First, we are made to know, though Ruth yet knows not, of Boaz and the relationship of Naomi to him. Boaz means "in him is strength," and he is spoken of as a mighty man of valour, - not of wealth, as in the common version, though the word may mean "wealth"; but not so probably in the connection in which it stands. It is the same expression which is used of the deliverers in the book of Judges, and has a good reason for its place in this sense here. The wealth which Christ has for the needy has indeed been attained by conflict; for though he was "rich" from eternity who "for our sakes became poor," yet the "riches of His grace" had to be acquired before they could be bestowed.

It is fit that we should be reminded here, first, of all, of that accomplished warfare into the fruits of which we enter, though this be not the subject of the book. Thus "in Him is strength" for our redemption.

Notice that Boaz is strictly a relation of Elimelech only, and through him it is that Naomi has any claim. Israel has no relationship to Christ except through the faith that Elimelech represents. In fact, and on this account, it is only through Ruth that Naomi can claim; but this will come before us later. Of all this she knows nothing yet.

But it is harvest, and Ruth proposes to go into the fields and glean, - a humble occupation and a poor one, but where, in the mercy that characterized the law, the poor and the stranger had special rights. These

harvest-fields lead us once more to think of that work of Christ, the death of the corn of wheat, whereby the bread of life has been provided for us. Nature is full of its testimony to Him, - fuller than even His people ever cared to know.

But what a harvest-field is there in Scripture for us! And is it not true that, as surely as the whole of it is open to us now, so surely will the remnant of Israel, brought in after the Church is gone from earth, have but the gleanings? May not this even be a rightful application of the statute as to the gleaner, coming where it does amid the "set times" of Leviticus xxiii.? May not there be room left for a double application of such a principle?

But gleaning in the field brings Ruth into contact with the master of the field; and so it is with the precious word of God when sought as food for the soul: it brings us into the presence of Him, before whose eyes "all things are naked and open" and who delights to minister to the necessity thus making itself manifest. How tender is His desire toward the seekers of the living bread that they should "go not to glean in another field, nor go from hence"! How soon do they find provision made for the inevitable thirst! How they are made to realize that here is One with knowledge of all their ways, and all the path by which they have come to where they are! Then there is nearer intimacy: we begin to learn what it is to take from His hand and to eat with Him till we are sufficed, and have something over. Then the gleaning goes on with more boldness and with more success: there is again and again what must have been dropped on purpose for us, until we find we have quite a store of precious grain. All this is the common history of seeking souls; while yet rest is not found, nor redemption known, nor relation established with the Lord of the harvest.

2 (18-27.) Confirmation and progress: a glimpse of redemption.

And she took it up, and went into the city, and showed her mother-in-law what she had gleaned; and she brought out and gave her what she had left over after she was satisfied. And her mother in law said her, Where hast thou gleaned today and where hast thou wrought? Blessed be he that regarded thee. And she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of Jehovah, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is related to us, one of our redeemers. And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep with my young men, until they have finished all my harvest. And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is well, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they come not upon thee in another field. So she kept with the maidens of Boaz to glean until the end of barley harvest, and of wheat harvest. And she abode with her mother in law.

(ii.) It is from her mother-in-law that Ruth learns presently as to the man with whom she has found favour; but the knowledge she gains is, after all, indefinite. There is some relationship, she learns, and he is one of our redeemers, - a phrase which shows how little she has to give that is intelligent or that can be laid hold of. Joseph's brethren are long, as we have seen, before they know with whom they have to do, and who knows them so well, and learn from his own lips that he is Joseph. It is a secret that can only be learnt from his own lips. For the remnant, attaching themselves to Israel's hopes and going back along the lines of Israel's history, it seems as if there would be much groping in the darkness before the light will dawn. They look upon Him whom they have pierced, only when He comes manifestly to all. Yet He has been with them as with Nathaniel before they see Him; and the Lord's words in the great prophecy of Matthew xxiv. seem clearly to imply that there will be those in Judea before He appears who will listen to his voice and obey Him. Are we to make a distinction here between different classes? - those with less light and those

with more - or is it true of all that they will be under the fog of Jewish teaching, learning from the mother-in-law, and counting him but as "one of their redeemers"?

Thus Ruth, however, is brought into connection with Boaz; for the grace that is in him to make deeper impression continuously upon her. She abides through the barley-harvest and through the wheat-harvest following. That which is gathered becomes naturally more valuable. But as to her own relations there is no change: Boaz is a kinsman, - one of her redeemers, and her home - a poor one yet - is with her mother-in-law.

SECTION 3. (Chap. iii., iv.)

Redemption realized.

All is now to be changed for Ruth; and thus, also, for Naomi. What follows is based upon two laws in Israel: the law as to the redemption of an inheritance (Lev. xxv. 25), and that of raising up a brother's name on his inheritance (Deut. xxv 5-12), - things which are here brought together, and which in application to Israel belong clearly together. Heir and inheritance, in their case, need alike to be redeemed; yea, and the name of the dead raised up, which is accomplished for Israel by a true spiritual resurrection, the breath of a new life breathed into them, as in Ezekiel's vision of dry bones (ch. xxxvii). In Ruth the story is, indeed, differently told, but it is essentially the same, and here has a tenderness and beauty all its own.

1. (iii) The claim of barrenness.

"And Naomi, her mother-in-law, said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek a resting-place for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now, is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? behold, he winnoweth barley to-night in the threshing-floor. Wash thyself; therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and go down to the floor; [but] let not thyself be known to the man till he have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he hath lain down, and thou shalt go and uncover the place at his feet, and lay thee down; and he shall tell thee what thou shalt do. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do. And she went down to the floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law had bidden her.

And Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, and he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn. And she came softly, and uncovered the place at his feet, and laid her down. And it came to pass that at midnight the man was startled and turned, and behold, a woman lying at his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she said, I am Ruth thy handmaid: spread then thy wing over thy handmaid, for thou art a redeemer. And he said, Blessed be thou of Jehovah, my daughter: thou hast shown more kindness at the end than at the first, inasmuch as thou followedst not after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not: I will do for thee all thou sayest for all the gate of my people knoweth that thou art a virtuous woman. And now truly I am a redeemer but there is a redeemer nearer than I. Tarry the night, and it shall be in the morning, if he will act the redeemer to thee, well, let him redeem; but if he will not redeem thee, then will I redeem thee, as Jehovah liveth: lie down until the morning. And she lay at his feet until morning, and she rose up before one could know another: and he Said, Let it not be known that a woman came unto the floor. And he said, Bring the cloak that is upon thee, and hold it. And she held it, and he measured six [measures] of barley, and laid it on her: and he went unto the city. And she came to her mother-in-law; and she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her. And she said, These six [measures] of barley gave he me: for he said, Go not empty to thy

mother-in-law. And she said, Remain quiet, my daughter, till thou shalt see how the matter will fall out: for the man will not be at rest until he have finished the thing today."

(i.) In this section we find Ruth no longer a gleaner. She is putting forth new claims and cherishing high aspirations. And here her mother-in-law is her instructor once more. She has already pointed out Boaz as a kinsman of Elimelech, and one of their redeemers, but, for some time this seems to have no practical significance for either of them. Now she is full of a new interest. Ruth must have a resting-place for herself, and to find it she must seek it. Very simply and naturally her mind turns to Boaz: ignorantly, indeed, and yet with a knowledge such as the heart teaches, and which in the end proves right. Ruth is bidden by her to put forth a personal claim upon Boaz, according to the law of Deuteronomy, and this she does, - to find in the first place that she has made an apparent mistake, but which in the end proves none. It is only upon the failure of a nearer kinsman than himself that Boaz can act. Naomi herself has called him one of their redeemers. It must be proved satisfactorily if there is more than one.

The remnant (whom Ruth represents) learns, first of all, from the nation (which is Naomi) certain lessons as to redemption, which personal experience, however, alone can interpret, and get right. The only religion that avails anything is that of experiment: in making which both heart and conscience get searched out, their needs thoroughly explored, and then met. The believing that avails for us is one that shows itself in coming to Him; yet the soul coming may find at first disappointment. The power of the "nearer kinsman" must be thoroughly and practically understood before Christ can show his power.

"Rest" can only come from a Redeemer. Naomi makes no mistake there. When Christ says, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest," He is declaring Himself this; and it is as such - the only and all-sufficient One - that He will or can give it to us. This we must learn aright. Thank God, He has proved His power to fulfill this word of His, all the centuries down.

Boaz is winnowing barley at night in the threshing-floor. And Israel is such a floor, which the Lord is going to purge, according to the Baptist's testimony. (Matt. iii. 12.) A night of affliction is coming for them, in which He will winnow the chaff from the grain, that He may gather to Himself that which has value for Him. "The fan is in His hand." Judgment, alas, must come; but He means by it to take forth the precious from the vile. And this is the very time when the remnant, therefore, in the darkness of as black a night as the earth has ever seen, shall creep to His feet, and claim Him as their own.

Assuredly it will be a bold act then, if even Ruth's seems so; yet this grace has been dawning upon them, and His voice has seemed to speak amid the voices of the prophetic promises, yet but beginning to be intelligible. At midnight, suddenly, just at the darkest, comes his voice with a question - how necessary a one, when it is redemption that is to be realized - "Who art thou?" How blessed to know that the right answer is but to own, "I am Ruth, thy handmaid," for this is the name of the barren woman whose natural hopes are dead. To such an one it is that the law applies and pledges itself: no other has any claim. "Spread, then, thy wing over thy handmaid," - this soul with its need of shelter, - "for thou art a redeemer."

But not yet can the prayer be answered fully. Always is there, indeed, encouragement for the needy from these lips that speak here. Still she must await the morning. She is to be answered; some way redemption will surely come: so much she knows, but is he - will he be the redeemer? This question, is it not answered for the remnant also only fully in the "morning," - a morning which He makes by His own coming, the glory of His presence. Ministered to they are, sustained by His hand, still sent back, as Ruth to her mother-in-law, to await the morning!

Ah, but His heart will not have its rest till the matter is finished, and redemption is found for Ruth - "shepherd-tended" Ruth!

2. (iv. 1-8.) The legal kinsman

"And Boaz went up to the gate, and sat him down there; and behold, the redeemer of whom Boaz spake passed by. And he said, Ho, such an one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside and sat down, And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit down here. And they sat down. And he said unto the redeemer, Naomi, who is returned from the country of Moab, hath sold the allotment of the field that was our brother Elimelech's: and I thought to inform thee, saying, Buy it before those that sit [here], even before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem [it]; and if thou wilt not redeem it, tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. And Boaz said, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou buyest it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And the redeemer said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: do my [part of the] redemption for thyself, for I cannot redeem it. And this was the custom in former time in Israel, in cases of redemption, and in cases of exchange, to confirm the whole matter: a man drew off his shoe and gave it to his neighbour; and this was the attestation in Israel. And the redeemer said unto Boaz, Buy it for thyself; and he drew off his shoe."

(ii.) Now we are to be introduced to the other kinsman: there is but one other in the story; and strange it is, when we know our Boaz, that he should have the prior claim! Is there, then, another redeemer? Does the word of God give any ground for such a supposition? Yes, as a supposition. Hypothetically, there is a mode of salvation other than by Christ: test it, and you find by experience (once more the teacher) that there is, and can be, only one.

"When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." This is the voice of God by the prophet Ezekiel (xviii. 27), and every word of God shall stand. It is a way of salvation, too, that is declared, - not simply of a righteousness that needs none. It is the wicked man who is spoken of, - the man who can already be called that, and who as that needs salvation. Forgiveness of sins is announced for him: "All his transgressions that he has committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live" (v. 22). Thus the mercy of God is pledged to a returning soul: and, of course, one must say, in all sincerity and truth, or it could not be from Him.

Yet this is not the salvation which we find in Christ. Its condition is not of faith in Him, but of works: to obtain it one must have a righteousness which is of works. And these two principles - of faith and of works - are principles that cannot be united together, so that it will not do to say that although faith in Christ is not here formally made mention of, it must in fact be found. On the contrary, it is most certain that the principle here declared excludes faith in Christ in any evangelic sense. "For if it be of grace," says the apostle, "it is no more of work, otherwise grace is no more grace." (Rom. xi. 6.) As surely, then, as the principle here is that of righteousness by work, so surely is it not a righteousness by faith: it is contrastive and contradictory to faith.

It is the principle of the law as given the second time, after the people had sinned and made a golden calf. It is not pure law, but law modified and tempered by mercy, so as to give man as failed the means of self-recovery, if self-recovery were possible. But it was not possible for them, and is not possible for any.

Of this law the mediator was Moses, and not Christ and so entirely unavailing was it, that the very mediator of the law becomes of necessity the accuser of the people: "there is one that accuseth you," says the Lord to Israel, "even Moses, in whom ye trust." (John v. 45.)

Thus we see the redeemer who is not Boaz, but the redeemer who cannot redeem. The law is, indeed, the nearest kinsman that man has, and the one to which, apart from the teaching of divine grace, man naturally turns. One of the reasons of the delay in Christ's coming was that the law should first of all be tried; for this is but the trial of man's righteousness. And so in the history of a saved soul, the law's claim must first be set aside, that Christ may not be to it as "one of our redeemers," but the only Redeemer possible, the Boaz "in whom is strength."

It is a matter for judgment., and therefore Boaz goes up to the gate, where causes were habitually tried. Presently, behold, the redeemer of whom he had spoken passes by. Notice, the man is quite indifferent: he has none of the loving interest that we find in the heart of Boaz: he would pass by, as the priest and Levite did the man on the road to Jericho. And such is the heartlessness of the legal method. Law has no personal interest, and cannot have. It speaks in the third person: if one comes under the rule, be it so; this is its impartiality, its indifference. But thus it cannot represent the heart of God.

Boaz calls the man, and he sits down; then ten men, elders of the city, are called, and they sit down; the ten commandments are our Boaz's witnesses that the law is incompetent to do aught for a sinner's salvation. How soon and simply could the case be settled, if always the ten and no others were witnesses! But people make this great mistake, that, because, in fact, God is merciful, He will not require the righteousness which the law requires, which the ten commandments specify, but something, they know not how much, under this. Whereas, though He may be patient and give time, and give repeated opportunities, He never lowers His demand, never can accept less than "what is lawful and right." Above all, He has never proposed Christ as a makeweight for our deficiencies. "If righteousness come by the law," says the apostle, "then Christ is dead in vain."

Boaz begins with the question of inheritance: "Naomi, who is returned from the country of Moab, has sold the allotment of the field that was our brother Elimelech's. . . . If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it. . . . And he said, I will redeem it." We see here the connection between the land and the people of Israel. In fact, how carefully has the land been guarded for them, keeping sabbath while the heirs are exiled! God has given it by absolute promise to the seed of Abraham, and that according to the flesh. But here is the difficulty: "And Boaz said, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou buyest it also of Ruth, the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And the redeemer said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance."

Elimelech is dead, that is Israel looked at as identified with the faith of God as King; yet Israel, in fact, remains, though as Naomi, widowed and destitute. But there is a young life, a new generation, through whom the name of the dead may be raised up. Yet these are as the Moabitess, whom the law cannot bring in, but must keep out: for it is written that "a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of Jehovah forever." Well may the kinsman fear, therefore, lest in taking Ruth he should mar his own inheritance.

Throughout the story this is the title that everywhere comes into prominence. Despite all Ruth's attractiveness and piety, she is always spoken of, emphatically, as Ruth, the Moabitess. And the law, in presence of this conceded truth, can make no exception in her favour. The law is against her wholly, - accuses, convicts, and cannot justify. So hopeless is Israel's case in the hands of Moses.

If we look at the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospel of Matthew, we shall find there, without the stigma of her origin, the name of Ruth. She is the third of four women only who stand exceptionally in the record there. At a first glance, we might think, uselessly also: for of what use are they in establishing His title to be David's Son? None, clearly; and so they must have another purpose: for everything has purpose in the word of God; yet what purpose in a genealogy?

But the genealogy is not merely His as Son of David; the title of it adds to this that it is Christ's as Son of Abraham. And the three names that end with Ruth are in this part, as we see: can they have part, then, in showing that Christ is Son of Abraham ?

Now here light breaks in at once: for the Seed of Abraham is he in whom all families of the earth are to be blessed, - Gentile as well as Jew; while these three names are Gentile. How vain, then, to think of denying the Gentiles their part in Christ!

But more: in each of these names we may discern what might be easily taken as a blot upon the genealogy. What was Tamar? what Rahab ? what even Ruth, the Moabitess? But does not this, then, show us all the more the Seed of Abraham, the blesser of the nations? Yes, and each name tells out, and in perfect order, the reality of grace. Tamar, whose sin alone brings her into the list, begins the story; for sin is the fundamental fact for the gospel; and our sin owned gives us title to the Saviour of sinners. But then Rahab (no less the sinner) shows us faith, a faith that separates from judgment and brings into blessing: that is as clearly the second foundation.

What, then, does the name of Ruth emphasize in this series? Can it be anything but this, that the law therefore is not the way of blessing, does not furnish the redeemer, but grace only does? - for Ruth the Moabitess is debtor to the grace of Boaz! Here, surely, all is consistent, all is harmony. And how Ruth's character, so different from that of those who precede her in this list, assures us that not those whom men would class as sinners, but those also whom they might class as saints, are all together by the law convicted and condemned, and that for all who receive salvation grace must reign!

No, assuredly the law cannot raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance. The power of God in grace can alone meet the need that is here symbolized. The kinsman passes his shoe - the sign of entering upon possession - to him in whom power is. The law testifies and yields its rights to Christ, and He is declared the only possible Redeemer. Such will the remnant find Him in the day that comes.

3. (9-22.) "The resurrection of the name upon the inheritance."

"And Boaz said to the elders and to all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have acquired all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. And Ruth also, the wife of Mahlon, have I acquired to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders said, [We are] witnesses. Jehovah make the woman that cometh into thy house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel; and make thee strength in Ephratah, and get thee a name in Bethlehem; and let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which Jehovah shall give thee of this young woman.

And Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in unto her, and Jehovah gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed he Jehovah, who hath not left,

thee this day without a redeemer, and may his name be famous in Israel. And he shall be to thee a restorer of life, and a support of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, who is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse to it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David. Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron, and Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, and Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, and Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David."

(iii.) Boaz proclaims his title and his grace. The inheritance becomes his by purchase; and Ruth also, once more and for the last time spoken of as the Moabitess, he acquires for himself. Israel's land is yet to be known as Immanuel's. for indeed he has bought it at its full value. The people, also, are the purchased of His love. In Ruth's case the figure falls necessarily short, and the word used does not positively convey the idea of purchase. All types must, indeed, fall short, whether as picturing our need or the way that He has met it. This we are prepared for. The outline may be slight, but is sufficient. When it is followed up in the day to come, how it will be seen that here is One who has strength in Ephratah, and His name in Bethlehem; and how will the remnant "break forth" like the house of Pharez, "breaker forth," as it is written, "For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shalt inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited, . . . for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more." And how Ruth's story is transfigured here! "For thy Maker is thy husband, Jehovah of hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel: the God of the whole earth shall He be called." (Isa. liv, 3-5.)

Naomi, therefore, is built up by Ruth, and her son becomes (in another sense, of course) her redeemer, the restorer of her life, and the support of her old age. For the son's name is Obed, the "servant," and the sweet adoring service of the new generation of Israel will be in those days the restoring of life indeed. Fit it is that the "women, her neighbours," should give the name to this new seed, as the nations round (then neighbourly!) will speak the praise of the new nation. For then for the first time shall they completely fulfill the word: "But thou, Israel, art my Servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away." (Isa. xli. 8, 9.)

This is indeed a sign of perfect redemption, whatever the dispensation: "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds." (Ps. cxvi. 16.) Redemption is thus the spring of service, and gives character to it; and if we are indeed in the nearer and more wonderful place of sons of God, the service of sons is only the fullest, the most joyful service. Yea, the only-begotten Son, to the wonder and delight of heaven, has come forth and served; yea, and still serves; and in that day will serve; as He has Himself said: -

"Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth, and serve them." (Luke xii. 37.)

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