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Ruth

The book of Ruth is a short story in the Old Testament of the Christian Bible. It is named after the main character, Ruth, who is a Moabite woman. The book is set during the time of the judges in Israel, which is a period of about 400 years after the Israelites' exodus from Egypt.

The book begins with a family from Bethlehem, Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons, who move to Moab because of a famine in Israel. While in Moab, Elimelech dies, and Naomi's two sons marry Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. However, after about ten years, both of Naomi's sons also die, leaving Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah as widows.

Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem, and she encourages Ruth and Orpah to stay in Moab and find new husbands. Orpah decides to stay, but Ruth insists on going with Naomi, saying, "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." (Ruth 1:16)

When they arrive in Bethlehem, Ruth goes to work in the fields, gleaning leftover grain, as was the custom for poor people. She ends up working in the fields of a man named Boaz, who is a relative of Naomi's husband. Boaz is kind to Ruth, and he allows her to glean extra grain and protects her from harm.

Naomi realizes that Boaz is a potential husband for Ruth, and she encourages Ruth to approach him and ask him to marry her. Boaz is pleased with Ruth's request and agrees to marry her, but he first must follow the customs of the time and seek out another relative who has a claim to marry Ruth.

In the end, the other relative declines the opportunity to marry Ruth, and Boaz marries her instead. Ruth gives birth to a son, and Naomi becomes the child's caregiver, which restores her joy.

The book of Ruth has several important themes, including loyalty, faithfulness, and kindness. It also shows how God can work through ordinary people to accomplish His purposes. Finally, the book of Ruth is significant because Ruth is an ancestor of King David and ultimately of Jesus Christ, as outlined in the genealogy in Matthew 1:5.

A brief description of each chapter of the Book of Ruth in the Christian Bible:

Chapter 1: This chapter introduces the main characters of the book: Naomi, her husband Elimelech, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. Due to a famine in Bethlehem, they move to Moab, where Elimelech dies and Mahlon and Chilion marry Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. However, tragedy strikes when Mahlon and Chilion die, leaving Naomi with her daughters-in-law. Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem and urges her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab and remarry. Orpah decides to stay, but Ruth insists on staying with Naomi and returning to Bethlehem with her.

Chapter 2: Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem, where Ruth begins gleaning in the fields to provide for them. She ends up in the field of Boaz, a relative of Elimelech, who is kind to her and allows her to glean more than she needs. Naomi recognizes that Boaz is a potential kinsman-redeemer for Ruth and encourages her to pursue him.

Chapter 3: Naomi hatches a plan for Ruth to approach Boaz and ask him to be her kinsman-redeemer. Ruth follows Naomi's plan and Boaz agrees to redeem her, but explains that there is a closer relative who has the first right to do so. Boaz promises to take care of the matter and tells Ruth to wait.

Chapter 4: Boaz meets with the closer relative, who declines to redeem Ruth, allowing Boaz to do so. Boaz marries Ruth and they have a son named Obed. Obed becomes the father of Jesse, who becomes the father of King David, making Ruth an ancestor of Jesus Christ.

The Book of Ruth, Chapter 1, tells the story of Naomi, her husband Elimelech, and their two sons, who left Bethlehem during a famine and moved to Moab. While in Moab, Elimelech died, leaving Naomi a widow. Her sons, Mahlon and Kilion, married Moabite women named Orpah and Ruth, but after about ten years, Mahlon and Kilion died as well.

Naomi, feeling alone and bereft, decided to return to Bethlehem, and urged her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab and remarry. Orpah ultimately decided to stay, but Ruth insisted on going with Naomi. Upon returning to Bethlehem, Naomi was greeted by the townspeople, who were surprised to see her without her husband and sons.

As the story unfolds, Ruth goes out to glean in the fields, hoping to find some food to support herself and Naomi. She ends up working in the field of Boaz, a wealthy landowner and relative of Naomi's. Boaz takes notice of Ruth and treats her kindly, instructing his workers to leave extra grain for her to collect.

In this chapter, we see themes of loss, grief, loyalty, and the importance of community. Naomi and Ruth are both widows, struggling to survive in a world where women had few options for supporting themselves. However, Ruth's loyalty to Naomi and her willingness to work hard in the fields ultimately leads her to the care and protection of Boaz, setting the stage for the rest of the story.

Here are some important verses from Ruth chapter 1:

- Ruth 1:16-17: "But Ruth replied, 'Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be

buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."

- Ruth 1:20-21: "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."
- Ruth 1:22: "So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning."

These verses show the strong bond between Ruth and Naomi, as well as Naomi's bitterness and struggle with the hardships she has faced. They also introduce the setting of Bethlehem and the beginning of the barley harvest, which becomes significant later in the story.

The Book of Ruth, Chapter 2, tells the story of Ruth's first encounter with Boaz and the beginning of their relationship.

Ruth continues to glean in Boaz's fields, and he notices her hard work and kindness towards Naomi. He asks his workers about her and learns that she is Naomi's daughter-in-law and a widow. Boaz shows her kindness and generosity, allowing her to glean among his workers and instructing them to leave extra grain for her.

Ruth is surprised and grateful for Boaz's kindness and asks him why he is showing her favor. Boaz replies that he has heard of her loyalty to Naomi and her decision to leave her own family to come with Naomi to Bethlehem. He blesses her and encourages her to continue gleaning in his fields for the rest of the harvest season.

Naomi is overjoyed when Ruth returns with a large amount of grain from Boaz's fields. She tells Ruth that Boaz is a close relative of Elimelech, and thus a potential "redeemer," who could marry Ruth and continue the family line. Naomi encourages Ruth to continue gleaning in Boaz's fields, hoping that their relationship will continue to grow.

In this chapter, we see themes of kindness, generosity, loyalty, and the importance of community. Boaz's kindness towards Ruth reflects his willingness to fulfill the laws of gleaning and help those in need, while Ruth's loyalty towards Naomi demonstrates her strong character and her desire to provide for her family. The growing relationship between Ruth and Boaz sets the stage for the rest of the story, as their actions eventually lead to redemption and restoration for Naomi and her family.

Here are some important verses from Ruth chapter 2:

- Ruth 2:2: "And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, 'Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor.' Naomi said to her, 'Go ahead, my daughter.'"
- Ruth 2:11-12: "Boaz replied, 'I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.'"

- Ruth 2:20: "The Lord bless him!" Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our guardian-redeemers."

These verses show Ruth's initiative in gleaning in the fields to provide for herself and Naomi, as well as her hard work and character, which leads to Boaz taking notice of her. Boaz's blessing of Ruth and recognition of her faithfulness to Naomi highlights the theme of loyalty and kindness throughout the book. Naomi's identification of Boaz as a guardian-redeemer introduces the concept of redemption and foreshadows the events of chapter 4.

The Book of Ruth, Chapter 3, tells the story of Naomi's plan for Ruth to approach Boaz as a potential redeemer.

Naomi recognizes the potential for Boaz to become Ruth's kinsman-redeemer, a relative who would marry Ruth and continue Elimelech's family line. Naomi advises Ruth to wash and anoint herself and then go to Boaz at the threshing floor where he will be working that night. Ruth is to wait until Boaz has finished eating and drinking, then to uncover his feet and lie down next to him.

Ruth obeys Naomi and goes to the threshing floor. Boaz wakes up in the middle of the night to find Ruth lying next to him. She explains her situation to Boaz and asks him to spread his garment over her, a symbol of his willingness to become her kinsman-redeemer. Boaz is touched by Ruth's loyalty and agrees to help her.

However, Boaz also acknowledges that there is another relative who is a closer kinsman-redeemer than he is, and he must give that person the opportunity to redeem Ruth first. Boaz promises Ruth that he will take care of the matter and ensure that she is redeemed. In this chapter, we see themes of loyalty, faith, and trust. Ruth's willingness to follow Naomi's plan shows her faith in God's provision and her trust in Naomi's wisdom. Boaz's willingness to help Ruth reflects his own loyalty to the family and his faith in God's plan. The concept of the kinsman-redeemer demonstrates the importance of family and community in ancient Israel, and foreshadows the ultimate redemption that God will provide through Jesus Christ.

Here are some important verses from Ruth chapter 3:

- Ruth 3:1: "One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, 'My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for.'"
- Ruth 3:9: "Who are you?" he [Boaz] asked. "I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family."
- Ruth 3:11: "And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character."

These verses show Naomi's concern for Ruth's well-being and her plan for Ruth to approach Boaz as a potential kinsman-redeemer. Ruth's request for Boaz to spread his garment over her is a symbolic act of seeking his protection and care. Boaz's affirmation of Ruth's character and his willingness to fulfill his role as a guardian-redeemer foreshadows the resolution of the story in chapter 4.

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The Book of Ruth, Chapter 4, tells the story of Boaz's redemption of Ruth and the restoration of Naomi's family.

Boaz goes to the gate of the town, where the elders of the community gathered, and calls the closer relative who has the first right to redeem Ruth. Boaz presents the case to him, telling him that he has the right to redeem the property of Elimelech and take Ruth as his wife. However, the relative declines the offer because it would jeopardize his own inheritance, allowing Boaz to take Ruth as his wife.

Boaz publicly declares his intention to redeem Ruth and marry her. The elders and people of the community witness the transaction and bless the couple. Boaz and Ruth have a son named Obed, who becomes the grandfather of King David.

In this chapter, we see themes of redemption, family, and faithfulness. The story of Boaz's redemption of Ruth and his willingness to marry her demonstrates his faithfulness to God and his desire to preserve Naomi's family line. The importance of community is highlighted by the public transaction at the gate of the town. The birth of Obed, the ancestor of David, foreshadows the ultimate redemption that God will provide through Jesus Christ, who will also come from David's line.

Here are some important verses from Ruth chapter 4:

- Ruth 4:4-6: "I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line." "I will redeem it," he said. Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property."
- Ruth 4:9-10: "Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, 'Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name

will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!"

- Ruth 4:13-14: "So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The women said to Naomi: 'Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel!'"

These verses show the resolution of the story, with Boaz fulfilling his role as a kinsman-redeemer by redeeming the land and taking Ruth as his wife to carry on the family line of Elimelek. The birth of their son emphasizes the theme of redemption and highlights God's provision for Ruth and Naomi. The women's words of praise acknowledge Boaz as a guardian-redeemer and anticipate his continued legacy.

Notes:

While the Book of Ruth is relatively short and straightforward, there are still some questions that remain unanswered or debated among scholars and readers. Some of these difficult questions include:

1. Who is the author of the Book of Ruth?
2. What is the historical context of the story? When did it take place?
3. Why did Naomi encourage Ruth and Orpah to return to Moab?
4. Was Ruth's decision to stay with Naomi purely out of loyalty and love, or were there other factors at play?
5. Why did Boaz wait until the morning to address the issue of redeeming Ruth's family line, rather than taking action immediately?
6. What was the significance of the "shoe exchange" in Ruth 4:7-8?
7. What is the meaning of the genealogy at the end of the book, tracing the lineage from Perez to King David?
8. Why was the story of Ruth included in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)?

While some of these questions have possible answers or interpretations, others remain a mystery or subject of debate among scholars and readers.