

Introduction

1. Last we began our study of the book of Ruth
2. It takes place in the time of the Judges, a very dark time in Israel's history due to their constant apostasy and oppression
3. When a famine hits the land, an Israelite named Elimelech takes his wife Naomi and two sons to Moab to find relief
4. While there, Elimelech dies, his sons marry Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth, and then within a decade, the two sons die and leave Naomi, Ruth and Orpah as widows with no children of their own.
5. When the Lord ended the famine in Israel, Naomi decides to return home alone and tries to convince her two daughters-in-law to go back to Moab to their own home and land.
6. Orpah leaves, but Ruth refuses to leave Naomi and returns with her to Israel
7. The two things we walked away with last week were these:
  - a. First, we got this amazing picture of loyalty and faithfulness from Ruth—it's what true loyalty looks like
  - b. Second, learned that Ruth is a representation (a Biblical type) of the Church

A. Ruth sets out to gather grain (2:1-7)

1. Chapter 2 begins with an introduction to a man named Boaz (1):
  - a. The NAU says he was a "**kinsman**" of Naomi's husband
    - 1) Most translations say "relative" which is more literal, but the NAU gets at the idea a little better (more on this later)
    - 2) He was from the "family" (NAU, CSB) or "clan" (as the ESV, NET, NIV)
    - 3) Clan is probably what's in mind here and it was the link between the family unit and the larger tribe (families made up clans which made up tribes)
    - 4) He was likely a cousin or brother of Elimelech—3:12 and 4:3 refers to him as a brother but that was also a common term used of fellow Israelites (much like we were to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ)
  - b. He was "**a man of great wealth**":
    - 1) More literally, a man of standing (e.g. prominent, well respected)
    - 2) Generally a property owner or man of wealth (2Ki 15:20)
    - 3) We know by details in the story that he had servants and employees
2. Ruth sets out to gather scraps of grain (2-3): "**And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, 'Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.' And she said to her, 'Go, my daughter.'**"
  - a. Without husbands and/or sons, Naomi and Ruth had no means of support so Ruth makes plans to go gather grain in the fields
  - b. The OT Law specifically established rules whereby farmers could not completely clear their fields of grain:
    - 1) They were to leave the corners and the leftovers that fell to the ground during harvest (Lev 24:19-21)

- 2) These were to be left for the poor, widows, orphans and aliens
- c. Gleaning, however, wasn't always a safe endeavor:
  - 1) Some land owners weren't thrilled with the poor coming into their fields and taking what they perceived as their grain
  - 2) Naomi indicated in 2:22 that it could be dangerous for women
  - 3) This sense of danger was also reflected in Ruth's desire to find a field **"after one in whose sight I may find favor"**
3. Ruth ends up in the field of Boaz (3): **"So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech."**
  - a. Because of the way some translations translate these first few verses, it gives the impression that Ruth specifically sought out Boaz's field because he was a relative—however, this isn't true
    - 1) Part of the confusion is due to how many translations translate the waw prefix that begins vs. 1 (conjunction vs. an untranslated introductory particle that simply marks the beginning of a sentence)
      - a) NAU, ESV, NIV, KJV and NKJV translated it as "and" or "so"
      - b) The CSB and NET, however, get it right and leave it untranslated
    - 2) However, notice that the text says she **"happened to come"** to the field of Boaz
      - a) Because the theme of God's providence flows throughout this book, this phrase is not to be understood as chance or luck
      - b) Rather, the author uses the phrase to highlight the fact that Ruth came upon the field of Boaz not from her own doing
    - 3) Later, when she meets Boaz her reaction gives the impression she didn't know who he was or why he was being so nice to her (2:10-11)
    - 4) Finally, when she makes it back home and shares what happened with Naomi, it is Naomi that informs her that Boaz is a relative (2:20)
  - b. This is our first glimpse at God's provision for Naomi and Ruth; He leads Ruth to the field of Boaz, who proves himself to be a kind, gentle and extremely gracious man
4. Ruth catches the eye of Boaz (4-7):
  - a. When Boaz arrives at the field and greets his reapers with a blessing (4): **"Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, 'May the LORD be with you.' And they said to him, 'May the LORD bless you.'"**
  - b. Boaz sees Ruth and inquires about her (5-7):
    - 1) It appears she may have been alone gathering grain behind the reapers—this might be why she caught the attention of Boaz
    - 2) Even though he was familiar with Ruth's story and reputation for loyalty to Naomi (seen later in the text), he apparently had never met her before

B. Boaz provides for Ruth (2:8-16)

1. His **FIRST** act of kindness and provision (8-9): he instructs Ruth not to glean in any other field than his own
  - a. She is to follow his “maids” (e.g. reapers) and glean where they reap (9a): **“Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them.”**
  - b. He instructed his servants (e.g. those who managed the reapers) to leave her alone (9b): **“Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you.”**
  - c. He also instructed her to drink from the same water jars as his servants drank (9c): **“When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw.”**
  
2. Boaz’s **SECOND** act of kindness (11-13): he blesses Ruth
  - a. Ruth responds to his kindness with a question: **“Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, “Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?”**
  - b. His answer reflects an intimate knowledge of Ruth’s story and a reason for his kindness:
    - 1) He knew of her loyalty to Ruth and the death of her own husband (11a)
    - 2) He knew how she had forsaken her own family and homeland and came to land an people she did not know (11b)
    - 3) She knew of her faith in the LORD (12): **“May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.”**
  - c. Ruth’s response to such kindness indicates the special nature, and the magnitude, of Boaz’s actions (13): **“Then she said, “I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants.”**
    - 1) It would have been unusual to treat not only the poor, but a foreigner nonetheless, with such kindness
    - 2) Once again, we see God’s provision here in answering Ruth’s concerns in v. 2:2: that she might find and glean in a field **“after one in whose sight I may find favor”**
  
3. Boaz’s **THIRD** act of kindness and provision (14): he feeds her
  - a. In another remarkable display of kindness, he not only feeds her, but invites her to sit at his table and eat with him and his workers (14)
  - b. The text even tells us that “he served her”
  - c. She was not only satisfied but even had some left over!
  
4. Boaz’s **FOURTH** act of kindness and provision (15-17): he instructed his servants not to “**insult her**” (e.g. rebuke, embarrass) and allow her to glean among the sheaves
  - a. According to the Law, the corners of the field belonged to the poor, as well as any of the grain that was left on the ground after the grain had been harvested and tied into bundles (called sheaves)
  - b. Here, Boaz goes above and beyond the letter of the Law, to the spirit of the Law, and allows Ruth to reap among the “sheaves” (in other words, she could even go over to where the sheaves were stacked up and pick up grain there)
  - c. But Boaz goes even further by instructing his servants to deliberately pull grain out of the sheaves and toss it on the ground (16)!
    - 1) Generally, gleaning involved a ton of work for very little grain; one could glean all day and come away with barely enough to eat

- 2) This was Boaz way of making sure that Ruth had more than enough grain and another amazing sign of his generosity and provision for Ruth
- 3) It paid off because Ruth ended up with about an “**ephah of barley**” which was about 30 pounds and a huge amount to gather in one day

C. Ruth returns home and learns of the identity of Boaz (2:18-23)
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1. When Ruth arrives back home, she shows Naomi what she had gleaned, and gave her what was left over from her meal (18)
2. Naomi immediately recognizes the incredible kindness shown to Ruth and inquiries about the owner of the field (19)
3. When Naomi learns it was Boaz, she pronounces a blessing upon him and recognizes him as a relative and their kinsman-redeemer (20):
  - a. The NAU translates the Hebrew *go el* as “**closest relative**” but it’s actually the Hebrew word for redeemer.
  - b. In the OT, a kinsman-redeemer (Hebrew *go el*) was a male relative who became responsible under the OT Law to care for another relative in times of trouble or need
  - c. There were a number of responsibilities of the kinsman-redeemer including avenging the murder of a relative (NUM 35:19), buying back a family member who had been sold into slavery (LEV 25:47-49), and generally looking after those who couldn’t help themselves.
  - d. However, there were two more prominent roles:
    - 1) Marrying a childless widow of a relative in order to care for her and provide offspring for the dead relative (DEU 25:5-10)
    - 2) Buying back land that had been sold so as to bring it back under the ownership of the family (LEV 25:23-34)
  - e. The language Naomi uses in these few verses indicates that she recognized Boaz as such a relative, one who was able to serve as hers and Ruth’s kinsman-redeemer:
    - 1) She specifically refers to him as their redeemer (Hebrew *go el*)
    - 2) She pronounces the LORD’s blessing on Boaz for not forsaking his responsibility as kinsman-redeemer: “**his kindness to the living or the dead**” (20)
      - The NAU translation, “**May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead**”, is poor because it makes the LORD the antecedent of “who”, when the grammatical construct actually favors Boaz as the antecedent (the one who has shown kindness)
      - The NIV does a better job of reflecting this (as does the NET): “**The LORD bless him!...He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.**”
      - In other words, Naomi recognizes that Boaz has already acted as a kinsman-redeemer by not shirking his responsibility to Naomi and Ruth (the living) or their husbands (the dead)
- f. **This theme of the kinsman-redeemer now takes center stage in the rest of the book**
4. Ruth continued to glean in the field of Boaz, alongside his servants, through the rest of harvest season (22-23)

Conclusion
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1. How does this relate to us?
2. We learned last week that Ruth is a type—a representation—of the Gentile church
3. Like us, she was in need of someone to redeem her
4. The Lord, through His divine providence, leads her to the field of the one who will become her kinsman-redeemer
5. Boaz represents Christ, our kinsman-redeemer, and the one who buys-us-back from sin and death
6. And, in Boaz's actions toward Ruth, we see a glimpse of the compassion, empathy, care and concern that Christ extends to us