

## Ruth 2 Chapter Study

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. REFUGE IN MOAB Ch. 1

Last week in ch. 1 we read the story of the family of Elimelech, a man of the tribe of Judah, who moved his wife Naomi & 2 sons from Bethlehem to Moab.

They lived in the time of the Judges when Israel went through repeated cycles of obedience to & rebellion against God.

This resulted in alternating seasons of blessing when they were obedient, and trouble when they rebelled.

Because Israel had fallen once more into idolatry a famine had settle on the land so Elimelech packed up and moved to the region east of the Dead Sea known as Moab.

Moab was a nation & people God had cursed because of their opposition to Israel during the Exodus, so Elimelech's choice to live there was unwise. God turned it to good eventually, but not without great personal cost to Elimelech's family.

First Elimelech died, then, after his 2 sons had married Moabite wives, they too died.

When word reached Elimelech's widow Naomi that the famine had ended back home, she began the trip back, though she'd lived in Moab for 10 years.

Naomi persuaded 1 of her 2 daughters-in-law to remain in Moab, but the other, Ruth, refused to be separated from her & made the trip home with her.

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Ch. 1 ends with a time marker – the 2 women returned to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

This was in the month of Nisan, March-April, so right about this time of year we're in.

The chapter begins with famine but ends with harvest, a harvest that will become more than just the means of Naomi's & Ruth's meals.

#### II. ENTER BOAZ Ch. 2

##### A. *Ruth Works Vs. 1-3*

**<sup>1</sup>There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz.**

Enter Boaz: The author mentions this wealthy relative at this point because he's going to figure prominently in the story of Ruth and he wants us to know who he was.

He was a relative by marriage to Naomi—an in-law or considerable wealth & position in Bethlehem.

By introducing him here, then telling the story of how Ruth & Boaz met, we see God was steering Ruth's steps.

We'll come back to look more closely at this a little later.

**<sup>2</sup>So Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after *him* in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." <sup>3</sup>Then she left, and went and**

**gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field *belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.***

In giving the Law, Moses had declared in Lev. 19 & 23 that harvesters were to leave the corners & gleanings of the field for the poor.

While other nations did not practice this, Israel had a kind of *workfare* program for those who were landless & poor.

On the first sweep through the field or orchard, the harvesters only reaped what was ripe. The immature grain & fruit was left to ripen.

In other nations, they would go through the field a couple days later to gather in these gleanings. But in Israel, they were left for the poor.

There wasn't a social welfare program or food stamps.

The poor provided for themselves by working the fields & reaping the corners & the gleanings.

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This practice wasn't followed in Moab so Ruth's awareness of it means Naomi has been faithfully teaching her the ways of God.

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Though it took a few days for the gleanings to ripen, the poor tried to get the better of each other by instead of waiting, they would actually follow the reapers. Ruth knew if she didn't get out to the field early, there'd be nothing left.

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The writer says in v. 3 Ruth "happened to come to the part of the field that belonged to Boaz."

She didn't know it was his field, nor did she at this point even know who Boaz was.

She was just being faithful, & found herself in a place of marvelous blessing. And so it is with us when we simply live faithfully in the *little decisions*, the dozens of daily choices we make.

We tend to think that the grand course of life hangs on a few major decisions we make throughout our lifetime.

Where we'll go to school.

What career we'll choose.

Where we'll live.

Rent or buy.

Marry or stay single.

Marry who.

Have kids or not.

Certainly those decisions are important & have a major impact on our lives.

But what we don't realize is that it's thousands upon thousands of minute decisions we make *every day* that *bring us* to these major decisions & set those very choices before us.

The decision we make in the *big thing* is really just the culmination of HOW we've chosen in the smaller things leading up to it.

Let me illustrate: We hear about persecution of believers around the world & inevitably ask if it was me, could I remain faithful or would I deny the Lord.

The answer to that is found in *how* you're doing in your daily life, now.

Are you being faithful & loyal to Jesus today? Do you obey God?

Do you regularly spend time with Him in prayer & reading His Word?

When the people at work get profane & mock God, do you join in, run & hide, or stand for righteousness in a humble & lovely way?  
If you can't maintain your witness with the jokers at work, it's not likely you'll be able to face the end of a gun.  
Or how about this: Ladies – There's a guy at work who's very attractive, funny, & charming.  
He's single & obviously looking for a relationship, & lately he's been spending quite a bit of time hanging around *you*.  
You know what's on his mind, but you're married & can't even go there.  
You just know any day now he's going to suggest the 2 of you go to lunch.  
The only way you're going to decline that temptation is if you've been faithful in all the little choices about your relationship with Jesus & your husband.

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Like Ruth, we don't see where the little faithfulneses of today are leading.  
But like good seed dropped into rich spoil, every choice we make in submission & obedience to God will one day reap a marvelous harvest of blessing.  
When we wake up in the morning and say, "God, this day guide my steps as I seek to faithfully follow you," He *will* direct us.  
[Psalm 37:23](#) • **The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way.**  
[Proverbs 3:6](#) • **In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.**

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#### **B. Boaz Favors Her Vs. 4-18**

**4** Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you!" And they answered him, "The LORD bless you!"

As a good landowner, Boaz came out to check on his harvest.

When he greeted the field-workers, he used the *covenant name of God*.

They replied in kind, hinting that this was a season of spiritual renewal in Israel.

**5** Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?"

In the culture of this time a woman was identified by what male she was attached to.

If she was unmarried, she'd be identified by her father's name.

If married, it would of course be her husband.

Boaz saw Ruth among the gleaners & asked the foreman who she was.

**6** So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, "It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. **7** And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house."

The foreman told Boaz who Ruth was & how she'd *asked for permission* to glean in his field.

She'd been busy throughout the day, taking only a short break in the shade of the little hut the harvesters had set up next to the field.

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Bethlehem was a fairly small village nestled in low rolling hills 5 miles south of Jerusalem.

It was a great place for growing grain and was known for its excellent bakeries. Bethlehem means "House of Bread."

Because the population of the town wasn't that large, Boaz had heard reports of Naomi's return & her companion Ruth.

**8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. 9 Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn."**

Following the report of the foreman, Boaz approached Ruth & asked her to consider his offer.

He said she was welcome to glean in his field & to draw right up along side the women who worked as his harvesters.

Harvesters would often tell over-zealous gleaners that got too close to the first pickings to back off.

But Boaz gave instructions to the women to let Ruth follow right behind them.

The men harvesters were told to keep an eye out FOR, not ON her.

And when the harvesters took their break, she was welcome to join them and enjoy some of the cool water they drew from the nearby well.

**10 So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"**

Ruth knew Boaz's kindness was unusual.

She was a foreigner & such kindness was rare.

Boaz was a godly man & understood God's heart for all people, regardless of their ethnic origin.

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Our nation is embroiled in a massive debate over illegal immigration.

The rhetoric flying from both sides is loud & hostile.

It's easy to get caught up in one side or the other, but as citizens of the Kingdom of God, we're called to look past all external distinctions to see eternal souls God loves.

Where ever you come down on the *rights* of undocumented aliens – as a followers of Jesus we owe a debt of love & compassion to all.

**11 And Boaz answered and said to her, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. 12 The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."**

Boaz tells Ruth that though this is the first time he's seen her, he's heard all about her –

How she left her native Moab to move to Bethlehem to take care of her mother in law.

Then Boaz speaks a blessing on her, again using the covenant name of God.

**13** Then she said, “Let me find favor in your sight, my lord; for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants.”

Ruth expresses her deepest appreciation for Boaz's kindness.

When she says, “You've spoken kindly to me, though I'm a foreigner,” she's letting Boaz know she's not *assuming* anything just because he's extended this offer to her.

She's not going to take undue advantage of him or overstep because of his kindness.

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Her gracious reply impresses & sparks even *more* interest in Boaz.

**14** Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, “Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.” So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched *grain* to her; and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back.

Boaz stayed to eat with the workers & invited Ruth to sit with them.

He passed her some lunch, part of which she ate, but kept some of it to take back to Naomi.

**15** And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her.

*Now* Boaz tells the harvesters to not only let Ruth take what they leave behind; but to invite her to join them in reaping the *ripe* grain.

**16** Also let *grain* from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave *it* that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.”

Every once in a while they were to drop a handful of the grain they'd already picked.

Ruth would see this little pile & gather it up as easy pickings.

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**Question:** Why didn't Boaz just hand Ruth a sack of barley?

If he wanted to bless her, why didn't he just tell her to open her hand & pour some grain into it?

**Answer:** That would have been too obvious & forward on Boaz's part.

Anything *more* than what he's already done in favoring her would look like an inappropriate pursuit of her & at this point, Boaz is uncertain of her response.

She's already told him she'll not presume upon him or the relationship anywhere beyond the kindness he's already shown.

He doesn't know if that was her polite way of saying she wasn't interested in him for anything more.

Boaz wants to bless her, but he doesn't want to presume upon her either, so he just tells the reapers to make her work as productive as possible.

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There are some wonderful parallels in the story of Ruth & Boaz to our relationship with Jesus, but we'll save those till a later study.

**17 So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.**

An ephah was over 5 gallons – not a bad haul for a gleaner.

That would provide enough bread for her & Naomi for quite a while.

**18 Then she took *it* up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied.**

This was her leftovers from lunch.

### **C. Ruth's Report to Naomi Vs. 19-23**

**19 And her mother-in-law said to her, "Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, "The man's name with whom I worked today *is* Boaz."**

When Naomi saw the haul Ruth had made, as well as the leftovers from lunch, she realized she'd hit the jackpot. So she asked, "Where'd you go?"

Ruth told her she'd worked the field of a man named Boaz.

**20 Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Blessed be he of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!" And Naomi said to her, "This man *is* a relation of ours, one of our close relatives."**

There's an *important revelation* in this the King James translation misses.

After blessing Boaz for his kindness, Naomi gives Ruth the good news that he's not only a close relative – he's a *potential redeemer*.

Notice the words - "This man *is* a relation [literally – a close relative] of ours, one of our close relatives [goel (ga'al) – kinsman redeemer]."

This is why earlier in the chapter the author kept telling us Boaz was a close relative of Elimelech's.

He wanted us to see that God was at work behind the scenes directing Ruth's steps into the very place where she would experience His blessing through Boaz.

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Because God intended the land to stay with the families of Israel perpetually, He commanded that the land could not be bought or sold, it could only be *leased* for no more than 50 years.

Every 50 years, in what was called 'the Year of Jubilee,' all land reverted to the original owner.

Sometimes a family would fall into debt & the only way to pay it off was to lease out their land to others.

If they were then able to pay off their debt, they could redeem their land *before* the 50 years was up.

If they weren't able to redeem it themselves a close relative, called a *goel*, kinsman-redeemer, could redeem it *for* them.

Boaz qualified as the goel for Elimelech's family.



When Elimelech left Israel, then died in Moab, his lands had been turned over to others.

When Naomi got back to Bethlehem, since her husband was now gone & she was penniless, she had little ground or ability to reclaim the family lands. As the widow of one of Elimelech's sons, Ruth also had a claim on the land, but her position was even *worse* than Naomi's; she wasn't only poor, she was a Moabitess.

The only way they're going to get their lands back is to find a kinsman-redeemer with the financial wherewithal as well as social standing & desire to do it.

That's a tall order – but Naomi sees the hand of God in all that's happened that day.

Ruth's description of Boaz's actions cause Naomi to perceive he had *more in mind* than just being kind to a foreigner.

**21 Ruth the Moabitess said, "He also said to me, 'You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.' "**

At the end of the day, Boaz told Ruth she could come back tomorrow & enjoy the same favor, & the day after that, & the day after that, until the end of the harvest.

**22 And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field."**

Naomi *endorses* Boaz's offer & encourages Ruth to take him up on it.

Her comment about people seeing her in other fields means Ruth ought not get a reputation for being a 'woman on the prowl,' out looking for a husband.

As a young, attractive, available woman, it was assumed she'd be waiting for someone to show interest in her.

Ruth's modest behavior so far with Boaz shows that she wasn't at all aggressive in her pursuit of a husband.

Naomi wants to make sure her reputation *stays pure* – so she counsels her to stay in Boaz's field.

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While we'll take a closer look at the picture Ruth & Boaz paint of Christ & the Church in a later study, I can't pass up the opportunity this verse presents.

Boaz is a great type of Jesus Christ, our heavenly kinsman redeemer Who by becoming man is able to reclaim humanity's lost dominion of Earth.

He pays our debt & restores our birthright, just like the goel did in Israel.

Ruth, the Gentile bride of a Jewish son – is a great figure for the Church which began as mainly a Jewish work but became the means by which Gentiles were grafted into covenant with God.

With that as our background, consider Naomi's counsel to Ruth.

"Stay in Boaz's field. Hang out with his women."

How crucial it is that as the bride of Christ we maintain our *loyalty* to Him; reinforcing it by constant fellowship with other members of the bride.

What would you think of an engaged woman who just days before her wedding went bar-hopping, night-clubbing, & dancing without her fiancé?

She dresses immodestly & flirts with every guy she meets.

Her friends, family & co-workers see her out running around with different

men, none of them her soon to be husband.

We'd say that was atrocious behavior & wonder about the sincerity of her love & devotion to him.

Don't Christians do the same thing when they *say* they believe Jesus could come back at any moment, but they're seen giving themselves to everything BUT Him?

They run here, go there, seeking satisfaction & meaning in the things of the world.

Just as it was wise for Ruth to remain in Boaz's field with his young women – it's a really wise thing for us to abide in Christ & hang out with His people; people *passionate* about abiding in Christ too!

**23 So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law.**

The wheat harvest lasted through July, so this means a period of about 4 months.