

INTRODUCTION 引言

We will wrap up our study on the book of Ruth as we come to the last chapter. You may ask: wait a minute, where is the Christmas message? Folks: this is the Christmas message. It is true that in Ruth's time there was no sheep or shepherd, no angel or wiseman, no Joseph and Mary, and there was even no baby Jesus! Those settings and characters would come about a thousand years after Ruth. But the truth is, there will be no Christmas if there is no Ruth. God allows Ruth to become one of the ancestors of Jesus. He links together countless people and events to accomplish His will. That is why history is His story. We see the progression of God's grace when we read the Bible. It is like waiting for something you order online. Most companies will send you email updates in the process. The first message confirms that your purchase is completed. A few days later, they will tell you that the package is coming. They will give you an approximate delivery date. Impatient customers will look up the tracking information daily and see where goods is. You wait with expectation until you finally receive the product. Likewise, God gives the Jews many signs of the coming Messiah throughout the Old Testament. They longed for the Savior. We are so much blessed because Jesus had arrived 2,000 years ago. You see, God has a plan because He has a goal. His plan is to achieve our salvation through Jesus Christ, and His goal is for people to come to know His Son. The exciting part is that God invites ordinary people like Ruth to be participants in His plan. He can accomplish great things through us too. Therefore, do not look down on your role as a student, employee, housewife or retiree. All that God asks for us is faithfulness. We can never imagine what wonderful results God can achieve through us.

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. A Deal Was Sealed 協議達成

Naomi had two problems at hand. First, a close relative had to redeem the land that belonged to her late husband, Elimelech. Second, Ruth should remarry so that someone could provide for her. Boaz was willing to help. However, there was another man more qualified because he was closer to Naomi's family. Therefore, Boaz had to find out the intent of that redeemer first. At the end, a deal was sealed. Let us listen to the negotiation process in verses 3-4: **3 Then he said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. 4 So I thought I would tell you of it and say, 'Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.' If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you."** And he said, **"I will redeem it."** Boaz found ten elders as his witnesses. Those senior people are well-respected in the community. Their testimonies were considered as legally-binding. The redeemer had the first right to buy the land from Naomi. The Old Testament Law allows the Israelites to sell their properties only in extreme financial need. Naomi needed some money for her living. The redeemer agreed the deal. Getting extra land means he could produce more crops. Boaz then presented the second half of the proposal in verses 5-6: **5 Then Boaz said, "The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also**

acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.” 6 Then the redeemer said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.” Buy a land and get a wife is a sweet buy one get one free deal. But the redeemer backed out, perhaps in view of the foreseeable financial loss. According to the Old Testament, the man would not have permanent ownership of the land. He had an obligation to marry the wife of the deceased person, hoping to give birth to a son to inherit the land. Since Naomi was beyond her child-bearing age, the remaining candidate who can produce an heir would be Ruth. The financial burden to care for a younger wife and her future children would be significant. The son born to Ruth could also take over the land of the redeemer, since he is a biological son. Due to those reasons, the redeemer concluded that he “cannot” accept it. By saying “cannot” he meant he was unwilling. In comparison, Boaz stepped up and fulfilled the legal obligations. He also had to endure the stigma for marrying a gentile woman. Why did Boaz take all those risks? It was because of his love for God and people. He spent money, time and effort to care for a widow’s family. In return, Boaz could enjoy a future family. You see, love must come with sacrifices. Even Jesus sacrificed a lot when He came into the world. God became a man. Jesus was restricted to a human body. He could not be in two places at one time. Like us, He needed air, water and food to survive. Jesus did not rely on His supernatural power to achieve God’s salvation plan. Jesus sacrificed everything for us to seal the deal. The question is: what do you sacrifice for following Jesus? Will you bear the ridicule for telling others that you are a believer? Will you avoid some unethical practices even though it may help you save or even earn money? Will you put Jesus first as you schedule activities and entertainment? Love God first and others more, and love yourself less. That is Jesus’ calling for us.

2. A Boy Was Born 男孩誕生

Boaz’s plan was a success. He and Ruth were married, and a boy was born later. The elders were pleased to see a happy ending. Listen to their comments in verses 11-12: 11 “... **May the Lord make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, 12 and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the Lord will give you by this young woman.**” Those elders gave Boaz a two-fold blessing. First, they wished that Ruth would be blessed like Rachel and Leah. They and their two maids gave birth to twelve sons, who became the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. Second, the elders hoped that Boaz’s family would be blessed like Perez’s. Perez was a direct ancestor of Boaz six generations ago. Perez’s mother was Tamar. Like Ruth, Tamar’s first husband died. Both women offered themselves in a second marriage to preserve the names of their deceased husbands. Moreover, the elders hoped that Boaz would be prosperous. They wished Ruth to bring many children to Boaz. A big family would mean more manpower and wealth. Afterward, a boy was born into the family. Some female friends congratulated the new grandma. Continue to read verses 13-15: 13 **So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. 14 Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! 15 He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”** Those ladies praised God for providing a redeemer to Naomi. They were confident that the baby would take

care of Naomi at her old age. They also gave credit to Ruth. Ladies: you are surely blessed if the friends of your mother-in-law say something nice about you! Those ladies then named the baby boy Obed, meaning “servant.” It was rare for someone outside of the family to name a newborn. But the more significant thing was whose ancestor Obed turned out to be. Read the second half of verse 17: ... **He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.** That was king David of Israel. God’s plan was much bigger than one family. From Obed came Jesse, whose son was David. According to the genealogy in Matthew 1, another important person came twenty-eight generations or about a thousand years after David. It is our Lord, Jesus Christ! A few key things happened during that period of time. Israel was defeated by Babylon. It was then succeeded by Persia, Greece then Rome. People come and go, and nations rise and fall. But God’s plan had never changed. He had ordained that Jesus would come. Could Boaz and Ruth have imagined that God chose them to be Jesus’ ancestors? Of course not! There are some key spiritual lessons for Christian parents to pay attention to. We give our kids the best of everything. But we cannot predict how God will use our children. They may become artists or scientists, managers or cook hamburgers, senators or janitors. One thing is for sure: our kids are God’s treasures entrusted to us temporarily. The world asks what they can do or how much they make. But God will definitely ask us to whom they belong. Do they know Jesus and do they follow Him? We must solidify their relationship with the Lord at home. We hope that they will continue to walk with Jesus after they leave home. There may not be a king David in your future generations. But God orders parents to pass down spiritual heritage to their children. From them, they will pass it down to their children. From one family, God can influence a society, a country and henceforth the whole world.

CONCLUSION 結論

God has a plan because He has a goal. He hopes that people will receive Jesus. God has been working all along in the human history. He included a simple person like Ruth in His salvation plan. She was a Gentile, a woman and a widow. Her in-laws were natives of a small town called Bethlehem. Sometime after Ruth, David was born in the same place. Then a thousand years after David, the Roman government called for a census. People had to return to the hometown of their ancestors to register. Joseph took Mary from Nazareth and they traveled to Bethlehem. On that first Christmas night, Mary gave birth to Jesus. The prophecy that the Savior would come from Bethlehem was thus fulfilled. God aligned everything and every person to accomplish His plans. Ruth might not have accomplished any big things in her life. She was only a daughter-in-law, a wife and a mother. It proves that God can use us for great things regardless of our background. Do not consider yourself a nobody. In God’s mind, you are not an accident nor a mistake. He created you in a unique way. He desires for you to know Him and to follow Him. Accept Jesus today if He is not your Savior and Lord. Jesus is not a fictional character on Christmas cards. He is the Son of God. He came into the world as a real person. Christmas paved the way for Easter. This one true God died for your sins, but He rose from the dead three days later. Jesus Christ is the biggest gift God has prepared for you. Confess your sins and commit your life to Him.

INTRODUCTION 引言

我們今天會看路得記的最後一章，結束這一系列的學習。你可能會問：等一下，聖誕節的信息在哪裡？各位：這就是聖誕節的信息。沒錯，在路得的時代，沒有羊或牧羊人，沒有天使或東方的智者，沒有約瑟和馬利亞，甚至沒有嬰孩耶穌！這些背景和人物出現在路得之後約一千年。但事實是，如果沒有路得，就沒有聖誕節。神讓路得成為耶穌的祖先之一。神將無數的人和事件串連在一起來完成祂的旨意。這就是為什麼歷史是神的故事。當我們讀聖經時，我們會看到神恩典的延續。這就有點像等待你在網上訂購的東西一樣。大多數公司會在過程中發送電子郵件向你更新進度。第一個訊息確認你的購買已完成。幾天後，他們會告訴你包裹即將到來。他們會給你一個大概的送貨日期。不耐煩的顧客會每天查看追蹤訊息，看看貨物在哪裡。你熱切地等待，直到最終收到東西。同樣，在整本舊約中，神給了猶太人許多即將到來的彌賽亞的啟示。他們期待救主。我們非常有福氣，因為耶穌在 2000 年前就已經來到了。你看，神有一個計劃，因為祂有一個目標。祂的計劃是透過耶穌基督來成就我們的救贖，祂的目標是讓人們認識祂的兒子。令人興奮的是，神邀請像路得這樣的平凡人參與祂的計劃。祂也可以透過我們完成偉大的事。因此，不要輕看你作為學生、雇員、家庭主婦或退休人員的角色。神向我們的要求就是忠心。我們永遠無法想像神能透過我們達成什麼精彩的結果。

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. A Deal Was Sealed 協議達成

拿俄米手頭上有兩個問題。首先，一位近親必須贖回屬於她已故丈夫以利米勒的土地。其次，路得必須再婚，以便有人可以供養她。波阿斯願意幫忙。不過，還有一個人更有資格，因為他和拿俄米的家更接近。因此，波阿斯必須先確認那個至近的親屬的決定。最終，協議達成。讓我們聽聽第 3-4 節的談判過程：**3 波阿斯對那至近的親屬說：「從摩押地回來的拿俄米，現在要賣我們族兄以利米勒的那塊地；4 我想當贖那塊地的是你，其次是我，以外再沒有別人了。你可以在這裏的人面前和我本國的長老面前說明，你若肯贖就贖，若不肯贖就告訴我。」**那人回答說：**「我肯贖。」**波阿斯找了十位長老來當他的見證人。那些長輩在社會上受人尊敬。他們的見證具有法律的效用。那位至近的親屬有優先權購買拿俄米的土地。舊約法律允許以色列人在極度貧困的情況下賣掉產業。拿俄米需要一些錢來維持生活。至近的親屬同意這筆交易。獲得額外的土地意味著他可以有更多的農地。波阿斯接著在第 5 至 6 節中提出了後半部份的提議：**5 波阿斯說：「你從拿俄米手中買這地的時候，**

也當娶死人的妻摩押女子路得，使死人在產業上存留他的名。」6 那人說：「這樣我就不能贖了，恐怕於我的產業有礙。你可以贖我所當贖的，我不能贖了。」買地又娶妻看來是買一送一划算的交易。但至近的親屬退出了，也許是考慮到可能的經濟損失。根據舊約，那個人不會擁有土地的永久所有權。他有義務娶已故的人的妻子，希望生一個兒子來繼承土地。由於拿俄米已經過了生育年齡，剩下能夠產生繼承人的就是路得。照顧年輕的太太和她未來的孩子的經濟負擔將是巨大的。路得所生的兒子也有權利繼承至近的親屬的土地，因為他是親生兒子。基於這些原因，至近的親屬得出結論，他「不能」接受。他說「不能」的意思是他不願意。相比之下，波阿斯則挺身而出，履行了律法的義務。他也必須承受與外邦女子結婚的社會壓力。為什麼波阿斯要冒所有這些風險？這是因為他對神和人的愛。他願意花金錢、時間和心思來照顧一個寡婦的家庭。作為回報，波阿斯可以享受未來的家庭生活。這就證明愛必須伴隨著犧牲。連耶穌來到世上也犧牲了很多。神成為人。耶穌被限制在一個身體之內。祂不可能同時出現在兩個地方。像我們一樣，祂需要空氣、水和食物才能生存。耶穌並沒有依靠祂的超自然力量來完成神的拯救計劃。耶穌為我們犧牲了一切以達成協議。問題是：你為了跟隨耶穌而犧牲了什麼？你會甘願承受因為告訴別人你是信徒而來嘲笑嗎？你會避免一些不道德的行為，縱然你可以因此省錢甚至賺錢嗎？當你安排活動和娛樂時，你會把耶穌放在第一位嗎？你要先愛神，多愛別人，少愛自己。這是耶穌對我們的呼召。

2. A Boy Was Born 男孩誕生

波阿斯的計劃成功了。他和路得結婚，後來一個男孩誕生。長老們很高興看到一個美好的結局。請聽聽他們在 11-12 節的評語：11 「...願耶和華使進你家的這女子，像建立以色列家的拉結、利亞二人一樣。又願你在以法他得亨通，在伯利恆得名聲。12 願耶和華從這少年女子賜你後裔，使你的家像她瑪從猶大所生法勒斯的家一般。」那些長老給了波阿斯雙重的祝福。首先，他們希望路得像拉結和利亞一樣受到祝福。她們和兩個使女生十二個兒子，成為以色列十二支派的祖先。其次，長老們希望波阿斯的家庭能像法勒斯的家庭一樣蒙福。法勒斯是波阿斯六代之前的祖先。法勒斯的母親是她瑪。像路得一樣，她瑪的第一任丈夫去世了。兩個婦人都願意再婚，以保留已故丈夫的名字。此外，長老們也希望波阿斯能夠繁榮昌盛。他們希望路得能為波阿斯多生孩子。一個大家庭意味著更多的人力和財富。後來，這個家庭誕生了一個男孩。一些女性朋友祝賀新任祖母。請繼續看第 13-15 節：13 於是，波阿斯娶了路得為妻，與她同房。耶和華使她懷孕生了一個兒子。14 婦人們對拿俄米說：「耶和華是應當稱頌的！因為今日沒有撇下你，使你無至近的親屬。願這孩子在以色列中得名聲。15 他必提起你的精神，奉養你的老，因為是愛慕你的那兒婦所生的。有這兒婦比有七個兒子還好！」那些婦女們讚美神為拿俄米安排了一位至近的親屬。他們相信新生的嬰孩以後會照顧晚年的拿俄米。她們也把功勞歸給路得。女士們：如果妳婆婆的朋友都說妳好話，那妳真是有福了！這些女

士隨後將這個男孩取名為俄備得，意思是「僕人」。很少有家庭以外的人為新生兒命名。但更重要的是，俄備得到底是誰的祖先。請讀第 17 節後半部：**...這俄備得是耶西的父，耶西是大衛的父**。那就是以色列王大衛。神的計劃遠比一個家庭更大。耶西是俄備得的兒子，而他的兒子就是大衛。根據馬太福音第一章的家譜，在大衛之後二十八代，即大約一千年，出現了另一個重要的人物。祂是我們的主耶穌基督！那段時間發生了一些關鍵的事情。以色列被巴比倫消滅。然後出現了波斯、希臘和羅馬等帝國。不同的人出現，然後又過去；國家興衰。但是神的計劃從未改變。祂已經命定耶穌會來。波阿斯和路得會想像到神揀選他們成為耶穌的祖先嗎？當然不可能！在這裡基督徒父母需要注意一些重要的屬靈教訓。我們給孩子最好的一切。但我們無法預計神會如何使用我們的孩子。他們可能成為藝術家或科學家、經理或漢堡廚師、參議員或清潔工。有一點是肯定的：我們的孩子是神暫時託付給我們的財寶。世俗會問他們能做什麼或賺多少錢。但神一定會問我們他們屬於誰。他們認識耶穌並跟隨祂嗎？我們必須在家中鞏固他們與主的關係。我們希望他們離開家之後繼續與耶穌同行。你們的後代中可能沒有一位大衛王。但神吩咐所有父母將屬靈遺產傳給他們的孩子。再從他們傳給他們的孩子。神可以從一個家庭影響一個社會、一個國家、甚至整個世界。

CONCLUSION 結論

神有一個計劃，因為祂有一個目標。祂希望人們接受耶穌。神一直在人類歷史中工作。祂包括像路得那樣平凡的人在祂的救贖計劃中。路得是一個外邦人、一個女子、一個寡婦。她的姻親是小鎮伯利恆的居民。在路得之後一段時間，大衛在同一個地方出生。大衛之後一千年，羅馬政府要求人口普查。人們必須回到祖先的家鄉登記。於是約瑟帶著馬利亞從拿撒勒出發，前往伯利恆。在第一個聖誕的晚上，馬利亞生下了耶穌。救世主從伯利恆而來的預言就這樣應驗了。神把事情和人物連結起來，完成祂的計劃。路得一生中可能沒有什麼偉大的成就。她只是一個媳婦、一個妻子、一個母親。這證明無論我們的背景如何，神都可以使用我們來成就重要的事情。不要認為自己是個無名小卒。在神的心目中，你不是偶然出現，也不是個錯誤。神以獨特的方式創造了你。祂希望你認祂並跟隨祂。如果耶穌不是你的救主和生命的主，今天就接受祂吧。耶穌不是聖誕卡上的虛構人物。祂是神的兒子。祂成為一個真實的人來到這個世界。聖誕節是為復活節鋪路。這位獨一的真神為你的罪而死，但三天後祂從死裡復活。耶穌基督是神為你預備的最大的禮物。承認你的罪並將你的生命交託給祂吧。