

## LESSON 26

### THE DEVOTION OF RUTH

The story of Ruth may be found in an Old Testament book, called by its protagonist's name, Ruth. It gives an account of a Moabite woman who leaves her own people to be with her mother-in-law, Naomi, who is an Israelite from Bethlehem. The story shows the mercy and blessing of God to a widow who has lost both of her two sons; to the nation of Israel whose most famous king came from Ruth, David; and to Christians, as David was a direct ancestor of Jesus.

Just one interesting aspect of Ruth's story is that what appears to be a curse actually becomes a blessing in the providence of God. The "famine" that Naomi experiences in her personal tragedy is like the famine of Bethlehem, which forces her family to remove to Moab where her children marry foreign women. There her husband and sons die, but when the famine ends, she returns to Bethlehem (which means "house of bread"), where Ruth finds her husband Boaz. The first son of Ruth (Obed) would have been raised in the name of her husband, Naomi's son. Thus, the widow does not remain childless, and her family's land inheritance will not be forfeited to a stranger. Obed has a son named Jesse and Jesse has a son named David, the King of Israel. In the beginning of the story Naomi, whose name means "sweetness" thinks of herself as cursed and therefore calls herself *Mara*, which means bitterness; however, at the end of the story she is clearly *is* blessed—and so is Israel and the Gentile world through David and his descendant Jesus.

### READING QUESTIONS A

1. Who was Ruth? Was she of the same nation as Naomi? Whom had she married?  
*Ruth was a Moabite living in the days of the judges, while her mother-in-law was an Israelite who lived in Bethlehem. (Descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot, the Moabites were long enemies of Israel who lived in a land east of the Holy Nation. Thus, when Naomi returned to Bethlehem, she would have traveled west.) Ruth married one of Naomi's sons (Mahlon).*
2. Why did Naomi encourage Ruth to stay in her own country and not follow her?  
*Naomi urges both her daughters-in-law to return to their native lands because they were young and marriageable. She says to them she would not be able to provide husbands for them. Her most notable remark is that God has afflicted her. But this is spoken in ignorance. The theme of the book of Ruth is that God in his providence had something wonderful in store for Naomi in that he would provide for Ruth and Naomi a "kinsman redeemer." Boaz takes on this role of kinsmen redeemer by buying the land from Naomi and in essence redeeming her family inheritance of the Promised Land given in the days of Joshua to all of the Israelite families. The Promised Land—the land of Canaan—is a type of redemption, as the Israelites*

*had escaped their enslavement under the Egyptians by crossing the Red Sea and in their new-found liberty took possession of a land that had been promised centuries before to Abraham.*

*As part of his role as kinsman redeemer, Boaz also marries Mahlon's widow Ruth. In doing so, he follows the unusual custom of taking off one's shoe and giving it to another. The one receiving the shoe is the one who not only ransoms the land of the deceased but symbolically carries on his name. In both these two ways—in his ransoming the land and the name of the deceased—Boaz is, for Christians, a beautiful type of Jesus Christ. Notice also that both a Gentile (Ruth) and Jew (Ruth) benefit from Boaz's role and are brought together as one people, typifying what Paul says in Ephesians 2:11-14: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us."*

3. What does Ruth promise to do as she followed Naomi back to Bethlehem in Israel?

*Ruth promises to follow her and make Naomi's people her people and the God of Israel her God. Again, for Christians, this statement typifies the Gentile entering into God's promise.*

4. People of the past had different customs than we do today. Were there any customs mentioned in this book of the Bible that seemed strange to you?

*One of the most unusual customs has already been discussed—that of one taking off his shoe and giving it to another, showing that the one receiving it takes on the position of kinsman redeemer. Another unusual custom appears in Naomi's directions for Ruth to go down to the threshing floor and uncover Boaz's feet when he lies down.*

5. What king of Israel was the great-grandson of Ruth?

*Ruth and Boaz have a son named Obed, who has a son named Jesse. Jesse was the father of King David, of the house of Judah. In the first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, the kingly lineage of Jesus Christ is traced back to David.*

#### QUEEN ESTHER'S LOVE FOR HER PEOPLE

#### READING QUESTIONS B

1. Why was Vashti taken from her position as queen to Xerxes?

*When Vashti did not appear before her husband the king, Memucan, one of the seven high officials, advised Xerxes what to do and why. He counseled him to remove her from her status as queen and give it to another. The reason that he gives for punishing her in such a way is to prevent Persia from following her example. He says, "For the refusal of the queen will be reported to all the women so that they will disobey their husbands, for they will say, 'King Xerxes commanded Vashti, the queen, to be brought in before him, but she did not come.'"*

2. What is the relationship between Mordecai and Esther?

*They were cousins.*

3. Why did Haman hate Mordecai? What did Haman do to take revenge against Mordecai?

*Haman was promoted to a high position and it was commanded that all the king's officials had to bow before him. For Jews, the gesture of bowing is a sign of special reverence shown only to God, and therefore Mordecai refused the order. His refusal wounded Haman's pride, and Haman then decided to take revenge not only on Mordecai but all Jews by advising Xerxes to make a decree to destroy them. The king foolishly agrees to Haman's request and so "messages were sent by men on horses to all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to put an end to all the Jews, young and old, little children and women, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and to rob them of all that they had."*

4. Why was Mordecai honored by Xerxes?

*Xerxes was reminded of the plot against his life that Mordecai had uncovered and wanted to reward him.*

5. Name at least two ironies in the story.

*One irony concerns Haman's entering the king's court to speak about hanging Mordecai. Instead of discussing the punishment of Mordecai, the king talks about his advancement and honor. Also, Haman thinks the king is talking of himself and not Mordecai when Xerxes asks, "What shall be done for the man whom the king wishes to honor?" As a consequence, Haman exalts the very man whom he want to disgrace he exalts when he responds. Perhaps the most notable irony is the fact that Haman is executed on the gallows that Haman prepares for Mordecai. All of the ironies serve to show that we cannot interpret our true situation from current circumstances and that God will use the evil intentions of God's enemies for good.*

#### 1. LITERARY WORDS: PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST

Teachers may want to discuss the stories or books that the students are already acquainted with and mention that most stories contain a protagonist who must struggle against a person, society, his environment or himself. (The word *antagonist* means "struggle against.") This struggle is called a conflict, and the person or adverse circumstance that the protagonist struggles against is called his antagonist.

#### 2. PHONICS AND VOCABULARY: OW

##### PHONICS EXERCISE A

1. c
2. c
3. b
4. a
5. c

6. c
7. b
8. a
9. b
- 10.c

PHONICS EXERCISE B

1. slow
2. narrow
3. window
4. tomorrow
5. narrow
6. bungalow
7. mellow
8. fallow
9. hollow
- 10.follow

PHONICS EXERCISE C

<u>flower</u>	<u>down</u>	<u>power</u>
shadow	know	throw
glowing	tower	hollow
meadow	crown	below
blow	yellow	blown

3. GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION: APOSTROPHES (5)

GRAMMAR EXERCISE A

1. its
2. Their
3. Their
4. Her
5. His
6. its
7. Its
8. Their
9. her

10.Its

GRAMMAR EXERCISE B

1. its
2. It's
3. its
4. its
5. its
6. its
7. It's
8. its
9. its
- 10.it's

GRAMMAR EXERCISE C

1. N
2. A
3. N
4. N
5. A
6. N
7. N
8. A
9. N
- 10.N