

The first two chapters of Ruth have set the stage for the events in these last two chapters. The LORD has sovereignly guided Ruth to glean from the fields of Boaz and will now insure that the family line of David and Jesus Christ, the Messiah, will continue. The despair that Naomi felt after losing her husband and two sons will be replaced with joy as the plan of God unfolds.

Ruth 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.

“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?” – Harvest time is coming to an end and Naomi is begins thinking about Ruth’s future well being. The “rest” she mentions is the security a woman of that time enjoyed when she had a husband to support her. Unmarried women (whether widows or young women) in that day had a difficult time supporting themselves and Naomi’s love for Ruth compelled her to think about finding a husband for Ruth.

“And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast?” – Ruth has spent a lot of time around Boaz over the last couple of months of the barley and wheat harvest. Also, Boaz is a relative of Elimelech, Naomi’s dead husband, which is important because of the principles of the levirate law (Deut. 25:5, 6). Under that law, if a man dies without children, then the man’s brother must marry the widow and the firstborn child of that union carries on the dead brother’s name and inheritance. Apparently by the time of Naomi and Ruth, tradition had expanded the law to include other relatives, although it seems that this duty was optional for relatives other than brothers.

“Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor” – Naomi apparently has asked around and has discovered that Boaz will be working that evening at his threshing floor, allowing Ruth the opportunity to easily find him and follow Naomi’s instructions. Winnowing was how they separated the grain from the chaff using the wind, which was strongest in the evening.

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.

“And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie” – Boaz and his men were working late to take advantage of the winds and slept at the threshing floor rather than make their way home in the dark. Naomi instructs Ruth to watch and take note of where Boaz lays down to sleep.

“and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down” – Once Boaz has fallen asleep, Ruth is to quietly slip in and “uncover his feet” and lay down. The Hebrew word for feet can include the legs and some have incorrectly assumed that Naomi was encouraging a sexual encounter between Ruth and Boaz. However, there was a symbolic reason for uncovering Boaz’s feet and there was nothing improper in what Naomi was instructing Ruth to do. In fact, Boaz recognized that she was a virtuous woman (v. 11). Ruth would pull the blanket back that Boaz was sleeping under so that she could ask him to “spread his skirt over her” (symbolized by the blanket). According to tradition, this expression meant that Ruth would be asking for Boaz’s protection as the kinsman-redeemer. In effect, she was asking him to utilize his rights as a kinsman to marry her. The fact that she lays down at his feet (v. 8) indicates that she was humbly making her request rather than demanding that Boaz fulfill his duty as a kinsman-redeemer or attempting to seduce him.

“and he will tell thee what thou shalt do” – Boaz will recognize Ruth’s intentions and will give her his answer.

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.

“And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid” – Ruth has followed Naomi’s instructions and has lain down at the feet of Boaz as he’s sleeping after uncovering his feet (vs. 5-7). In the middle of the night Boaz wakes up and is startled to find someone laying at his feet (v. 8). He asks who this person is and Ruth responds with her name and humbly identifying herself as a servant to Boaz.

“spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman” – Ruth immediately states her reason for being there. She asks Boaz to take her into his care by exercising his right to marry her as a near kinsman.

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

Boaz prays for the LORD’s blessings on Ruth because she is demonstrating more kindness toward Naomi now than she has previously shown. Instead of seeking a husband her own age, she is looking to Boaz, who is a near kinsman and can fulfill the requirements of the levirate law. She is insuring that Naomi’s dead husband, Elimelech, will have children to carry on his name. Thus Ruth was showing her faithfulness to Naomi, placing the family’s well-being above her own. Ruth was also showing kindness in wanting to marry Boaz, who apparently was a significantly older man. Ruth is demonstrating that she is not motivated by money since she could have found a rich younger man to marry, nor is she motivated by her flesh in seeking a younger husband even if he is poor.

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.

Boaz tells Ruth to not worry, because he is willing to do all that she is asking. A marriage between Boaz and Ruth would not be frowned upon by the people in the city because Ruth has been recognized as being a “virtuous” woman. The Hebrew word translated “virtuous” carries the idea of strength and integrity. Her faithfulness to Naomi has earned the respect of the townspeople.

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

Boaz is willing to marry Ruth but there is a problem. There is another kinsman who is a closer relative to Elimelech than Boaz and this man must be given the first chance to marry Ruth.

Verses 13-18: Boaz plans to talk with this nearer kinsman in the morning and give him the opportunity to exercise his right as a kinsman-redeemer. If he accepts, then Ruth must marry this man. However, if he declines then Boaz will become the kinsman-redeemer and will marry Ruth. In the morning before daylight, Boaz sends Ruth home with a gift of barley, who, when she gets home, tells Naomi all that was said. Naomi tells Ruth that they must be patiently and wait to see the outcome of the meeting between Boaz and the other kinsman.

Ruth 4

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*.

In ancient times people would gather at the city gate to conduct business, and this is where Boaz goes that morning. He waits until the man who is the nearer kinsman comes by and then stops him to talk. He also asks 10 elders of the city to be witnesses as he talks to the nearer kinsman (vs. 1-2). Boaz notifies this man that Naomi, the widow of their relative Elimelech, is selling the land that belonged to her husband. Since this man is the nearer kinsman, he has first right to redeem the land and Boaz needs to know if he is going to exercise his right. The man immediately decides to buy the land.

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

Boaz also informs the man that if he redeems the land, he will also be obligated to marry Ruth so that her firstborn child would be heir and carry on the name of Elimelech. However, that requirement is a deal-breaker to this man because it would interfere with the inheritance of his own land and name. Perhaps the man was already married and had children or, more likely, he was unmarried and it would complicate matters if the man's only heir was born through Ruth. His first-born would also be Ruth's, so whose name would the child be carrying on? The man decides that he could not redeem the land and relinquished his right/responsibility of redeemer to Boaz.

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

Boaz declares before the 10 elders of the city that he is buying the land of Elimelech and his sons from Naomi. He also intends to marry Ruth and father an heir to inherit the name and land that belonged to Elimelech and his sons. The elders and all the people who had gathered at the gate acknowledged that they were witnesses and pronounced their blessing on the transaction (vs. 11-12).

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.

Boaz marries Ruth and the LORD blesses their union with a son named Obed (v. 17).

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

Naomi had believed that the LORD had not shown her favor when she returned from Moab, saying that people should not call her Naomi ("my delight") but instead call her Mara ("bitter"). She had said that the LORD had taken everything from her (Ruth 1:20-21). Now the women of Bethlehem were commenting on how much the LORD had blessed her. He had provided her with a "kinsman" (the Hebrew word means "redeemer"). The wording of these verses seem to be referring to the child born to Ruth. Another blessing the women speak of is that this child will be to Naomi "a restorer of thy life" (perhaps referring to the joy that he will bring to her) and "a nourisher of thine old age" (that Obed would take care of her in her older years). The women then speak of the blessing of her daughter-in-law Ruth, who has been better to Naomi than seven sons. Seven is the number of completion, symbolizing a complete family.

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.

Naomi helps take care of this child, obviously cherishing him. The neighborhood women name the child "Obed" ("serving"). Obed becomes the grandfather of Israel's beloved king David. Jesus Christ eventually comes from this family line (Matt. 1:1-16; Rom. 1:3). The blessing spoken of by the women in v. 14 has indeed come true because the family line of Obed has certainly become famous, particularly through his descendants David and Jesus Christ.