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a *Grace Notes* course

# Ruth

Bible Study by Correspondence  
by Warren Doud

Lesson 9 of 10

Ruth 4:1-8

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*Grace Notes*

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## Instructions for Lesson 9

Begin each study session with prayer. It is the Holy Spirit who makes spiritual things discernable to Christians, so it is essential to be in fellowship with the Lord during Bible study.

Read the whole book of Ruth often. It is a short book, and reading it many times will help you understand the story much better.

### Instructions

1. Study Ruth 4:1-8 by reading the verses and studying the notes. Be sure to read any other Bible passages that are called out in the notes.
  2. Study the topics in the same manner. Take particular care to trace all of the discussion through the Bible passages which are included. The topics are called out in the text at a certain point, but you can study the topics in any order you wish.  
The topics are: **Blessing; Faith.**
  3. **Review** all of the notes in the Ruth study and the topics
  4. Go to the Quiz page and follow the instructions to complete all the questions on the quiz. The quiz is "open book". You may refer to all the notes and to the Bible when you take the test. But you should not get help from another person.
  5. When you have completed the Quiz, be sure to **SAVE** your file. If the file is lost, and that can happen at Grace Notes as well, you will want to be able to reproduce your work.
  6. To send the Quiz back to Grace Notes, follow the instructions on the Quiz page.
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### Ruth, Chapter 4

#### Ruth 4:1

**Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat down there, and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spoke came by, unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! Turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down.**

This very colorful description is one of the few documents from the ancient world which describe how a legal process of this kind was carried out. Boaz first move was to go up to the gate of the town of Bethlehem and sit down there.

The gate of a town or village played a large part in the cities of Judah in these times. Excavations reveal that cities in Palestine were very closely built, with no large open spaces like the Roman forum or the Greek agora. There was some space at the gate for people to gather and do business, and the gate was the center of city life.

The gate was the place for any important assembly, but it was primarily for legal business. For example, the kings of Judah and Israel sat on thrones "in the entrance of the gate of Samaria" (1 Kings 22:10). Similarly, King Zedekiah sat "in the gate of Benjamin" (Jer. 38:7).

When Absalom wanted to take advantage of the way justice was administered, he "rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate; and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, that Absalom called unto him..." (You can satisfy your curiosity about what happened next by reading 2 Samuel 15.) :-)

The gate was the place to find the men with whom you had to do business. Amos speaks of "him that rebukes in the gate," and of the unjust judges who "take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right." And he exhorts the people, "Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate." (Amos 5:10-15)

People were condemned before the elders of the city "in the gate", Deut. 22:15. The gate is mentioned in connection with executions (Deut.

22:24). And it is seen as a supreme tragedy when "the elders have ceased from the gate." (Lam. 5:14)

In Deut. 15, when a man refused to marry the widow of his brother, the woman was bidden to "go up to the gate unto the elders" to begin the process of public humiliation of the offender.

So - Boaz was in the right place to conduct legal business.

The phrase "ho, such a one" is a form of direct address without using the person's name. The author of RUTH is aware that Boaz knew the man he was addressing, but he either didn't know the man's name, or he thought it was irrelevant. The phrase is also found in 1 Sam. 21:2 and 2 Kings 6:8.

#### Ruth 4:2

**And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.**

The idea here was to gather a sort of jury to hear the transaction and exercise some kind of judicial function.

In Joshua 24, if a man fled from "the avenger of blood" to one of the cities of refuge, it was the elders who determined whether he was to be admitted. And when Jezebel wanted Maboth executed in a judicial manner, it was the elders she forced into taking the necessary action (1 Kings 21:8,11).

Elders had far-reaching powers. In this case, the matter was relatively minor, and the elders really had little to do or decide. But any transaction that was witnessed by the elders, and attested to by them, was of absolute validity.

I couldn't find any information about why there were ten elders chosen. In later times, ten men were required for a synagogue service, and some commentators suggest that ten is a quorum, but for such an old custom, there is little to go on.

#### Ruth 4:3,4

**And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, who is come again out of the country of Moab,**

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selleth a plot of land, which was our brother Elimelech's.

**And I thought to advertise you, saying, Buy it before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it; but if thou wilt not redeem it, then 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.**

Boaz addresses the kinsman and informs him that Elimelech, who was related to both of them, owned some land near Bethlehem, and that the land had to be redeemed in Naomi's favor.

We are not told how the land might have changed hands over the years; it may be that Elimelech sold the land to someone just before he took his family to Moab. Nevertheless, the title to the land would have stayed with Elimelech's family, and such a purchase would have been equivalent to a leasehold or rent. If this is the case, to redeem the land at this time would have required a payment to the occupant for the balance of his lease. The fact that Naomi was in Moab ten years suggests that some arrangement like this was in place to allow legal use of the land during Elimelech's absence.

Upon Elimelech's death, the ownership of the land would have passed to his sons. Numbers 27:8-11 shows very clearly the sequence of inheritance: first, sons; then, daughters; then, brothers; then, uncles; then, the next nearest kinsman. The widow is not mentioned in the line of inheritance!

Although the law did not provide for a widow to inherit, apparently this law was not rigidly enforced. ["Ancient Hebrew Marriage Laws", Longmans, 1944] For we see here that Naomi had legal rights to the land and could realize some money from it. But Ruth was the widow of Mahlon and would have had similar rights.

Verse 4 makes it clear that the kinsman is the nearer relative and Boaz is the next directly in line.

The kinsman is quite ready to buy the land and is prepared to come up with the money. At this point, however, he is not aware of a slight complication. :-)

### Ruth 4:5

**Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.**

The following quotation is from "Commentary on the Old Testament", Volume 2, C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, p. 489ff.

"The question arises, what right had Naomi to sell her husband's land as her own property? ... The true explanation is no doubt the following: The law relating to the inheritance of the landed property of Israelites who died childless did not determine the time when such a possession should pass to the relatives of the deceased, whether immediately after the death of the owner, not not until after the death of the widow who was left behind.

"No doubt the latter was the rule established by custom, so that the widow remained in possession of the property as long as she lived; and for that length of time she had the right to sell the property in case of need, since the sale of a field was not an actual transfer of title but simply the sale of the yearly produce until the year of jubilee.

"The field of the deceased Elimelech would, strictly speaking, have belonged to his sons, and after their death to Mahlon's widow (Ruth), since Chilion's widow had remained behind in her own country Moab. But as Elimelech had not only emigrated with his wife and children and died abroad, but his sons had also been with him in the foreign land, and had married and died there, the landed property of their father had not descended to them, but had remained the property of Naomi, Elimelech's widow, in which Ruth, as the widow of Mahlon, also had a share.

"Now, in case a widow sold the field of her deceased husband for the time that it was in her possession, on account of poverty, and a relation of her husband redeemed it, it was evidently his duty not only to care for the maintenance of the impoverished widow, but if she were still young, to marry her, and to let the first son born of such a marriage enter into the family of the deceased

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husband of his wife, so as to inherit the redeemed property, and perpetuate the name and possession of the deceased in Israel.

“Upon this right, which was founded upon traditional custom, Boaz based this condition, which he set before the nearer redeemer, that if he redeemed the field of Naomi he must also take Ruth, with the obligation to marry her, and through this marriage to set up the name of the deceased upon his inheritance.”

### Ruth 4:6

**And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar my own inheritance. Redeem thou my right for thyself; for I cannot redeem it.**

The fact that marriage with Ruth must accompany the redemption of the field changed the whole picture for the kinsman. He does not say "I will not redeem", as if he were refusing. Rather he says, "I cannot redeem," indicating that there is an impediment to the transaction.

It is not clear what prevented the kinsman from fulfilling his obligation. He was ready to buy the field without marrying Ruth, but he couldn't do both.

One possibility is that he did not want to marry a Moabite woman. That would have been understandable, and it probably would not have been held against him.

Another reason is that paying for the land and taking on the responsibility for caring for Ruth and Naomi would have involved a considerable expense. He would pay for the land, but the land would stay with Naomi's family. So his own family would suffer the loss of some of their own

inheritance. And the kinsman may already have been married and not wanted to have a second wife.

Whatever the reason, the kinsman was emphatic about it, even repeating his statement so there would be no doubt.

### Ruth 4:7,8

**Now this was the manner in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, to confirm all things: a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbor; and this was a testimony in Israel.**

**Therefore, the kinsman said unto Boaz, But it for thyself. So he drew off his shoe.**

The author of Ruth uses the word "formerly" to describe this custom, indicating that by the time of writing the ceremony of drawing off the shoe was no longer practiced.

From Keil and Delitzsch, "The custom itself, which existed among the Indians and the ancient Germans, arose from the fact that fixed property was taken possession of by treading upon the soil, and hence taking off the shoe and handing it to another was a symbol of the transfer of a possession or right of ownership.

See Deut. 11:24.

In this case, there was only a symbolic transfer of the rights to purchase a property, not a transfer of the land itself. The act of handing over the shoe to Boaz was undoubtedly designed to indicate visually to the elders that a formal agreement had been reached.

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### Ruth Lesson 9 Quiz

#### Instructions

The following questions relate to your study of this lesson, including the topical studies.

To answer a question, type your response in the space provided after the word "Answer:".

A question may be True/False, multiple choice, fill in the blank, or short answer type.

The last question requires you to write one or two paragraphs in "essay" form. Use the space provided; it will expand to accommodate your response.

You have choices about sending the quiz back to Grace Notes.

- If you received an email file containing the quiz, you can use the REPLY feature of your e-mail application to open the quiz. Enter your answers in the reply message. Then SEND the message to Grace Notes.
- You can enter your answers on these pages, then send the whole file back to Grace Notes as a file attachment. This is handy, but these lessons will average 100K to 200K in size. As an alternative,
- After you answer the questions here, copy and paste the whole list of questions into a new MS Word document; then, send the new file to Grace Notes as an attachment. The new file will, of course, be much smaller than this main file.
- Finally, you can print the Quiz pages on your printer and send your response back to Grace Notes in the regular mail. If you do this, send the mail to:

**Grace Notes**

**% Warren Doud**

**1705 Aggie Lane**

**Austin, Texas 78757 USA**

Whichever transmission method you use, when Grace Notes receives your completed Quiz, the next lesson will be sent to you, by the same means you received this one. EXCEPT: when you have sent in the FINAL QUIZ, we will send your certificate to you, by regular mail.

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### Questions on Ruth Lesson 9

1. Where did the legal transaction between Boaz and the kinsman take place?

Answer:

2. The conversation between the two men took place without any witnesses. { True / False }

Answer:

3. When a man was fleeing for refuge to one of the cities of refuge, it was the \_\_\_\_\_ who determine whether he was to be admitted.

Answer:

4. The land which Boaz was asking the kinsman to buy had been bought by Ruth from the money she saved in Moab. [ True / False ]

Answer:

5. If the kinsman could not purchase the land, or refused to do so, who was next in line to redeem the land?

Answer:

6. The kinsman was eager to purchase the property, but he was not aware [ a. that the price was too high for him; b. that Naomi had already promised the land to another relative; c. that the land had been sold many years before and was not available; d. that he would also have to marry Ruth ].

Answer:

7. How did the kinsman indicate that he was giving his right to the land to Boaz?

Answer: