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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

This booklet is designed to assist you in studying and understanding the Old Testament book of Ruth. It is intended to accompany the sermon set (available on tape or CD) as preached by Pastor John Beals in May & June of 2003.

A suggested study approach would be to read the Biblical Text in its entirety once or more as a first step, in conjunction with the Overview section. Become familiar with the story line, names, places, etc. Then use the chapter by chapter Study Guide sections for further study as you dig deeper into the Text. These chapter sections are written in running commentary form, to accompany Bible reading.

OVERVIEW

Naomi is removed from her famine-ravaged homeland by the choice of her husband Elimelech into the ungodly society of the Moabites. In the foreign land of Moab, her two sons find themselves wives. In seemingly rapid succession, her husband and two sons die in the alien land leaving three widows. The saddened elder widow decides that Israel is where she will die. Naomi makes her way back to her home where she is pitied and pitiful. The providence of God revives the physically and emotionally depressed widow and her tale transforms from one of woe to one of great joy.

Ruth, the poor, obscure Moabitess gave her life for her mother-in-law, but more importantly for the true God of Israel. Her fidelity, friendship and piety proved itself in time: Boaz noted that “all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman” (3:11). A fascinating compliment came in 4:15, where the women of the city consider her as better than seven sons to Naomi. This young foreign widow experiences the goodness of God in a unique fashion.

The Old Testament book is named after one of the major characters, Ruth. This is significant in that she is not even an Israelite, indeed this is the only OT book named after a non-Israelite. Ruth is mentioned by name 12 times in the book but only one other time in the Scriptures (in Matthew 1:5 – the genealogy of Jesus). The story regards the private lives of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz. There are no miracles, laws, wars, victories or revelations; there is the affliction and comfort of Naomi and the conversion and preferment of Ruth. Just over one half of the book is dialogue. Boaz speaks the most, Naomi is more in focus.

The most significant ideas in the book circle around the providence of God (1:6, 13, 20; 2:3-4, 20; 3:10-13, 18; 4:1-6, 11, 14-17, 18-22) and the loving kindness (sometimes called “mercy”) of Ruth, Boaz and God (1:8, 14, 16-17; 2:11, 20; 3:10; 4:14-17).

- Naomi is the perfect grandmother figure who becomes more endearing to the reader as the story unfolds.
- Ruth’s unique faithfulness and fidelity immediately make her appeal to the reader as the sweetheart of the story. Somehow, she is always thought of as a sweet, young, attractive, grateful girl.
- Boaz’s kindness and seeming nobility grab the reader’s attention making him out as the perfect “knight in shining armor” who can sweep Ruth into security and happiness. From his first reference, we all root for Boaz to marry Ruth!

Author:

Though the author is unknown, many have assumed it was Samuel. Joshua and David have been also considered as possible authors.

Date of events:

Uncertain, but 1:1 states that the events took place in the time of the judges (between the death of Joshua (1200BC?) and the crowning of Saul (1032BC?)).

Date of writing:

Uncertain, but probably some time long after these events (see 1:1a; 4:7a). The first and last verses help in establishing a general date:

- Chapter 1:1 states that the events took place “when the judges ruled,” indicating that the book was written after the time of the judges and during the time of the kings.
- Chapter 4:22 tells us of David, therefore it is likely that it was written in David’s lifetime or perhaps some time shortly after David.

Major Characters:

Boaz	an Israelite farmer whose confidence in Jehovah places him in the line of the Messiah
Elimelech, Mahlon, & Chilion	Naomi’s husband and two sons; Israelites who die in the first five verses (but whose actions have set the stage for the story)
Naomi	an Israelite wife and mother of two (becoming a widow who loses her two children)
Ruth	a Moabitess girl who marries an Israelite and is converted

CHAPTER 1

Chapter 1

1 ¶ Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

2 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 Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

Notes on Chapter 1

1 – “When the judges ruled” – before the kings (before Saul, David, etc), during the leaders such as Ehud, Gideon, Eli, etc. Judges were leaders in Israel who determined right and wrong among the people and who were chosen by God to lead the people, delivering them in times of trouble.

“a famine” – possibly due to God’s judgment (Leviticus 26:19-20; Deuteronomy 28:23-24) – Note: Even though this is the “land flowing with milk and honey” and Bethlehem is the “house of bread,” when necessary, these judgments still must come and Bethlehem becomes a breadless town.

2 – “Elimelech” means ‘my God is king.’ *Thought: Did Elimelech truly believe his namesake by leaving for Moab?*

“Naomi” means ‘sweetness; amiable; pleasant; delightful’

“Mahlon” means ‘sickly’ (?) (at the very least, it is a name suggesting sorrow)

“Chilion” means ‘consumption; frailty; mortality’ (?) (like his brother, Chilion’s name brings to mind unhappiness)

“Ephrathites” – originally, Bethlehem was called “Ephrath.” Ephrathah could be the area surrounding Bethlehem

Elimelech took his family to Moab in search of food; however, did he need to leave his homeland (chosen by God)? Was he nobly acting by faith providing for his own (see I Timothy 5:8) or was he reacting in fleshly unbelief, attempting to meet needs without God? His choice *appears* to have been made in unbelief: Deuteronomy 30:1-3, 8-10 states that God would send the rain if the people repented.

Selecting Moab was not the wisest choice for any Israelite. It would seem unlikely that a man who truly feared God in his actions would visit such a people for help. Consider the following about the Moabites:

1. they began by the incestuous relationship of Lot and his daughter (Gen 19:30-38);
2. they refused passage to the Hebrews when they came from Egypt (Numbers 22-24);
3. they were excluded from the assembly of the LORD (Deut 23:3-6);

3 And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.

3 – Does Elimelech's death suggest God's judgment or just natural consequences? Nothing is stated of the cause for his seemingly untimely death. Naomi is left in a foreign land with her two sons. Doubtless her sons provide her some comfort.

4 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 dwelled there about ten years.

4 – His sons marry Moabite women. Nothing is stated regarding Naomi's involvement in these marriages. Possibly they married on their own initiatives.

Such a marriage may have been a violation of God's Word (see Deuteronomy 23:3 – consider also II Cor 6:14-17). Deuteronomy 7:3 prohibits marriage between the Israelites and those of Canaanite nations. Moab was not listed with the Canaanite nations; however, their false religion in worshiping the god Chemosh would likely, by the spirit of the law, include them in the list of prohibited nations. One must remember that the law against such marriages was to keep Israel from joining with false religions. Certainly a Canaanite who converted to the worship of Jehovah would be excluded from this law.

5 And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

Later, in 4:10, we find out that it was Mahlon who married Ruth (thus, Chilion married Orpah). Exactly when they married we cannot tell. Their term in Moab however lasted for about ten years.

6 ¶ Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the

5 – After 10 years in Moab, Mahlon and Chilion died. Now Naomi, a homeless, childless, elderly widow without a country is left alone in this foreign land.

6 – Israel once again prospered (Lamentations 3:32 – *But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his*

country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.

7 Wherefore 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.

8 And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.

9 The LORD 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.

10 And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

mercies.), thus Naomi wished to return to the land that God had chosen for His people. At the very least, this shows a desire on Naomi's part to be with her own people. Possibly she also wanted to rid herself of the wickedness of the Moabite nation.

7-8 – Naomi initiated the departure from Moab. Her two daughters-in-law accompanied her willingly back to Israel (as may have been the custom – to travel a short distance at least). Although the Scriptures do not say, it is possible that they traveled some distance before beginning the conversation in the following verses.

The upcoming conversation places Naomi in the driver's seat. She realizes the girls' situation and will more than suggest that they return to Moab. Naomi realized at least three potential problems:

- They would be strangers
- They were still young
- They worshiped other gods

9 – Here Naomi prays for them and specifies Jehovah in her prayers. A believer (even one that has wandered from God) never forgets that God is able to provide comfort. She prays that they will “find rest” – suggesting permanence and freedom from anxiety after the pain they have experienced. The prayer was obviously a touching one as was the parting: “they ... wept” – they sorrowed greatly. It would appear that Naomi was very dear to both girls.

10 – Naomi, in her kind way, urges the girls to return to their own mothers. Even so, her testimony was such that these girls wanted to remain with her (normally, mothers are first choice and mother-in-laws are second).

These girls were so attached to her that their language spoke volumes of Naomi's personality: they did not say, “We will go with thee” but “we will *return* with thee” – almost as if to say that they have always been with her.

11-14 – Naomi tries to persuade them to stay in Moab. Her current lot has changed her outlook on life. She wavers greatly under seemingly insurmountable pressure.

11 And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

12 Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons;
13 Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me.

14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and

11 – Naomi tells them that by following her, their chances of remarriage are between slim and none. She uses a normal, kindly approach that lets the girls “off the hook.”

In this verse, Naomi looks at the situation realistically. The response of the girls is evidently one of kindness. Her ten years in Moab have not been the most fruitful, but she has held a testimony that made an impact on at least these girls, if not on others.

12-13 – Reading these verses one can sense the fanciful dream that appeals to Naomi. Her unrealistic dream does not include God, but says “I” four times in verse 12.

- she must get a husband (an unlikely scenario) – and tonight at that!
- she must then conceive more than once (an even more unlikely scenario)
- she must produce at least two boys
- the girls must wait at least 15-20 years

“it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me” = “I am much too bitter for you.”

In the KJV, Naomi’s comment appears to make an apology or an excuse for God and His actions toward her. Naomi reveals her true feelings here. Real bitterness and discouragement are seen. The ideal grandmother figure quickly becomes an apathetic, “poor me” God-blamer.

For the first time in this story, we see that Naomi is not as orthodox in her relationship with God as one might have hoped. She looks at her lot in life and actually voices an ungodly feeling (*be careful in verbalizing thoughts – see Proverbs 17:27-28*). What has caused this apparently sudden transformation? Whatever the cause, Naomi admits to being a bitter old woman, blaming the situation on the hand of God.

14 – Orpah, though very sorrowful, kissed Naomi and departed from her.

Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.

Ruth, however, is determined by great love to cling to Naomi.

Question for consideration:

Did Naomi do well in discouraging her daughters-in-law from following her, when by taking them with her she might save them from the idolatry of Moab and bring them to the faith and worship of God?

Suggestions (*these assume a spiritually minded Naomi*):

- If they followed, she would not have them do so on her account. Strong affection is good, but emotions do not last forever.
- She wished to have them make a deliberate decision – sit down first and count the cost. These girls knew of Naomi and the God she worshiped. If they would follow her now, it would be with a complete understanding of the future life of possible trials. (The NT speaks to this wise: Mt 19:16-22; Luke 9:57-62 (Mt 8:19-20))

Suggestions (*these suggest a spiritually confused Israelite, as was common in the days of the judges*):

- Does she wish to allow one who has been so close to her to return to such pagan practices? Perhaps she assumes God is no better than the Moabite god Chemosh.
- Does Naomi even realize the spiritual disaster she is suggesting to these girls? Naomi may at this time be spiritually inept.

15 And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.

15 – Naomi tests Ruth sincerity and dedication. She essentially tells Ruth that following her would decide her religion. “If you will ever return, go now, not later.” Orpah had made a decision that indicated her spiritual interest: *she never truly left worshipping the false gods of the Moabites.*

16 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after

16 – Ruth’s clinging to Naomi in verse 14 is evidence of her sincere heart. Ruth gives a response here that has become one of the most familiar statements

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:

in all of Scripture. Ruth would never seek her former religion.

Such a thought will make the Christian ponder his testimony: If God could work in Ruth's heart through Naomi's 'less than prime' example, how much more could have been accomplished had she acted like a true child of God? (It is humiliating when, in spite of your poor words and actions, a non-believer is saved and praises your testimony as a major source for his conversion! God is glorified, but our 'works' are burned up!)

It is interesting to note that although these words are used often at weddings, originally this was stated from daughter-in-law to mother-in-law, thus demonstrating true Christian love!

"Intreat me not to leave thee..." – do not pressure me to desert or abandon you.

Not only would Ruth attend Naomi on her long journey, but she would permanently settle with her.

"Your people ... your God..." – Ruth would renounce her ethnic and religious roots, but she was not doing so blindly (in the next verse, she will invoke the name of Jehovah, which suggests her knowledge and acceptance of the true God).

Consider the power of her new faith (Luke 14:3 "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple") – especially as it is in contrast to Naomi's recent charges against God (in verse 13). Truly, Ruth's real character is now seen.

17 Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

17 – Ruth would plan to live with Naomi until they die. She is so permanent in her ambition that she intends to live as part of Naomi's family until even Ruth dies (which would presumably be much later than Naomi's death).

"The LORD do so to me..." – Ruth wills God's punishment to come upon her if she ever departs from these words!

18 When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left

18 – Naomi gets the point and is speechless. Ruth is here to stay.

speaking unto her.

19 ¶ 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 they said, Is this Naomi?

20 And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

21 I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

19 – When they finally came to Naomi’s home town the women of the town questioned who it was (likely Naomi had a worn appearance from her 10 year journey). Naomi probably appeared weak, tired, old and saddened. The talk of the ladies was, “Is this Naomi?”

20 – Naomi rebukes the original meaning of her name (pleasant; amiable) and refers to herself as “Mara” (bitter).

In this verse and the following, Naomi blames God for her misfortune. This attitude decries Naomi’s current spiritual condition. Someone has said, “Trials will either make your life bitter or better.” Naomi looked at all her trials as undeserved afflictions, *thus making her bitter*.

Her “fullness” that God has allegedly taken from her is also a sign of where her trust lies. She trusted Elimelech to provide for her now and her sons to do so later on. It appears that she did not trust in God’s guidance for her well-being.

21 – She realized her previous health and prosperity and now sees her age and lack. Yet she recognizes that all comes from God.

While it is true that afflictions do come from God, one must consider the following:

Deuteronomy 8:5; Job 1:21; 2:10; 40:1-14; Proverbs 3:11-12; Amos 3:6; I Corinthians 11:32; James 1:24ff; I Peter 5:7-10; Revelation 3:19

As difficult as it may appear, afflictions are meant for our betterment and we are to accept them (by faith) as working together for our good (Romans 8:28).

Note the contrast in verses 16-18 vs. 20-21. Ruth depends on the providence of her new God; Naomi vilifies the choice of the Almighty! In this instance it was a newly saved Gentile whose longing for God rebuked the veteran saint.

22 – Note – neither the townsfolk nor the Word of God changes her name, she is still Naomi (because the Lord sees the end).

CHAPTER 2

This chapter deals with an insignificant Gentile woman who has no family and must glean for her daily sustenance. Yet the significance is seen in the extension of God's hand to help those who are willing to come to Him.

Chapter 2

1 ¶ And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz.

2 And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall

Notes on Chapter 2

1 – Our initial encounter with Boaz is notable. His godly character has gotten him an impressive depiction in the Scriptures:

- He is a mighty man of wealth (*Boaz* means “in him is strength”).
- He is a man of noble character (this is the same term as used for the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31:10).

Later in Ruth (4:21) we find that Boaz's father is Salmon and his mother is Rahab the harlot (see Matthew 1). Notice the grace of God! In spite of the difference in the financial structure of the families, Boaz does not disown Naomi (Proverbs 14:20-21; 19:17; 28:27).

Old Testament gleanings (a “gleaning” is that which was left by others during wheat harvest):

God had made provisions for the poor of Israel by commanding that the field owners not remove all from their fields during harvest. Leviticus 19:9-10 and 23:22 tells the people to leave portions of the field un-harvested and leave gleanings on the ground for the poor to freely take, thus God specifically met the needs of the poor (yet still expected them to work to get the food!).

2 – Note Ruth's attitude – although she could return to Moab and probably have plenty, yet she trusts in God and is willing to suffer a little now. God's will is not always the easy road.

find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.

3 And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

4 ¶ And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee.

5 Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?

6 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:

7 And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house.

8 Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my

Often, we must be humbled and work hard to discover His will (even then, God has not promised an easy way – only a light burden).

Here, Ruth's humility and industry are seen:

- She willingly went out to beg for grain
- She does not presume that it is her right to glean from others
- She wishes to seek work so they may eat

3 – Notice God's providence at work: Ruth "happened" to come to Boaz's field (see Matthew 6:26-30). This is truly the intervention of God. No one aimed her in that direction; there was nothing in the Scriptures that told her which field to choose. Ruth chose this field because God (perhaps even unbeknown to Ruth) directed her steps (Psalm 37:23).

4-5 – Boaz and his servants have a mutual love and respect for each other. Their greetings are friendly and godly, not worldly. He asks, "To whom does she belong?" never having seen her before and, perhaps, taking an immediate interest in her.

6-7 – The servant explains who she is and that she is a hard, willing worker (all day she has been working, and has stopped only for a brief rest in the workers' hut). He even mentions that she had asked permission to glean (even though she had the right to do so by God). Such an unassuming nature is becoming of any person (see also 2:10).

8 – After hearing the background information, Boaz addressed Ruth personally, asking her to always glean in his fields. He suggested she stay with his own maidens, rather than be in the constant company of men.

maidens:

9 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.

10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?

11 And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

12 The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

13 Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of

9 – Boaz has given Ruth the privilege of gleaning close behind the reapers (allowing Ruth a distinct advantage over other gleaners). He goes even further to allow her to drink from the workers' own water supply (a valuable perk for harvesting in the heat of the sun).

10 – Ruth knows her own unworthiness and realizes Boaz's authority, and thus displays her gratitude for his kindness. To Ruth, this is amazing: a wealthy Israelite is not only speaking to her, but is showing such kindness as to place her on par with a natural-born Israelite (Boaz's testimony here is again striking).

11-12 – Boaz praised her decision to become a Jewess and her kindness toward Naomi. He then prayed for her that she would experience all the glory of her salvation. Notice: although he was impressed and wished her the best, he did not stop her from working.

In his concluding comments in verse 12, Boaz pictures God as a mother bird who will protect her young from danger by her outstretched wings (Boaz himself being the means which God used to protect Ruth). Boaz was godly enough to redirect praise to God rather than to himself.

13 – “Let me find favour in thy sight...” – You have been gracious to me.
 “that thou hast comforted me” – you have given me comfort
 “thou hast spoken friendly” – you have spoken compassionately

thine handmaidens.

14 And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.

15 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:

16 And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.

17 ¶ So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about

Remember: The Moabites and Israelites were enemies and she knew it. She probably expected nothing but the very last of the leftovers. She noticed that Boaz had treated her as well as his personal handmaid, even though she was not as skilled as they.

There are few events in life more satisfying than when a good person cares for and respects another in need. This is a beautiful picture of the love of God toward sinful man!

14 – By mealtime (probably lunch) Boaz asks her to eat with him. Boaz prepares a meal for his workers and even enough for strangers if necessary. Boaz eats with his employees (thus showing his care for them and his willingness to eat their food).

He encourages her to “dip thy morsel in the vinegar” – dip her bread into the sauce used to moisten and spice up dry bread. He then prepared her plate: “and he reached her parched corn” he handed her a portion of roasted grain. Ruth then ate and went immediately back to work.

15-16 – Ruth’s good impression on Boaz causes him to say, ‘Allow her to glean where my maidens glean.’ Do not embarrass her by telling her to stay further behind. Boaz instructed his workers to allow larger portions to fall near her (purposely). By doing this, Ruth would not even have to cut or pull the left-over stalks of grain. The harvesters would cut them and leave bunches behind.

Boaz is going out of his way to be kind to her. His extraordinary kindness is a fine example for us today. Often, we look down on those who differ from us in financial, economic, or ethnic status. Boaz was truly an “equal opportunity employer,” and an excellent example of godly compassion.

17 – She worked all day – “until even” Then she worked on her gatherings to prepare them for cooking and ended with an ephah of

an ephah of barley.

18 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 she had reserved after she was sufficed.

19 And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz.

20 And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.

barley grain (equivalent to about 30-50 pounds!). This is a huge amount for a gleaner. This suggests at least two points: 1) Ruth worked hard; 2) Boaz's workers obeyed his orders.

18 – Ruth went into the city with her gleanings (she carried it herself). She first went to Naomi (duty first). She also brought home what she couldn't finish from lunch and gave it to Naomi (the first instance of a “doggie bag”!) – see I Timothy 5:4.

19 – Naomi inquired of her activities (accountability is good). Naomi praised her work (praise is profitable). The wording suggests that Naomi is utterly amazed at the amount of barley Ruth got. Naomi practically leaps with joy and asks where she worked today, but before Ruth could explain (Naomi was not really interested) Naomi praised the man who helped her.

Ruth explained, “the man who was so kind to me today was namedBoaz!” She mentions how Boaz asked her to continue through harvest (yet she does not explain his honor to her – thus, again displaying a humble spirit).

20 – Naomi is thrilled over the day's events and especially over the fact that *Boaz* has taken a liking to Ruth and Naomi. The fact that Naomi mentions the Lord's name in praise here suggests that she realized that God has not left her helpless. She returns to her former attitude of trust in the covenant God who constantly shows kindness to His own.

Imagine: When things go wrong for us and we take it out on God, God does not abandon us. Actually, God is often preparing us for a greater blessing. Naomi may already be feeling the ill effects of her previous improper attitude toward God. Perhaps she is wishing that she had never opened her mouth so unadvisedly. Either way, she knows that God is true to His word.

21 And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest.

22 And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field.

23 So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law.

21-23 – Ruth and Naomi discuss what her work will be for the next little while before winter: Ruth would work with Boaz’s employees until both barley and wheat harvests were done. Naomi’s recommendations are wise: stay with Boaz, both for job security and for safety. (It appears that Naomi has not yet thought of the match-making potential between Ruth and Boaz!)

CHAPTER 3

In this chapter, we will see the plans of Naomi to see Ruth and Boaz join in marriage. She is deeply concerned for her daughter-in-law and their mutual love is evident. We also find some interesting information about life and customs in those days that are not attested to elsewhere in Scripture.

Chapter 3

1 ¶ Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

2 And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor.

3 Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking.

Notes on Chapter 3

1 – Naomi is not satisfied with Ruth's widowhood. Knowing the problems that befall a widow, Naomi will do what she can to relieve her dear daughter-in-law of the difficulty of continuing as such.

Note: it is easy to take advantage of kindness and eventually expect complete devotion to our own needs, yet Naomi was not so. She wished not to be a burden.

In looking for another husband for Ruth, Naomi intends:

- To find an emotional rest for Ruth (as the married state *should* produce)
- To relieve her from such obligations that she now has (as the main provider)

2 – Naomi reports the coming events: this afternoon and evening, Boaz was planning a feast after they threshed the barley (Naomi somehow knew of this).

3 – Until now, Boaz had made no recorded advances toward marriage; therefore, Naomi felt it was Ruth's responsibility to remind him of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

1. Naomi reminds Ruth to wash – suggesting that this is a special time.

2. Secondly, she tells Ruth to anoint herself – the OT people often used perfumes which normally accompany a clean body.
3. She also reminds her to dress up – (note: special meetings require special appearance. Getting washed and dressed was a sign that this meeting was important) likely Ruth did not have a large supply of clothing (especially not a set of “good clothes”), so Ruth was probably to wear clean clothes and have an outer garment that could be used as a blanket. It is possible that Ruth had previously worn the dress of a widow; up till now, Boaz would have to respect her grieving and leave her alone; now Ruth was showing that her mourning was over.

Notice that Naomi uses the age-old method of waiting for the man to eat, drink and rest before totally confusing him with a situation that requires serious thought!

(If nothing else can be learned, we have found that women haven't changed in 3000+ years and that men still have not caught on!)

4 And it shall be, when he lieth 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.

5 And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do.

4-5 – Naomi had instructed Ruth to approach her “kinsman-redeemer” and let him know of her interest in his “responsibility.”

The final instruction to Ruth is rather odd: she is to mark the place where Boaz lies down. After he is asleep, she is to uncover his feet and lie down incognito.

Some have assumed that Naomi’s suggested approach was improper, but:

1. the Scriptures give no condemnation of the act
2. the act may have been commonplace in those times
3. both Naomi and Ruth are spiritual

and virtuous women

4. Naomi never suggests anything immoral
5. knowing the godly character of Boaz, such an act, if immorally designed, would not work to Ruth's favor

Naomi did have Ruth encourage Boaz to take the leadership role in establishing what, if anything must be done.

6 ¶ And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her.

6 – Ruth followed Naomi's advice – as is easy to do when the advice comes from a loving, godly example (and if the advice is also a desire!).

7 And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.

7 – Boaz had been again with his employees. He worked, ate and went to rest (note his orderly work schedule).

Quietly, Ruth carried out Naomi's instructions to the detail. Her probable action was that she uncovered the lower part of his legs so as to expose him to the cool air and thus awaken him in due time.

8 And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.

8 – "At midnight" – shows his work was hard and his feast ended at a reasonable hour.

His fright tells us that he is not used to having a woman with him, nor was he expecting one.

9 And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.

9 – Ruth explains that she is there because of their kinship (which has certain filial responsibilities) and that she wishes to be redeemed by Boaz. Ruth is not suggesting to Boaz anything immoral. Most likely she is stating the fact that he has already spread his "wings" over her and she has noticed and accepted it as good.

10 And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch

10 – Boaz treats Ruth favorably never suggesting (possibly not even thinking) that anything improper is intended. Ruth's hard work, decent conduct and modest approach to Boaz suggested a righteous character.

as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

11 And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.

12 And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

13 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 the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning.

He then praises her as a virtuous daughter.

“More kindness at latter end...” – originally, Boaz (in 2:11) commended Ruth for her care over her mother-in-law. Now her care for the deceased family evidences itself in that she wishes to continue the family name.

It is truly amazing that Boaz responds to Ruth as he does. The middle of the night is hardly a normal time for serious talk of marriage. The approach Ruth took is hardly the norm for establishing a lifetime together. This is none other than the providence of God working out in the lives of His children.

11 – Boaz promises Ruth that he would do all he could to marry her.

12-13 – Up to this point, Ruth’s approach and Boaz’s response have been story-book-like. Ruth must realize by now that God is truly in control of everything – even unusually schemed events! There are, however, problems associated with dealing with a man of true integrity: Boaz sees Ruth’s plan as one that is intended to follow God’s normal outline for the kinsman-redeemer. If one is to follow God’s plan, one must follow it out as God has planned it – *exactly* as God has planned it.

Boaz is aware of and therefore must inform Ruth of one little hurdle: he is not the *nearest* kin! Yet he does not put Ruth in the awkward position of working out the details. Boaz will personally check first thing in the morning. He tells her of the other kinsman’s rights, but says he will marry her if the other kinsman does not. (Note that Boaz’s interest in Ruth is for her happiness, for the family’s well-being and for righteousness. He is willing to allow the other kinsman to *marry her* if he wishes to do so!) Doubtless, Boaz had a strong desire for her but he would trust rather in

14 ¶ And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor.

15 Also he said, Bring the vail that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city.

16 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.

17 And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law.

18 Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.

the providence of God: if God did not want them together, He would keep them apart; if God wanted them together, not even a man with the rights would be able to stand in the way. (How drastically different is this from the actions of Jacob toward Esau for the birthright!)

14 – It was probably not wise for Ruth to have walked home alone at night; therefore she stayed in safety until early morning. She was to leave early enough to protect her integrity at both the threshing floor and on the way home.

“And he said, Let it not ...” – Most likely, Boaz said this to himself. Boaz continued to protect her by devising that nothing be said about the meeting.

Note: sometimes good people, for good reasons, are in what could be construed as a questionable position. Wisdom does not discover a secret to another who might misconstrue it.

15 – Boaz’s personal joy and desire to make Naomi joyous also, caused him to give Ruth a gift. The quantity is unspecified, but doubtless it was as much as she could conveniently carry (thus, again, showing Boaz’s generosity). He gave her 6 measures of barley, perhaps as a means to protect her reputation (if someone saw her returning in the early morning with grain, they would less likely question her action or consider indiscretion).

16-18 – “Who art thou?” seems to be saying, “How did it go for you?” Ruth shows Naomi Boaz’s generosity and informs her that he was concerned for Naomi’s well being and joy. Ruth naturally became restless but Naomi’s wisdom guided and comforted her. “Sit tight,” is what she essentially told her, “Boaz is going to go through with this and he won’t rest until he gets it all done!”

CHAPTER 4

Chapter 4

1 ¶ Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the 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.

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

3 And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's:

4 And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, 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 beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it.

5 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.

6 And the kinsman said, I

Notes on Chapter 4

1 – Boaz wastes no time. He immediately gets to the public place (the gate) where important business would be transacted. The other kinsman who is now passing by is not named. The chronicler did not include his name (by inspiration), but Boaz would likely have used it.

2 – The ten elders would comprise the court hearings. Elders had powerful sway in cities and often appear as city officials.

3-5 – Boaz offers the redemption of Naomi's (mortgaged?) land. Boaz could have redeemed it himself without saying a word to the kinsman, but because of his honesty and fairness, he saw the opportunity and duty to offer it to the relative.

6 – Having heard the stipulations on the

cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it.

7 Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel.

8 Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe.

9 ¶ 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.

10 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

property (which included taking Ruth) the unnamed relative immediately declined. The marriage part of the contract was obviously too much for him. He must have had plans for his possessions:

1. possibly he did not wish to be married
2. possibly he did not wish to have children (or more children if a widower)
3. possibly he did not wish to connect himself to a Moabite

7-8 – In these ancient times, no written contract was used. The unusual act stated here may not have listed all the agreements, but certainly provided a reminder (one would not be likely to forget doing this).

The unnamed relative, performing his half of the bargain, followed the common action of these times. He removed his shoe in front of all the witnesses and handed it to Boaz, thus signifying the relinquishing of the land and of Ruth. “Concerning changing” (v7) means the transfer of goods or rights. This unnamed relative officially transferred his rights to Boaz. It was a “testimony in Israel” (v7) meaning that it was legalized and witnessed.

9-10 – Boaz makes public his redemption of the property. By stating everything publicly, all the agreements would be heard and remembered by at least some.

Righteous Boaz proposes to marry Ruth to bring forth a son to the names of Elimelech and Mahlon. Such an honorable ambition placed him in the genealogy of the Messiah, whereas the other kinsman’s refusal left him out.

Boaz’s public declaration secured the possession of the land and honored Ruth by showing he was proud to marry such a

from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day.

11 And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem:

12 And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman.

13 ¶ So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son.

14 And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD,

woman.

11 – Everyone at the gate witnessed these events and a prayer was made for Boaz and Ruth (this is significant in that the nation was spiritually depraved at this time).

The first part of the prayer is for Ruth.

- By mentioning Rachel and Leah in their prayer, the people showed complete acceptance of Ruth as part of the Israelite family.
- Their prayer requested the blessing of children.

The second part is for Boaz.

- It included the blessing of prosperity in Bethlehem due to:
His hard work – Prov 22:29
Her virtuous character – Prov 31:23

12 – The story in Genesis 38 tells of Judah's improper relationship with Tamar. The relationship was intended by Tamar to be that of a levirate marriage (as Boaz's and Ruth's was now). Tamar conceived and bore twins (Pharez and Zerah). Pharez was considered as the more significant son in the tribe of Judah and was in line with Boaz's clan. Although Judah and Tamar acted immorally, God blessed them with many descendents. Since God blessed them, how much more will He bless righteous Boaz and Ruth!

"This woman" – suggests that Ruth was present (she obviously heard the beautiful prayer of acceptance).

13 – "The Lord gave her conception" – children come from God (Genesis 33:5; 48:9; Psalm 127:3; Isaiah 8:18, etc.).

14-15 – The ladies were extremely joyous to see the birth of a son in the house of

which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.

15 And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.

16 And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.

17 And the women her neighbours 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.

18 Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron,

19 And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab,

20 And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon,

21 And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed,

22 And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.

Ruth and Boaz – they praised God!
Notice the one for whom they are joyful:
Naomi.

“famous in Israel”

1. because if he were like Boaz he’d be a supplier and preserver of the family
2. because if he were like Ruth, he’d be dutiful and kind

Not only did the Lord bless Naomi with Ruth (who was better than 7 sons), but also with Ruth’s son. Naomi’s hopes had been dashed when her husband and sons died without leaving children. She had previously accused God of emptying her life. Now, in His grace and for her faithfulness, God would bless her in her old age and fulfill her desire.

16 – Naomi willingly took the child to watch over him. She would be to him as a loving nanny or as the perfect grandmother.

17 – The ladies note that a son is born, but specify that he is born to *Naomi*. Naomi’s female neighbors named him. “Obed” = servant (possibly in anticipation of what he would become – servant to Naomi; servant of the Lord). The name is believed to be a shortened version of Obadiah.

18-22 – The book closes with great joy to Naomi.

Ruth’s dedication to God and Naomi’s love and perseverance allowed them both to experience the joy that very few could even witness: to be in the genealogy of David and Jesus. Not only would God in His providence meet the needs of two insignificant widows, but this blessing would be shared with the nation of Israel and with all who are saved!

CONCLUSION

Many have taken this story of Ruth and Boaz to be a representation of the extended love the Lord has for this world. If this book were merely a historical account of the lives of these three main characters, it would be just another interesting story. As is true with all Scripture, the book of Ruth is more than just a story. Boaz's redemption of the elderly Israelite Naomi and her foreign daughter-in-law Ruth give us a good picture of what the Lord has done for all of us in making salvation available. Jesus' death on the cross allowed us, who would otherwise be helpless, to be redeemed from our sins and to live under His wing. Naomi and Ruth were temporally satisfied to be redeemed by Boaz, so you and I can be eternally satisfied with the redemption of Jesus.

NOTES
