

The Book of Ruth

Introduction:

The prophet Isaiah wrote, “*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah*” (Isa. 55:8). Said statement finds its fulfillment in the Old Testament book of Ruth. The Lord’s objective, in this short book, is to bring together Boaz and Ruth that they may stand in the lineage of Jesus Christ (see Matt. 1:1-6). The bringing together of these two individuals occurs in a most peculiar way. A famine in the land of Judah forces a man named Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons (Mahlon and Chilion) into the land of Moab for survival. Elimelech dies not long after entering Moab leaving Naomi a widow with two sons. Eventually, the two sons marry two Moabite women named Ruth and Orpah. Ten years later both Mahlon and Chilion die in Moab. Naomi has been stripped of all earthly possessions that would make a wife and mother content in this life. The three widows determine to return to Judah because the famine had been lifted. On the way to Judah, Orpah decides to turn back to Moab. The rest of the book tells the story of Naomi, her daughter-in-law Ruth, and Boaz who is a near kinsman to Elimelech. Ruth meets Boaz and through a series of providential events becomes his wife through the process of the Levirate law of marriage. Boaz and Ruth have a son named Obed. Obed becomes the grandfather of King David and thereby an ancestor of Jesus our Lord. The date of Ruth is placed at about 1000 BC during the days of the judges (see Ruth 1:1).

The Function of Ruth

The function of the book of Ruth appears to be threefold. First, it gives the historical account of one small part of the lineage of Jesus Christ. Secondly, the book reveals how that God’s providence is at work in the lives of man that His will may be accomplished. Thirdly, God approved characters are divinely revealed in Ruth and Boaz.

The Historical Record of Christ’s Lineage

Ruth 4:17-22 gives the lineage of Christ from Perez to David. This short list of ten generations is found verbatim at Matthew 1:3-6 in relation to the line of Christ. Boaz and Ruth’s part, in this most important story, is found in Obed their son. Obed is the grandfather of King David. The primary function of the Old Testament is to trace the promises God made to Abraham regarding all nations being blessed through his seed (see Gen. 12:1ff). God preached the gospel to Abraham on that occasion (see Gal. 3:8). The promised seed of Abraham would eventually be realized in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16). The promised blessing would be the forgiveness of man’s sins (Gal. 3:14; Acts 2:38-39). No greater message is needed by man today than that which is delivered in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God’s Providence

The word “providence” is defined as “control exercised by a deity; divine direction” (AHD 997). The divine direction in the life of Elimelech and his family seems far beyond human reason. If I wanted to play match maker for two people who had no knowledge of each other I would have to plan a way to have the two get to know each other. God’s divine providence was that Boaz and Ruth come together that they may have Obed. To achieve this objective the Lord brings about a famine and the death of three men. The human mind may view such providence as odd yet by the sovereign will of God He succeeds in redeeming man from the consequences of sin. Naomi begins to understand and appreciate the providential ways of God throughout the study. She at first believes that God’s hand was against her (Ruth 1:13) in that He hath dealt bitterly, testified against her, and afflicted her (Ruth 1:20-21). Through time; however, Naomi comes to realize that God was working through her for the benefit of all (see Ruth 2:20ff).

Ruth

The character of Ruth defines what a “**worthy woman**” is (see Ruth 3:11). God’s approved character ought to be what all godly men look for in prospective wives. Ruth was kind (Ruth 1:8), caring (Ruth 1:14-18; 2:11), had a diligent work ethic (Ruth 2:7, 14, 17), and humble (Ruth 2:10, 13). Ruth had great love, respect and honor for her mother-in-law (Ruth 3:5ff; 4:15) and was willing to responsibly take care of her (Ruth 2:17-18). Ruth was also a woman of faith (Ruth 2:12; 4:14). She was grateful for all that was given to her in this life (Ruth 2:13). Ruth’s character was such that people took notice and thereby referred to her as a “*worthy woman*” (Ruth 3:11). Young men would do well to seek out such a woman for a wife (see also Prov. 31:10-31).

Boaz

Though the book does not refer to Boaz as a “**worthy man**” he certainly seems to define such a thought. Boaz’s inner heart is exposed in that he was impressed with the godly character traits of Ruth (Ruth 3:11). The primary feature of Boaz, like Ruth, was his faith in God (see Ruth 2:4). Boaz was a man who respected the laws of Jehovah God (Ruth 4:1ff). Boaz was a kind (Ruth 2:13), honest (Ruth 3:12), and compassionate man (Ruth 3:17). Though the scriptures reveal that he was rich (Ruth 2:1) he never seemed to think too highly of himself as though he was better than others (see Ruth 2:4-7, 13). Boaz was a man who respected and treated with dignity those of the opposite sex. He would in no way take advantage of a woman in need (Ruth 3:13-15). Young women would do well to seek out such a man for a husband.

Outline of the Book of Ruth

Chapter 1

I. **Famine, Death, and a Return to Judah (1:1-14):**

A. *“And it came to pass in the days when the judges judged, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there”* (1:1-2).

1. The days of the Judges were times of sin cycles. Israel would sin, go into bondage to their enemies, sorrow over their sins, and God would send a judge to deliver them. It is believed that Ruth was written possibly during the days of Gideon. Judges chapter 6 records the invasion of the Midianites, a people who came into a land and destroyed its food production capabilities (see Judges 6:1-4).
2. Ruth picks up the history of God’s people during an intense famine that drove many from their homelands seeking food. One such family was that of Elimelech of Bethlehem-judah. Elimelech had a wife (Naomi) and two sons (Mahlon and Chilion).

B. *“And Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelt there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died both of them: and the woman was left of her two children and of her husband”* (1:3-5).

1. While we may ponder the validity of such marriages we may look to the book of Deuteronomy to find that it was only the Canaanite women that God forbid marriage to (see Deut. 7:1-3). Moses explains to Israel that the Moabite was not to enter into the congregation. Apparently Israel could lawfully marry someone who was not of their faith yet such a one was not permitted to be a part of the congregation of God’s people (see Deut. 23:4).

2. Some time after entering Moab Elimelech dies and then ten years latter both Mahlon and Chilion die. Naomi's heart was broken. All she had remaining was her two daughters-in-law who were Moabites.
- C. *"Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that Jehovah had visited his people in giving them bread. And she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah"* (1:6-7).
 1. After the death of Naomi's husband and Sons there was not much left for her in Moab. She gets word that the food shortage has abated by the helping hand of the Lord.
 2. Naomi takes her two daughters-in-law and returns to Judah.
- D. *"And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, go, return each of you to her mother's house: Jehovah deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. Jehovah grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voice, and wept"* (1:8-9).
 1. Naomi knows that there is nothing for Orpah and Ruth in Judah so she request that they remain in Moab with their families. She gives them God's speed and prays for their well being.
 2. Naomi reveals the first bit of information regarding the character of Ruth in this study. Naomi said that the two daughters-in-law were "*kind*." Ruth's kindness is further revealed in this study and shall be developed as we study along.
 3. The scene was obviously an emotional one seeing that the three had developed a wonderful relationship through the years.
- E. *"And they said unto her, Nay, but we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have a husband tonight, and should also bear sons; would ye therefore tarry till they were grown? Would ye therefore stay from having husbands? Nay, my daughters, for it grieves me much for your sakes, for the hand of Jehovah is gone forth against me. And they lifted their voice, and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her"* (1:10-14).
 1. Naomi's reason for her daughters-in-law remaining in Moab is that if they return to Judah they would have near impossible opportunities to be remarried. Naomi was aged and the probability of her having children again was virtually non-existent. The reason Naomi brings this up is that the Law of Moses commanded that brothers had the responsibility, by Levirate law, to raise up seed to other brothers who had deceased without having children (see Deut. 25:5).
 2. Secondly, even if she were able to have children how could she expect Orpah and Ruth to wait so many years for the young men to be of a marrying age?
 3. Lastly, Ruth knew that it would be next to impossible for the two widows to find a husband in Judah due not to having been previously married but also their Moabite heritage. Their Moabite descent added to their being widows would be difficult obstacles to overcome for others.
 4. Notice that Ruth "*clave unto*" Naomi. Ruth had a deep love for her mother-in-law. She had shown her appreciation for Naomi by her kind treatment and apparently had developed such a love for her mother-in-law that she was not willing for the relationship to end. Secondly, Ruth had clearly become convicted of the faith of Jehovah (see below).
 5. The last thing to notice is Naomi's heartache. Like Job, she had all her family taken from her (even her husband). Her grief was more than she could bear. She concludes that "*Jehovah is gone forth against me*." Naomi's faith was being put to the test during these difficult days.

II. **Ruth chooses to return to Bethlehem with Naomi and to serve the God of Israel (1:15-22):**

- A. *"And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her god: return thou after thy sister-in-law"* (1:15).
 1. Apparently the three women had made some progress toward Judah before having this conversation (see Ruth 1:7). Orpah has listened unto her mother-in-law's advice and left for her homeland to her people and god. Why Ruth would suggests this to the two people she loved is unknown. It may be that she was testing their acquired faith in Jehovah???

2. Naomi now turns to Ruth and tells her to follow her sister back to her people and gods of Moab.
- B. *“And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God, where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me. And when she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, she left off speaking unto her”* (1:16-18).
1. We are given our first glimpse into the character of Ruth at this point. She has been identified as **kind** at Ruth 1:8 and now **caring** toward her aged and widowed mother-in-law. Ruth is willing to care for Naomi until she passes from this earth.
 2. Secondly, we see the germ of **faith** within Ruth. She verbally commits herself to accepting Jehovah as the one true God. Boaz detects this faith in Ruth as well (see Ruth 2:11).
- C. *“So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and the women said, is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and Jehovah hath brought me home again empty; why call ye me Naomi, seeing Jehovah hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, who returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest”* (1:19-22).
1. Naomi and Ruth proceed on to Bethlehem and there meet up with some old acquaintances of Naomi’s. The word of God states that *“all the city was moved about them.”* Ten plus years had passed since Naomi had been to her home in Bethlehem and it appears that many of the women remembered her. They ask, *“Is this Naomi?”* Naomi no longer desires to be called by her name which means “pleasant or gracious.” She request that the people refer to her as *“Mara”* (bitter). All that would make a woman pleasant and gracious (i.e., her husband and children) have been taken from her in death. That which is thereby left is a spirit of bitterness. Naomi was *“full”* of children and a husband but now she is *“empty.”*
 2. Naomi states that Jehovah has done two things in relation to her current state of being empty and bitter:
 - a. *“Jehovah hath testified against me.”* Naomi states that Jehovah has testified (announce or bring low) against her in that He is responsible for the loss of her husband and sons. By some unseen providential manner God’s hand was in the loss of Naomi’s husband and sons.
 - b. *“The Almighty hath afflicted me.”* Naomi also attributes the death of her husband and sons to God’s afflicting (to cause grievous distress to) hand against her.
 - c. It may be that God moved in such a way in the life of Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah so that he may *“know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or not”* (Deut. 8:2).

Lessons:

- The value of **influence** and teaching: Ruth came to a knowledge and faith in Jehovah God no doubt by the teaching and example her husband and mother-in-law set. Jesus said that the Christian was to be the salt and light of the world in matters of God’s influence (see Matt. 5:13-16) (see study # 1; Christian Influence).
- Godly **Character**: Ruth displayed a golden character by being **kind** (Ruth 1:8) and **caring** (Ruth 1:14-18) toward her mother-in-law. Each and every person has a God ordained responsibility to care for your ailing family members (see I Tim. 5:8). Those who take care of these responsibilities show a kind and caring spirit (Eph. 4:32) (see study # 2; Character Traits to look for in a Woman).
- **Providential testing**: Naomi has said that *“the hand of Jehovah is gone forth against me”* (Ruth 1:13), the Lord has *“testified against me,”* *“dealt very bitterly,”* and *“afflicted me.”* The Lord allows man to go through various trials in life that He may know what is in our hearts (see Deut. 8:2; James 1:2-3; I Pet. 1:6-7) (see study # 3; Providence).

Chapter 2

I. Ruth Gleans in Boaz's Field (2:1-7):

A. *"And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech, and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor"* (2:1-2).

1. Boaz is introduced here as a man of great wealth and a relative of Elimelech (Naomi's deceased husband). The financial standing of Naomi and Ruth is revealed. Ruth's request to "*glean among the ears of grain*" in Boaz's fields illustrates their great poverty. Moses had given law regarding harvest time. The landowners were not to harvest the corners of their lots and neither were they to pick clean the ground wherein extra ears of grain may have fallen. These leftovers were to be left for the poor to gather (see Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22 and Deut. 24:19-22). I find two things of interest here:

- a. First, there is an obvious difference between Boaz and Ruth. Boaz is a wealthy land owner and Ruth is a poor gleaner of the fields. This distinction has been divinely revealed for a purpose. Boaz's character trait may begin right here. Like King Solomon and the lowly country Shulamite of the Song of Solomon, Boaz did not consider himself too good for a poor Moabite gleaner of the fields named Ruth (see study # 4; Self Perception).
- b. Secondly, we need to take note that though God made such provisions for the poor he did not expect anyone to simply hand them food. Gleaning fields meant hard labor (harvesting). When the poor went to work they received foods. Man today should endeavor to work always rather than waiting for a handout (II Thess. 3:10) (see study # 5; Work Ethic).

2. We note that Ruth had no idea that Boaz was a near kinsmen of Naomi's at this point (see Ruth 2:19ff). Ruth simply desired to work for sustenance.

B. *"And she went, and came and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on the portion of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech"* (2:3).

1. The obvious mention of Boaz "*who was of the family of Elimelech*" combined with the fact that Ruth "*hap*" to come to his field reveals a providential move by the Lord (see study # 3).
2. The levirate law of marriage would require that a kinsman of a deceased man who had no children take the widow for his wife.

C. *"And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, Jehovah be with you. And they answered him, Jehovah bless thee. Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: and she said, Let me glean, I pray you, and gather after the reapers among the sheaves. So she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, save that she tarried a little in the house"* (2:4-7).

1. We note that Boaz **did not think too highly of himself** and now we see that he is a man of **faith** (see study # 6; Character Traits to look for in a Man). Boaz returns home from Bethlehem and sees Ruth gleaning in his field. He does not recognize the girl and so asks the supervisor of reapers, "*Whose damsel is this?*" The sight of Ruth and question by Boaz indicates the initial interest on the part of Boaz. The supervisor of the reapers tells Boaz about Ruth. Her hard work ethic had not gone un-noticed by the reapers of the field. Ruth had worked all day long in the field (see study # 5).
2. Again, we note other important characteristics found in Ruth. Ruth was not only **kind** and caring toward her mother-in-law but she was a **hard worker** (see study # 2). Secondly she was a **humble woman**. It no doubt took a spirit of humility to go to a wealthy man's field and request to glean in it. Those who gleaned fields were viewed as poor and destitute of caring families.

II. Boaz and Ruth Meet (2:8-13):

A. *"Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither pass from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee?"*

And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn” (2:8-9).

1. No doubt Boaz was familiar with Naomi’s daughter-in-law by word of mouth yet had never seen her.
2. Notice the three fold **kind acts of Boaz** toward Ruth:
 - a. First, Boaz allows Ruth to follow the maidens of the field (those whose work it was to gather and bundle all that the reapers had cut with their tools).
 - b. Secondly, Boaz tells Ruth that she will not be harmed by anyone as she does this work.
 - c. Thirdly, Boaz tells Ruth that any time she gets thirsty she may drink of the young men’s water that are working as reapers.

B. *“Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found favor in thy sight, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a foreigner?”* (2:10)

1. Ruth takes careful note of the kindness of Boaz and asks him why he would do such a thing to a foreigner such as herself.
2. Note the **spirit of humility** within the lowly and poor Ruth. She knows her place as a foreigner in a strange land. She is in the field of a wealthy man who is allowing her, by the law of Jehovah God, to glean his fields so that she does not starve. She makes no demands but rather has simply gone to the field to work. She falls to her face in humility and **gratitude**. Women who think too highly of themselves and make demands upon men are truly a sore pain within the heart.

C. *“And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thy husband; and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people that thou knewest not heretofore”* (2:11).

1. Ruth wants to know why Boaz would show kindness toward her seeing that she is a foreigner.
2. Boaz tells Ruth that he knows all about her. He has heard about the death of her husband in Moab and he has heard about her good care of Naomi. Boaz has heard about her giving up the land of her nativity (i.e., leaving behind her parents and the gods of the Moabites). **Boaz is saying that such actions speak volumes about what type of heart Ruth has.** Ruth has shown herself to be kind, caring, hard working and humble.

D. *“Jehovah recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of Jehovah, the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to take refuge”* (2:12).

1. We have learned of **Ruth’s kind, caring, hard working, and humble disposition** to this point of the study. We now take note that she was a woman of **faith** (see study # 2). Boaz has heard how that Ruth has come to Israel from Moab to hope and rest under the protecting wings of Jehovah God. Interestingly, Moses spoke of the Lord bearing Israel on eagle’s wings by protecting them against the Egyptians (see Ex. 19:4).
2. Seeing that Ruth’s character was genuine and humble Boaz asks that the Lord would *“recompense her work and give her a full reward.”*

E. *“Then she said, Let me find favor in thy sight, my lord, for that thou hast comforted me and for that thou hast spoken kindly unto thy handmaid, though I be not as one of thy handmaidens”* (2:13).

1. Once again the spirit of **humility** comes out in Ruth. Ruth admits that she was *“not one of thy handmaidens”* yet Boaz is treating her as one. Secondly, she humbly refers to Boaz as *“her lord”* (i.e., one having authority over her in the field). Ruth continues to display a spirit that illustrates that she knows her place.
2. Ruth tells Boaz that his acts of kindness and comfort have not gone unnoticed nor without **gratitude**. Ruth never reveals a character that demands people to feel sorry for her due to her financial standing. This godly woman simply wanted the opportunity to work for her sustenance (see study # 5).
3. Note that at this point Ruth does not know who Boaz is but Boaz knows who she is.

III. **Boaz gives special treatment to Ruth due to her Kind, Humble, Hard working, and Grateful Ways (2:14-16):**

- A. *“And at meal-time Boaz said unto her, Come hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers, and they reached her parched grain, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left thereof”* (2:14)
 - 1. The **humble, hard working, and grateful Ruth** had made such an impression upon Boaz that he asked her to join his reapers and maidens *“at meal-time”* that she may fill herself.
 - 2. Ruth ate until she could eat no more and then left the meal to go back to work.
- B. *“And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not. And also pull out some for her from the bundles, and leave it, and let her glean, and rebuke her not”* (2:15-16).
 - 1. Boaz is very impressed with Ruth. He observes her completing her meal and getting right back to work. He decides to help her a bit by telling his reapers to allow Ruth to glean even among the sheaves (i.e., the main portions of the field rather than just the corners).
 - 2. Boaz further instructs his reapers to pull grain ears out of their bundles so that Ruth may walk by and pick them up.

IV. **Ruth comes home to Naomi (2:17-23):**

- A. *“So she gleaned in the field unto even; and she beat out that which she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. And she took it up, and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned and she brought forth and gave to her that which she had left after she was sufficed”* (2:17-18).
 - 1. Ruth had began her work early that morning (Ruth 2:7) and had worked up to the *“meal-time”* (probably lunch) (Ruth 2:14). Ruth continued her hard labor *“unto even.”* The results of her work was *“about an ephah of barley”* (i.e., approximately 20 lbs).
 - 2. After all the work was completed Ruth brought the finished 20 pounds of barley to her mother-in-law that she too may eat. Again, Ruth is showing a spirit of **responsibility and compassion** toward Naomi by working hard and taking care of her.
- B. *“And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned today? And where hast thou wrought? Blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man’s name with whom I wrought today is Boaz”* (2:19).
 - 1. Now it seems clear that Ruth had no knowledge of who Boaz was. She was not seeking to gain his favor for any other reason than that she may labor among his fields for sustenance.
 - 2. Naomi is impressed with the amount of barley that Ruth has acquired and asks where she had gleaned. Ruth tells her mother-in-law that it was in the fields of Boaz.
- C. *“And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of Jehovah, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is nigh of kin unto us, one of our near kinsmen”* (2:20).
 - 1. Upon hearing the name of Boaz Naomi praises God for His providential care. Naomi had previously considered herself completely rejected by the Lord God and left to be in bitter pain (see Ruth 1:13, 20-21).
 - 2. Naomi now recognizes that God, through His providential care, has provided the opportunity for herself and Ruth to be comforted and cared for (see study # 3).
- D. *“And Ruth the Moabitess said, Yea, he said unto me, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, and that they meet thee not in any other field. So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz, to glean unto the end of barely harvest and of wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law”* (2:21-23).
 - 1. Ruth reveals all that Boaz told her and that she has been invited to glean in the fields until the end of the harvest.
 - 2. Ruth takes Boaz up on his offer and works throughout the harvest season with his maidens.

Lessons Learned

- **Ruth’s** diligent **work ethic** is depicted in that she worked from morning (Ruth 2:7) to afternoon (Ruth 2:14) and even until evening (Ruth 2:17). Ruth’s **humble spirit** is depicted in that she falls upon her face in front

of Boaz to give him thanks for allowing her, a Moabite foreigner, to glean in his fields (Ruth 2:10, 13). Ruth's **love and care** for her mother-in-law is also seen in this chapter (see Ruth 2:11). Ruth also was a woman who took her **responsibility** to care for her aging mother-in-law with all seriousness (Ruth 2:17-18). Furthermore, we find that Ruth was now a woman of **faith** who sought out the loving protection of the one God of heaven (see Ruth 2:12). Lastly, we find that Ruth was **grateful** for Boaz's kindness (Ruth 2:13). So many poverty stricken people today feel that society owes them a living. Ruth was not only a hard worker but she also gave thanks.

- **Boaz** was a man of "**wealth**" (2:1). Wealth; however, was not what Boaz was all about. Boaz was a man of faith (Ruth 2:4), kind, and compassionate (Ruth 2:8, 13). Boaz is a man not impressed by man's wealth but rather the character of faith, humility, love, and gratefulness. Ruth was a woman who knew her place and her responsibility. Boaz was impressed by her work ethic as well. We note that Boaz did not consider himself to wealthy or good to communicate and care for Ruth (i.e., think too highly of himself).
- **Naomi** blesses the name of Jehovah for not forgetting her and her afflictions. Though Naomi experienced the bitter pain of the death of her husband and sons she had not given up on God. Apparently she had been praying and beseeching the Lord regarding this matter and her prayers were answered.
- **Providence** once again comes into the story. Naomi had attributed her bitter loss of husband and sons to Jehovah and now she believes by faith that God is acting in her favor.

Chapter 3

I. Naomi Instructs Ruth to go to Boaz and request Marriage (3:1-5):

- A. *"And Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to-night in the threshing-floor. Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee and get thee down to the threshing-floor, but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking"* (3:1-3).
 1. While this conversation may sound a bit odd to us it is legitimately within the confines of the Mosaic Law regarding marriage. Naomi was not merely being opportunistic she was applying the Law of Moses to her daughter-in-law's life. The name of Naomi's son would only live on through a kinsman, like Boaz, and Ruth.
 2. There are two legal issues here:
 - a. Apparently Naomi had sold her husband's land at some previous point due to her poverty (see Ruth 4:3). Said land belonged to God and the sale was not permanent. Moses explains that in such a sale a near kinsmen had the right to re-purchase the land and give it back to the poor that sold the land (see Lev. 25:23-33).
 - b. Secondly, we have the legal right of remarriage of a woman whose husband died. She was to be married by a near kinsman so that her first husband's name would not be blotted out of history (see Deut. 25:5-10). The man she remarried had to be the nearest kinsmen (see Ruth 3:12). The man who refused to raise up seed to his kinsmen was to be publicly disgraced.
- B. *"And it shall be, when he lies down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest I will do"* (3:4-5).
 1. Naomi surely knew that Boaz had interest in Ruth. Naomi instructs Ruth to put on nice clothes, slip in among the maidens of Boaz, and mark out the place where he sleeps. During the night, Naomi instructs Ruth to wait until Boaz is in bed and then to go in to him, uncover his feet and lie there. Boaz would then tell her "*what thou shalt do.*" This was an apparent procedure that Naomi felt the wisest approach to getting her daughter-in-law married.
 2. Notice another golden characteristic of Ruth. Ruth said, "*All that thou sayest I will do.*" For all intense and purpose Naomi had become Ruth's mother. **Ruth respected and honored her mother-in-law** in accordance with Moses' command to honor thy father and thy mother (Ex. 20:12). Young men would do well to find a mate in life that is not a rebel but rather one who

honors, respects, and is obedient to their parents. Remember, a woman who will not show respect and honor to her parents will be hard pressed to show respect and honor toward her husband (see study # 2).

II. Ruth goes to Boaz and request Marriage (3:6-18):

- A. *“And she went down unto the threshing-floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down. And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself; and, behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thy handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thy handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman”* (3:6-9).
1. Notice again that Ruth did *“according to all that her mother-in-law bade her.”* It takes a great deal of respect to follow someone’s instructions when relationships are involved. Ruth not only said that she would do all that Naomi said to do she did it!
 2. When Boaz had finished his work, filled his belly with food and drink, made his heart merry (content with food and drink), he then went to sleep. Ruth comes quietly into the bed of Boaz and humbly lies at his feet.
 3. It was not until midnight that Boaz realized a woman was in his bed and it startled him. Upon asking who she was Ruth reveals her identity to him. We now have two people who know their relationship to each other. Two people who are obviously interested in each other. Two people who know that the Law of God permits them to be together as husband and wife. Ruth now makes her request to Boaz, *“spread therefore thy skirt over thy handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.”* Ruth appeals to the Levirate marriage laws that Boaz was very familiar with. Her request that Boaz *“spread thy skirt over thy handmaid”* seems to be a sign of a woman belonging to a man in marriage (not necessarily the sexual act) (see Deut. 27:20; Ezek. 16:8).
- B. *“And he said, Blessed be thou of Jehovah, my daughter: thou hast showed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followest not young men, whether poor or rich.”* (3:10).
1. Boaz acknowledges the fact that Ruth could very well have gone after younger men who were poor or rich yet she has chosen him, an aged man.
 2. At the beginning of Ruth’s association with Boaz she illustrated a kind, humble, and grateful disposition that impressed Boaz. Her character was great in the beginning of their acquaintance but even grater now. Boaz recognizes the fact that Ruth is not a woman impressed by youth or wealth but rather she is indeed a *“worthy woman.”*
- C. *“And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou sayest; for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a worthy woman”* (3:11).
1. Boaz is willing to fulfill the request of Levirate marriage to Ruth due to the fact that he and everyone else know just how worth of a woman she is.
 2. A study of Ruth thereby defines the *“worthy woman:”* (see study # 7; A Worthy Woman)
 - a. A worthy woman is **kind** (Ruth 1:8) and **caring** (Ruth 1:14-18; 2:11).
 - b. She has a diligent **work ethic** (Ruth 2:7, 14, 17).
 - c. A worthy woman is **humble**. Ruth’s **humble spirit** is depicted in that she falls upon her face in front of Boaz to give him thanks for allowing her, a Moabite foreigner, to glean in his fields (Ruth 2:10, 13).
 - d. A worthy woman views her **responsibility toward parents** and family as serious (Ruth 2:17-18).
 - e. This woman will **respect and honor her parents** (Ruth 3:5ff).
 - f. A worthy woman is furthermore depicted as one who exercises **faith** in God (see Ruth 2:12).
 - g. The worthy woman is **grateful** (Ruth 2:13).
 - h. The worthy woman lives in such a way as to cause others to view her as a *“worthy woman”* (Ruth 3:11).
- D. *“And now it is true that I am a near kinsman; howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let*

him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as Jehovah liveth: lie down until the morning" (3:12-13).

1. Boaz recognizes Ruth as a prize to be had among women. Boaz was not; however, willing to disobey the Law of Moses for his own desires. The nearest kinsman was to be approached in the Levirate marriage. Boaz admits that there is a kinsman closer to Ruth than he.
 2. Boaz, being a man of **honesty and integrity**, decides to wait until the morning that Ruth may approach this man and asks him to fulfill the law of marriage. Boaz agrees to fulfill this duty if the nearest kin refuses to do so. Young women would do well to find a man who would never take advantage of them but rather treat them with respect, dignity, and honesty (see study # 6).
- E. *"And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could discern another. For he said, Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing-floor. And he said, Bring the mantle that is upon thee, and hold it; and she held it; and he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and he went into the city"* (3:14-15).
1. Surely the night went by with a bit of anxiety. Boaz and Ruth have obviously fallen for each other at this point yet there stood between them a man that was a nearer kinsman than Boaz.
 2. Boaz instructs Ruth to remain with him through the night yet early she was to leave so that no one would see her and assume anything had happened (i.e., the two were wed or worse yet the two were with each other in fornication). Boaz loads Ruth up with food and sends her on her way. Meanwhile, he goes to the city to confer with the elders about the matter.
- F. *"And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her. And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said, Go not empty unto thy mother-in-law. Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall; for the man will not rest, until he have finished the thing this day"* (3:16-18).
1. Seeing that the hour was very early Naomi asks, *"Who art thou, my daughter?"* Ruth reveals herself and tells Naomi all that had transpired through the night with Boaz.
 2. **Boaz** shows himself to also have a **kind and caring heart** for the needy. He sends Ruth on her way with six measures of barley so that Naomi would have something to eat.
 3. Naomi recommends that Ruth rest and patiently wait the outcome of Boaz's meeting with the elders and nearest kinsmen of Ruth (see 4:1ff).

Lessons Learned:

- The identity of the *"Worthy Woman"* (see notes above) (Ruth 3:11).
- Boaz's honesty and integrity (Ruth 3:12-13).
- Boaz's kind and caring disposition toward the needy (Ruth 3:16-18).

Chapter 4

Prelude to study: Ruth has gone to Boaz and made her request of Levirate marriage known to him. Boaz has revealed that there is a nearer kinsman to her than him. Boaz tells Ruth that if this nearest kinsman will not perform his Levirate duty then he will do so. Boaz sends Ruth home and he goes to the gate of the city to confer with the elders over this matter.

I. Boaz meets with the nearest kinsmen and elders over the right to purchase Elimelech's land and perform the right of Levirate Marriage with Ruth (4:1-6):

- A. *"Now Boaz went up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the near kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! Turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down"* (4:1).
1. This reading seems to infer that the nearest kinsmen just happen to be walking by the city gate at this time. Boaz sees the man and calls out to him that they may discuss the matter of Ruth.
 2. The gate of the city was the place where buying, selling, and acts of justice were performed.

- B. *“And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. And he said unto the near kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, sells the parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech’s: and I thought to disclose it unto thee, saying, Buy it before them that sit here, and 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 besides thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it”* (4:2-4).
1. Numbers 27:8-11 reveals the law of inherited land. When a man died he was to leave his land to his sons. If he had no sons he was to leave it to his daughters. If he had no daughters he was to leave it to his brethren. And so on until the property reaches the kinsmen. Elimelech’s land, seeing that he had no surviving sons or daughters, belonged to his kinsmen. Naomi; however, sold the land while a widow (this infers that the land remained with the deceased man’s widow throughout her life).
 2. Seeing that Naomi sold the land to one who had no rights to it (probably due to her state of poverty) it was now to be redeemed and placed with the rightful owner. The nearest kinsman tells Boaz that he will purchase the land.
- C. *“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. And the near kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: take thou my right of redemption on thee; for I cannot redeem it”* (4:5-6).
1. Elimelech’s property had strings attached. To buy the field belonging to Elimelech was to accept the Levirate law of marriage to Ruth. Elimelech’s sons were the rightful heirs of the land yet seeing that they were dead Ruth was the only remaining person through whom an heir of Elimelech could receive the inheritance. The issue was one of inheritance. To take the land of Elimelech would certainly be a good investment; however, such a reception came with Ruth and the responsibility to give her a son who would then be the rightful owner of the land.
 2. When the nearest kinsmen contemplated these facts he thought that it would not be a wise investment. He would lose all the money he invested into the land because it would eventually go to Ruth’s son. Why then perform the Levirate law of marriage with Ruth? The obvious answer is that if one were to do such a thing it would have to be out of love for Ruth and not for a property investment.

II. **Boaz Purchases Elimelech’s land and Redeems Ruth as His Wife (4:7-12):**

- A. *“Now this was the custom in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning exchanging, to confirm all things: a man drew off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbor; and this was the manner of attestation in Israel. So the near kinsman said unto Boaz, buy it for thyself. And he drew off his shoe”* (4:7-8).
1. The near kinsman was in no way bound by law to redeem the land and Ruth. The Levirate law of marriage was an option that came with shaming consequences for not accepting it yet it was nonetheless up to the near kinsman to do the redeeming.
 2. To make an *“attestation”* (i.e., confirm a deal) the men took off their shoes and gave it to his neighbor. The nearest kinsmen did this with Boaz to confirm the fact that he has no desire to purchase Elimelech’s land and neither does he desire to marry Ruth. The idea of a *“former”* custom, regarding, making a deal firm appears to have ceased at the time of this writing.
- B. *“And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech’s, and all that was Chilion’s and Mahlon’s, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day”* (4:9-10).
1. At the refusal of the nearest kinsman to purchase the land of Elimelech and perform the right of Levirate marriage with Ruth the Moabitess Boaz steps in and redeems both the land and Ruth. Ruth was considered a purchase seeing that the land was connected to her and her unborn seed.
 2. Boaz calls upon the elders and the people present at the gate to serve as witnesses for the sale and redeeming of Ruth (see Deut. 17:6).

- C. *“And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. Jehovah make the woman that is come into thy house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephrathah, and be famous in Bethlehem: and let thy house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which Jehovah shall give thee of this young woman”* (4:11-12).
1. The elders and the people present at the gate respond to Boaz’s statements saying, *“We are witnesses.”* The sell of the land is now complete and Ruth now belongs to Boaz.
 2. The elders and people confer a blessing upon Boaz by saying that their prayer is that Boaz would have many sons who would bring honor to his name by their godly behavior.
 3. Ruth appears to be a *“young woman”* and Boaz an older man (Ruth 3:10).

III. **Boaz and Ruth have Obed (4:13-22):**

- A. *“So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in unto her, and Jehovah gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the woman said unto Naomi, Blessed be Jehovah, who hath not left thee this day without a near kinsman; and let his name be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of life, and a nourisher of thine old age, for **thy daughter-in-law, who loves thee**, who is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbors gave it a name, saying, *There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David*”* (4:13-17).
1. Boaz and Ruth come together in marriage and by the providence of God Ruth bore a son. Naomi has now been blessed with a son that shall carry on the name of her deceased husband. This son would *“restore the life”* of Naomi in that her sorrows may be lightened.
 2. The loss of Naomi’s husband and two sons left her feeling that *“the hand of Jehovah is gone forth against me”* (Ruth 1:13) and that *“the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me... testified against me... and hath afflicted me”* (Ruth 1:20-21). Naomi’s heart is lifted when she ascribes Ruth’s work in Boaz’s field as a providential move of kindness on the part of Jehovah (Ruth 2:20). Now, Ruth exclaims to Naomi, *“Blessed be Jehovah, who hath not left thee this day without a near kinsman.”* A child was born and hope was restored to Naomi.
- B. *“Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez begat Hezron, and Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, and Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, and Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David”* (4:18-22).
1. There is a bigger picture here than simply the Lord’s not forgetting Naomi. It is apparent that God providentially used the famine in Judah (Ruth 1:1) to move Boaz’s kinsman Elimelech to Moab where he and his sons would find Ruth yet die. Once Ruth, the worthy woman, is discovered she is brought back to Judah, where according to Levirate marriage law, she marries Boaz. Boaz was a man in the lineage of Christ (the son of Salmon).
 2. Boaz and Ruth were thereby a match made by the providence of God that He may continue the hope of salvation for mankind. The author’s purpose for listing the genealogies is not that we may know David’s heritage but more importantly the heritage of Christ.