

Ruth 3-4 Chapter Study

I. REFUGE IN MOAB Ch. 1

When a famine struck Israel, a man of the tribe of Judah named Elimelech, who lived in Bethlehem, moved his wife Naomi & 2 sons to the region of Moab on the eastern side of the Dead Sea.

It was a bad move. He died, then after his 2 sons married Moabite women, they died as well, leaving the 3 women as widows.

When Naomi returned home, her daughter-in-law Ruth went with her. But they went back *empty*.

The land that had at one time belonged to her husband Elimelech had been taken over by others during the 10 years they were gone.

It *technically* belonged to Naomi & Ruth, who as the widow of Naomi's son, held *title* to the land.

But their claim had little force because they lacked the resources to work the land on their own.

II. ENTER BOAZ Ch. 2

So arriving back in Bethlehem, Ruth goes out to the field along with the rest of the poor to glean after the harvesters.

It just so happens that she works the field of her & Naomi's relative – a wealthy man named Boaz.

He was their Goel, their kinsman-redeemer.

In the Law of Moses, a provision was made for the redemption of people who'd fallen into poverty and had sold themselves into slavery to repay their debts. They could be redeemed by a relative.

The same applied to lands that had been lost due to debt; they could be redeemed & turned back to their rightful owner.

Boaz was Naomi & Ruth's *kinsman-redeemer*.

And in ch. 2 we read about Boaz's growing admiration of Ruth.

Ch. 2 ends with Naomi telling Ruth to remain in Boaz's field throughout the harvest.

III. RUTH'S REDEMPTION Chs. 3-4

A. Naomi's Counsel 3:1-5

¹Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? ²Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, *is he not our relative?* In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. ³Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your *best* garment and go down to the threshing floor; *but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.* ⁴Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do." ⁵And she said to her, "All that you say to me I will do."

Naomi comes up with a plan, a way to make sure her daughter-in-law Ruth, who's

shown such devotion & loyalty to her, is taken care of.

Earlier, when Naomi had set out from Moab to return to Bethlehem, both Ruth & her other daughter-in-law, Orpah had gone out with her.

But Naomi had dissuaded them – saying she was too old & had no more sons to give them as husbands.

Now she figures out a way to provide a husband for Ruth.

As their kinsman redeemer, Boaz had both the legal right & the financial resources to redeem Naomi & Ruth's land.

Since Boaz had already shown interest in Ruth, chances were good Naomi's plan would work.

So she tells Ruth to get herself all prettified, then to head on over to the **threshing floor** where Boaz has been at work beating out the grain of the barley harvest.

The threshing floor was a large, flat expanse of rock on a hill where the wind blew. Heads of grain were placed on the rock, then beaten with a flail or trodden by oxen to separate the grain from the chaff.

Once that was done, they used winnowing forks to throw the grain into the air where the wind would blow off the lighter chaff, leaving the grain to fall to the ground.

It was hard but joyous work because it produced the grain that was the mainstay of their prosperity.

After a long day of work, they'd enjoy an evening meal, then would settle down for a solid night's sleep.

Ruth was to wait till Boaz had settled down, then go to where he was sleeping and lie down at his feet, taking some of the blanket he used to cover himself, and pulling it over herself.

This would be Ruth's way of asking for Boaz's protection in a **personal way**. She was coming under his **covering**, asking him to fulfill his role as her kinsman redeemer, not just in securing the lands that belonged to her but redeeming her from poverty & widowhood.

In ch. 2 we saw that Ruth & Boaz **were attracted** to each other, but had done a polite little dance with each other, unsure of how they other felt.

Naomi told Ruth to make this rather bold declaration of her desire for Boaz so he'd know **clearly** where he stood with her.

The reason Naomi told Ruth to keep herself **unknown** until after everyone had settled down was to protect both Boaz & Ruth from embarrassment should for some reason Boaz **decline** Ruth's request.

B. Ruth Approaches Boaz 3:6-18

⁶So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her. ⁷And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

If not for her noble reputation as a highly virtuous woman, Ruth's behavior here in climbing under the covers with Boaz could be seen as immoral.

But her actions up to this point have made it clear there's nothing improper in her intent; she's simply laying claim to her rights as the relative of Boaz.

8 Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet. 9 And he said, "Who are you?" So she answered, "I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a [goel] close relative."

When Ruth first laid down, Boaz was asleep.

But in the middle of the night, his feet touched another body and he realized someone was there.

It startled him so he asked who it was; and Ruth replied, letting him know exactly what she meant by lying down next to him like this.

In 2:12, Boaz had said to her –

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.

In v. 9, Ruth uses the same word when she says – "Take your maidservant under your wing."

She's saying, "If you meant your earlier blessing, then become God's wing of protection & blessing to me."

10 Then he said, "Blessed are you of the LORD, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich."

Ruth's earlier kindness had been her loyalty to Naomi & her desire to take care of her by leaving her own people and land.

But what she does here is an even greater act of kindness toward Naomi.

You see, Boaz was no *young man*; he was older – as evidenced by his commendation of Ruth in not going after a husband of her own age.

She sought **Boaz** as a husband because of his ability to redeem Naomi's land, instead of going after some younger guy who was more attractive to her as a young woman.

Ruth demonstrates an important principle here about selecting a spouse.

While attraction is of course an important consideration, far more important is the nature & character of the person you're considering marrying.

Ruth was concerned with the future of her family, and selected a mate who would ensure a blessed future instead of just her present pleasure.

It's crucial that single people who plan for marriage take care & time to gauge the character of those they're considering marrying.

How wise & faithful are they in handling business & finances?

How good are they at maintaining healthy relationships?

What effect do they have on those they spend time with – is it positive or negative?

What about their plans for the future?

Do they have any? And if so, are they where you want to go?

What kind of a parent will they make to your children?

Many people have married a physically attractive spouse only to discover that

what was *inside* was far *less* than attractive.

Besides, the beauty of youth fades while the inner person becomes ever more visible with the passage of time.

The beauty of the inner person is far more important to a relationship than their exterior.

Ruth had come to know Boaz as a generous, kind, hard-working, godly man.

Though he was older & maybe less appealing than some of the young bucks around Bethlehem, he was twice the *man* they were.

Ruth knew she could love the man—Boaz.

11 And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you *are* a virtuous woman. **12** Now it is true that I *am* a [goel] close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. **13** Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be *that* if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you—good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the LORD lives! Lie down until morning.”

Boaz has good news & bad for Ruth:

1) First the Good news – He will indeed become her redeemer.

2) Then the Bad news – There was a relative closer to her than he, a goel who had prior claim on her & Naomi’s land.

Boaz says that’s he’ll go and see if this other relative wants to fulfill her request for redemption or not.

14 So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another. Then he said, “Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.”

This he said to his workers there at the threshing floor; they were stay mum about Ruth’s visit until the matter was settled.

15 Also he said, “Bring the shawl that *is* on you and hold it.” And when she held it, he measured six *ephahs* of barley, and laid *it* on her.

Then she went into the city. **16** When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, “*Is* that you, my daughter?” Then she told her all that the man had done for her.

17 And she said, “These six *ephahs* of barley he gave me; for he said to me, ‘Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.’” **18** Then she said, “Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day.”

Ruth’s report to Naomi convinced her that Boaz was earnest in his desire to redeem her.

C. Boaz Redeems Ruth 4:1-12

1 Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, “Come aside, friend, sit down here.” So he came aside and sat down.

2And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down.

Immediately after Ruth left, Boaz went to the city gate where the elders met to hear cases brought to them by the people.

Boaz sat down to wait his turn, and as he sat, along came the guy he needed to see – the relative who was a closer relative than he to Naomi & Ruth.

He asked the guy to stop; he had some business to take care of with him.

They waited their turn, then when it came, Boaz stood and addressed the elders.

The writer tells us there were 10 elders because this was the number called for to bear witness to the transfer of land, as well as a marriage. ^[1]

3Then he said to the close relative, “Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of land which *belonged* to our brother Elimelech.

Boaz is condensing the story of how Naomi’s land came to be under the control of others.

The land had been turned over to others when Elimelech moved to Moab.

He’d probably been leased it out before he left ten years before.

4And I thought to inform you, saying, ‘Buy *it* back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem *it*, redeem *it*; but if you will not redeem *it*, then tell me, that I may know; for *there is no one but you to redeem it*, and I *am* next after you.’” And he said, “I will redeem *it*.”

Boaz says he’s become aware now of Elimelech’s inheritance & since his widow has now returned, she’d like to redeem what belongs to her and has made an appeal to him as the kinsman redeemer.

But, since this other guy has first crack at it, Boaz wants to know if he wants it or if Boaz can redeem it.

The guy says he wants it.

5Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy *it* from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance.”

It was the duty of the kinsman-redeemer to not only keep property in the family name, but to maintain the *posterity* of the family.

Since Naomi was too old to have children, the duty to keep Elimelech’s family going would fall to Ruth as the widow of Elimelech’s son.

So Boaz informs the nearer-kinsman that the land isn’t all he’ll have to redeem; he’ll have to take Ruth as his wife as well.

6And the close relative said, “I cannot redeem *it* for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem *it*.”

Exactly why the man declines is unclear.

More than likely he’s already married & has sons.

Having another wife, with more children, would mean further dividing of his

property – something he didn't want to get involved in. Since Boaz had already expressed his desire to redeem both Ruth & her land, this guys turns over his rights to him.

7 Now this *was the custom* in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging, to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave *it* to the other, and this was a confirmation in Israel.

8 Therefore the close relative said to Boaz, “Buy *it* for yourself.” So he took off his sandal.

In Deut 25, a ceremony is spelled out if a kinsman *refused* to fulfill his duty.

He was to take off his sandal & hand it to the woman he was refusing to marry. She would then spit in his face as a supreme act of dishonor for the dishonor he was showing by refusing his duty to safeguard the people & land of Israel through redemption.

Since there was no real dishonor in this case, it was merely the formality of passing over one redeemer in favor of another, they just did the sandal part.

By handing Boaz his sandal, he was symbolically giving him the right to “walk over the land as his property.”^[2]

9 And Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, from the hand of Naomi. **10** Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate. You are witnesses this day.” **11** And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said, “We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. **12** May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the LORD will give you from this young woman.”

The elders & people pronounce their blessing on the union of Boaz & Ruth.

D. Their Family 4:13-22

13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, 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 close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel! **15** And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him.” **16** Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him. **17** Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, “There is a son born to

Naomi.” And they called his name Obed. [Worshiper] He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

In an unusual move, the *women* of Bethlehem named the child; Ruth & Boaz accepted it.

V. 16 says the child placed on Naomi’s bosom and she became his nurse.

Naomi was far too old to be able to nurse a newborn – that’s not what this means.

Obed simply became the fulfillment of her desire to see her family name carried on in Israel. The little guy took the place of her other two sons who’d died in Moab.

As Obed’s grandmother & member of the family of Boaz & Ruth, she played a key role in raising him.

¹⁸Now this is the genealogy of Perez: [the son of Judah] Perez begot Hezron; ¹⁹Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; ²⁰Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon; ²¹Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed; ²²Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.

Here we have the genealogy of King David.

It was 12 generations from Jacob to David; 14 from Abraham to David.

Abraham lived right around 2000 BC, while David lived right around a thousand years later, in 1000 BC.

There are some striking parallels between Boaz & Ruth and the story of our redemption.

Ruth, a Moabitess, is a picture of Gentile believers.

She begins as a lost *outsider*, a stranger to the covenant of God.

She’s led to a knowledge of God through Naomi, a Jew, whose failure to trust in God has caused her to wander away.

Naomi stands as a type of Israel, through whom God made Himself known.

In Romans 9-11, the Apostle Paul says that it in the midst of Israel’s disobedience salvation had been extended to the Gentiles.

So Gentile Ruth learns about God through wandering Jewish Naomi.

Boaz as the kinsman-redeemer is a type of Jesus Christ.

God installed this role in the Law just so such a beautiful picture of the Savior could be given.

The kinsman-redeemer had to be a family member. [\[3\]](#)

Jesus took on humanity so He could be our kinsman and save us.

The kinsman-redeemer had the duty of buying family members out of slavery.

Jesus redeemed us from slavery to sin and death.

The kinsman-redeemer had the duty of buying back land that had been forfeited.

The Earth was given by God to man, who forfeited it to Satan in the Fall.

Jesus will redeem the Earth, reclaiming it from the devil’s dominion.

In redeeming Ruth, Boaz was motivated by a great love for her.

Jesus' motivation for redeeming us is His love for us.

Boaz had a plan to redeem Ruth unto himself - and some might have thought the plan to be risky or foolish; notifying the closer relative, then speaking only of the land before mentioning Ruth.

Jesus had a plan to redeem us, and as Paul says, many think the gospel is foolishness. But the plan worked & is glorious.

Boaz took the Gentile Ruth as his bride.

Jesus has taken a vast Gentile throng as His bride in the Church. ^[4]

As kinsman-redeemer to Ruth, Boaz provided her a glorious destiny.

As our redeemer, Jesus provides us a glorious destiny.

Both Boaz & Jesus were born in Bethlehem.

In 2:14, when Boaz & Ruth had lunch, he gave her bread & wine (vinegar), symbolic of Communion.

The Book of Ruth serves an important purpose in telling the history of Israel because it gives us the lineage of David, which then leads to Christ.

But above all, this is a love story.

It's fitting that it's also a wonderful parallel to Christ & His people – for theirs too is primarily a love story.

[1] *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* – Comment on Ruth 4:2, this practice is seen validated many years later.

[2] Ibid, 4:8

[3] Adapted from David Guzik's excellent on-line commentary on Ruth.

[4] Ephesians 5:31-32; Revelation 21:9