

Introduction

1. In our first week, we met a man named Elimelech, his wife Naomi and their two sons
2. Because of the famine in Israel, they moved to Moab
3. While there, the two sons married Moabite women
4. Tragedy strikes as all three men die, and Naomi and her daughters in law are left alone
5. It's here that one of the first major themes of the book appears—loyalty and faithfulness
6. We see this first in Ruth, in not only how she responds to Naomi, but in her declaration: "Your people are my people; your God is my God"
7. We also see this theme repeated as we are introduced to Boaz, the kinsman redeemer, and how he lives out the Spirit of the Law in providing for Ruth and Naomi
8. Finally, we saw how the relationship between Boaz and Ruth was a foreshadowing of Christ and the Church

A. Naomi comes up with a plan to provide security for Ruth (3:1-5)

1. Our passage today begins with Naomi asking Ruth two rhetorical questions (1-2):
  - a. The first question: "**My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?**" (1)
    - 1) Instead of the word "**security**" your translation of the Bible may use the word "**rest**" (NIV) or "**home**" (NIV, NET)
    - 2) The Hebrew word here simply means rest, but the way it's used here Naomi is referring to the care and security that comes from having a husband
    - 3) Life for widows in the ANE was often difficult, especially when they had no immediately family or children to help care for them
    - 4) This would have been especially hard for Ruth because she was a foreigner
    - 5) So, Naomi was thinking of Ruth's future and her need for security
    - 6) We saw Naomi express this same care and concern for Ruth in chapter 1 when she tried to send Ruth back to her home country, Moab, where she not only had family but opportunity to marry again
    - 7) We see it again here as Naomi thinks about Ruth's future
  - b. The second question "**Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were?**" (2):
    - 1) Your Bible may say "**relative**" or "**close relative**" which is a literal translation, but it doesn't quite convey what Naomi meant
    - 2) As we learned in chapter 2, Naomi identified Boaz as someone who could fulfill the OT practice of kinsman-redeemer
    - 3) Naomi reminds Ruth of Boaz's importance here
2. It becomes clear at this point that Naomi has an idea on how she can provide and care for Ruth, so she comes up with a THREE PART plan (2b-5):
  - a. Part one of her plan was for Ruth to clean herself up and go meet Boaz at the threshing floor (3): "**Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor;**"
    - 1) "**wash yourself**"—she had likely been working in the fields gathering grain

- 2) **“anoint yourself”**—mostly like a perfumed oil
  - 3) **“best clothes”**—best is supplied, but the word refers to a mantel or cloak
  - 4) **“threshing floor”**—where grain was separated from the chaff
    - It’s interesting to see Boaz beating out his own grain since this normally would have been a job for his servants
    - It shouldn’t shock us though; after all, we got a good look at his character earlier in the way that he addressed his workers and treated Ruth
    - He likely didn’t consider such work to be beneath him
- b. Part two of her plan was for Ruth to approach Boaz in a very specific way (3b-4):
- 1) She was to approach him in stealth mode (3b): **“but do not make yourself known to the man until…”**
  - 2) She was to wait until he had finished eating and drinking and had laid down for the night (3b)
  - 3) She was then to uncover his feet and lay down next to him (4b): Some scholars have suggested this phrase, and passage as a whole, refers to sexual activity, but that is a mistreatment of the text and completely ignores the immediate and broader context of the passage (more on this below)
- c. Part three of her plan was for Ruth to simply wait for instruction from Boaz (4c)
3. Okay, now I know what you’re thinking: **“Hmmm, that’s a little weird.”**
- a. I’ll admit it kind of does seem a bit weird, but we have to be careful not to see these actions through our 21<sup>st</sup> century eyes and American culture
  - b. If we simply take Naomi’s advice at face value, it appears she simply instructs Ruth to approach Boaz in a humble manner to ensure that the act wasn’t seen as too forward; in fact, much of the language in the passage indicates the submissive nature of Ruth’s actions (e.g. lying down at his feet, asking him to cover her up with his cloak)
  - c. It also appears Ruth’s actions were in keeping with ancient Israelite custom

<p><b>B. Ruth follows Naomi’s advice and goes to Boaz (3:6-13)</b></p>
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1. She lays at his feet (6-7):
  - a. She waited, as instructed, to wait until he had finished eating and drinking: **“When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain;”**
    - 1) Some have interpreted this to mean that Boaz was drunk because similar language is used this way in the bible to refer to drunkenness (1SA 25:26; 2SA 13:28, EST 1:10)—but in those cases the heart is said to be “merry with wine” and sometimes the word drunk or drunkenness is even used
    - 2) However, the same words are used elsewhere with no reference to intoxication (Judges 19:6, 9; ECC 8:15; Luke 12:19)
    - 3) In this context, there is no reference to drunkenness and it is best to understand the passage to refer to the joy and satisfaction of a good meal after a hard day’s work
  - b. Once he had fallen asleep, she uncovered his feet and lay down: Despite what some scholars suggest, there is nothing sexual here:

- 1) What the phrase “**uncover one’s nakedness**” is used as a euphemism for sex in the Bible, uncovering the feet is never used this way
  - 2) Another obvious clue is that Boaz is asleep when Ruth uncovers his feet and he doesn’t wake up until the middle of the night
  - 3) Ruth also lays at his feet, hardly the position for sex
  - 4) In addition, Boaz refers to Ruth as a “**woman of noble character**”(v.11)—hardly something one would expect if she were there to seduce him
  - 5) Boaz even goes to lengths to protect Ruth from any speculation by warning her not to share with anyone that she came to the threshing floor (14)
2. She asks Boaz to redeem her (8-9):
- a. Boaz awakes in the middle of the night and finds a woman at his feet: “**It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet.**”
  - b. He is unaware that it’s Ruth (likely because it’s dark): “**He said, ‘Who are you?’**”
  - c. Ruth responds by identifying herself and explaining her actions (9): “**I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative.**”
    - 1) “**maid**”: by introducing herself as a female servant she takes a submission posture
    - 2) “**spread your covering over your maid**”: a idiom for marriage (see DEU 22:30; EZE 16:8)
    - 3) “**a close relative**”: Hebrew *go’el*, kinsman-redeemer
    - 4) So Ruth humbly, but very directly, reveals her willingness and desire to marry Boaz as her kinsman-redeemer
      - a) We have to remember there were two purposes to this practice
      - b) One was to provide security and protection for the widow
      - c) The second was to ensure the progeny of the dead husband
      - d) In both of these cases, Ruth’s actions went beyond herself and her dead husband—they provided security for Naomi and ensured the progeny of her father-in-law, Elimelech (who lost both sons and Naomi was too old to have more children)
      - e) As such, Ruth’s commitment and obedience to the Law here stand in stark contrast to Israel’s disobedience at the time of the Judges—and this is made all that more profound because she was a Moabite, an outsider!

C. Boaz responds with gratitude, grace and obedience (3:10-15)
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1. It should be no surprise how he responds
2. He first blesses her for her kindness to him and praises her for her noble character (10): “**Then he said, “May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich.”**”
3. He then calms her fears (that maybe he would say no) and agrees to do what she asked (11): “**Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.**”
  - a. The phrase “woman of excellence” can also be render as “woman of noble character” or “worthy woman”
  - b. The same phrase is used in Proverbs 31:10: “**An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.**”
  - c. According to this passage, Ruth’s character was well know: “for all my people in the city” is more literally, “all the gate of the town” which could mean everyone in the city or just the

- prominent men of the city since the gate was the common gathering spot for leaders within a city
- d. We see here that Boaz’s willingness to marry Ruth went beyond the OT obligation, but to genuine affection and recognition of Ruth’s worthiness as a wife
4. There was only one problem (13):
    - a. Boaz wasn’t the nearest relative, which meant that someone else had the first option to redeem Ruth (13): **“Now it is true I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.”**
    - b. As a Godly man, Boaz adheres strictly to the Law and agrees to allow the closer relative to marry Ruth if he elects to do so, but he promises to marry her if the closer relative does not (13)
  5. Ruth stays until morning before heading home (14): **“So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said, “Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.”**
    - a. She continued her posture of humility and submission by spending the night sleeping at his feet
    - b. Boaz protected her reputation by instructing her to get up and leave while it was still dark so that others would not be aware that she had come to the threshing floor.
    - c. Even in this parting episode we see the noble character of each

D. Ruth returns home to Naomi and waits for Boaz to fulfil his promise (3:15-18)
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1. As he had done before, Boaz ensures that Ruth not leave empty handed (15): **“Again he said, “Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it.” So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her. Then she went into the city.”**
  - a. **“Six measures of barley”**: probably six seahs (smaller than an ephah but larger than an omer), which would have been about sixty pounds—we learn in v. 17 that he did this to help provide for Naomi
  - b. **“Then she went into the city”**: the NIV and NET have **“then he went”** ( older manuscripts apparently support “he” while medieval manuscripts like the Vulgate support “she”)
2. Ruth reports everything that happened to Naomi (17)
3. Naomi instructs Ruth to wait for Boaz to work out the details of her redemption (18)—notice the urgency to which Naomi claims Boaz will handle the matter: **“for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today.”**

Conclusion
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1. When we began our study, I mentioned that one of the refreshing things about this story is the amazing character of each of the main individuals in the story
  - a. Remember, this was in the time of the Judges—our study of Judges revealed that there wasn’t much to emulate or be encouraged by in regard to the Israelites, or even most of the judges
  - b. Yet, during that time, we find this family of Israelites who practically ooze obedience, faithfulness, loyalty, kindness, care and concern for one another

- c. This part of the story continues to reveal what we love about these characters
  - 1) Naomi shows concern for Ruth's future and security by devising a plan, and one in accordance with the Law of God
  - 2) Ruth's actions reveal a willingness, and even a desire, to secure not only her own care and protection, but that of Naomi, as well as desire to ensure the progeny of her dead husband
  - 3) Ruth's actions also reveal her humble and submissive nature
  - 4) Boaz's action reveal a desire to care for Naomi and Ruth, and to do so in strict accordance with the Law of God
  
- 2. There's something else here that may be a bit of a stretch, but I think it's worth considering:
  - a. I wonder if there is something to the fact that Ruth is the one that initiates the redemption process with Boaz—in other words, the one who needs to be redeemed asks the redeemer
  - b. God had already put in place a plan to redeem widows through the law of the kinsman-redeemer
  - c. We even see His providential hand in the story of Ruth, how he is actively working behind the scenes to bring Ruth and Boaz together
  - d. However, it's Ruth that makes her plea to Boaz and asks him to redeem her
  - e. In some respects, that's similar to our situation
  - f. God had made a way of salvation for us; He has provide a kinsman-redeemer for us in Jesus Christ
  - g. If we look at our lives, we can see how He providentially moves us to lead us to our savior
  - h. However, in the end, we God allows us to take initiative and ask Jesus Christ to redeem us
  - i. There's one final observation—Boaz's response is similar to Christ's—will He not do anything we ask when it comes to saving us, and do so with urgency?