

## Ruth Chapters 3-4 Study Notes

### I. **Divide into paragraphs and give titles to each paragraph.**

- A. 3:1-6 Naomi instructed Ruth to propose to Boaz.
- B. 3:7-13 Boaz promised to redeem Ruth and her family honorably.
- C. 3:14-15 Boaz protected Ruth by sending her at dawn with abundant grain.
- D. 3:16-18 Naomi counsels Ruth to wait and see what happens.
- E. 4:1-8 Boaz fulfilled his responsibility as a guardian redeemer.
- F. 4:9-12 Elders and all people blessed Ruth
- G. 4:13-17 The marriage of Boaz and Ruth, the birth of Obed.
- H. 4:18-22 The genealogy of David.

### II. **Basic observation based on 5 w's and one h.**

- A. Who appears?
  - 1. Main characters: Naomi, Boaz and Ruth
  - 2. Supporting cast: another guardian-redeemer, ten elders of the town, all the people at the gate, the women
  - 3. Director and Producer: the LORD
- B. What is happening?
  - 1. Naomi persuades Ruth to propose to Boaz according to Israelite law and custom, and Ruth obeys Naomi
  - 2. Boaz accepts with a condition that he give first chance to the closer guardian-redeemer.
  - 3. How Boaz took Ruth as his wife legally and how Obed was born, and became the grandfather of King David
- C. When does this take place?
  - 1. One day (1). After the barley crop was harvested and was brought to the threshing floor.

2. While winnowing barley.
  3. During the night and early morning.
  4. After Ruth proposed, Boaz promised to respond appropriately; Ruth and Naomi sat tight
  5. At least 9 months pass by from the marriage to the birth of Obed
  6. Obed became the grandfather of King David, perhaps around 40 years later
- D. Where does this take place?
1. Naomi's house.
  2. Boaz's threshing floor.
  3. Naomi's house.
  4. The town gate, a public meeting place (Dt 21:19). They decided important things as a community at this place.
  5. Boaz and Ruth's house

### III. **Further observation based on five fingers method:** emphasis, repetition, relationships, comparisons, and contrasts.

#### A. Repetition

1. "Guardian-redeemer," or "redeem" 14 times (2:20;3:9,12,13[2]; 4:1,3,4[2]6[3],8,14). Hebrew "ga'al"
  - a) The guardian-redeemer was responsible for protecting the interests of needy members of the extended family in several ways:
    - (1) to provide for a brother who had died (Dt 25:5-10),
    - (2) to redeem land that a poor relative had sold outside the family (Lev 25:25-28),
    - (3) to redeem a relative who had been sold into slavery (Lev 25:47-49),

- (4) and to avenge the killing of a relative (Nu 35:19-21).
- b) The establishment of the guardian-redeemer was God's way of protecting the twelve tribes so that each one could maintain their family line and property.
  - c) God promised to send the Messiah through the tribe of Judah. The purity and existence of this tribe had to be maintained for God to keep his promise.
2. "Do," 10 times (3:4,5,6,11,13 [2],16; 4:4[2],6). It requires action and obedience. Ruth did what Naomi instructed in obedience. Boaz was ready to do what Ruth asked; it was his promise. Boaz acted according to his promise Action is important, not just words.
  3. "My daughter," 5 times (3:1,10,11,16,18).
    - a) Naomi called Ruth "my daughter" three times. It was highly unusual for a Moabite to be regarded as an Israelite family member. This indicates that Naomi had accepted Ruth as her own daughter.
    - b) Boaz called Ruth "my daughter" two times. It indicates a pure familial relationship and his acceptance of her a legitimate member of the Israelite community.
  4. "Threshing floor," 4 times (3:2,3,6,14). It was a place where grain was processed after harvesting, similar to a barn, and it was possible to have a secret meeting there.
  5. "Elders" 4 times (4:2,4,9,11)
  6. "Witnesses" 3 times (4:9,10,11)

## B. Relationships

1. Ruth, the Moabite, the dead man's widow (5,10) became Boaz's wife and the mother of Obed.
2. Ten elders and the people at the gate became witnesses of the marriage of Boaz and Ruth.
3. The women say, "Naomi has a son," and named his Obed, which means "worshiper."
4. Naomi became the "nanny Grandma" of Obed (the word "cared for him" means "nanny" or "babysitter").
5. Obed became the grandfather of King David

#### C. Comparisons

1. Ruth is blessed in the same way as Rachel and Leah who built up the family of Israel (11).
2. Boaz and Ruth's family may be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah (12).

#### D. Contrasts

1. Two guardian-redeemers.
  - a) One was willing to take the land, but not to marry the widow because it would endanger his own estate. This probably means that if he had a son by Ruth, that son would inherit part or all of his own estate and it would be considered Mahlon's, not his own.
  - b) Boaz faced the same situation as a guardian-redeemer. But he was more concerned about Ruth than his property and inheritance. Boaz had God's mindset of compassion toward Ruth. He was mindful of a marginalized, poor, Gentile widow.
2. Ruth was better to Naomi than seven sons

3. Naomi came back to Bethlehem empty (1:21), but the LORD filled her with a good son-in-law, and a very special grandson through Ruth; God renewed her life

#### E. Emphasis

1. The repetition of the word “redeem” in various forms indicates that redemption is a significant theme in the book of Ruth.
2. God blessed Ruth’s faith abundantly, and she became a source of blessing.

### IV. Interpretation

As we have observed, a key word in this passage is “redeem.” In 2:20, Naomi realized that Boaz was one of her guardian-redeemers. Deuteronomy 25:5-6 say, “If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband’s brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.” The establishment of the guardian-redeemer was God’s wisdom of protecting the twelve tribes so that each one could maintain their family line and property. Through this God wanted to keep his promise of sending the Messiah through the tribe of Judah. Naomi persuaded Ruth to propose to Boaz according to God’s law, and Ruth understood what Naomi meant and obeyed her without hesitation. Then, we have several questions in our hearts. Why did Naomi give a strange instruction (3:1-4)? How could Ruth obey clearly without hesitation (3:5-6)? Why did Boaz regard Ruth’s act as greater kindness (3:10)? How did Boaz carry out his responsibility, and how did God bless Ruth (4:1-22)? In what respect is Boaz a guardian-redeemer, a type of Christ?

- A. Why did Naomi give a strange instruction (3:1-4)?
1. There was a risk involved in sending Ruth to Boaz in this way. If it did not work out, the reputations of one or both of them could have been ruined. Naomi's life could become more miserable and Ruth could be outcast.
  2. Naomi's faith in God had been revived as she experienced God's leading upon Ruth step by step. Through Boaz's generosity, kindness, mindfulness she could experience God's kindness to her and her family (2:20). She could have confidence in God to intervene in the marriage. Based on this confidence she could take a risky action.
  3. Still we have some question in our heart about why Naomi chose such a risky way. She could have invited Boaz for dinner or asked a professional Jewish matchmaker to get involved. She was very much concerned about her daughter's future well-being. She did not want Ruth to remain with her permanently, but to establish her own home (3:1). She might have prayed a lot about this. Then she saw God's opportunity which required her full commitment and courageous action. So she took it by faith without hesitation. It was her act of faith in God and the expression of her genuine love for her daughter-in-law. In fact, this was timely instruction as a mentor.
  4. Naomi encouraged Ruth to wait by faith (18). Waiting by faith is also an act of faith (1Jn 5:15). She trusted God and Boaz.
- B. How could Ruth obey clearly without hesitation (3:5-6)?
1. Ruth clearly knew how risky it was to follow Naomi's instruction. If she was misunderstood, she could be stoned to death, not to mention cast out of society.

Everyone thought of her as a woman of noble character (11). Furthermore, it was shameful for a woman servant to approach a noble master in this way.

2. Ruth trusted her mother-in-law fully and was willing to do what she said. But it was not blind submission. She understood the meaning of her mentor's instructions. She also sensed God's grace at work in her life and the restoration of her mother-in-law's family. She said to Boaz, "I am your servant Ruth. Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family" (3:9). Fundamentally, Ruth trusted in God. She also believed Boaz's genuine integrity as a man of God.
  3. Like many other widows, Ruth could have refused to consider marrying again. She already determined to follow Naomi even to death (1:18). That could have been a reason not to marry again. If she had such a struggle, she had to deny herself to obey Naomi. But one thing is clear: she obeyed Naomi to build up her family line, risking her life and future (9). This was her self-sacrificing love for her mother-in-law.
- C. Why did Boaz regard Ruth's act as greater kindness (3:10)?
1. When Boaz awoke in the middle of the night to find a woman laying at his feet, he was surprised and perhaps upset (exclamation point in verse 8). But he was not impulsive in his response. Rather, he asked who she was.
  2. On hearing her answer and her request, he immediately replied, "The LORD bless you, my daughter. This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: you have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor" (3:10). The word "kindness" means "loyalty." Her first act was to pledge to follow Naomi and her God even to death

(1:16). That was a great act of loyalty. But this one was even greater. She was willing to marry an older man to restore Elimelech's family line. She did not follow her own desire to remarry for her own benefit and well-being. She sacrificed herself for the sake of her family line. Boaz was not suspicious and judgmental, nor was he opportunistic to take advantage of Ruth. Rather, he understood her with God's mind.

3. Boaz promised to become her guardian-redeemer. However, he also explained that he had to give the first opportunity to a closer relative according to God's law. He was truly a godly man of integrity.
  4. Boaz protected Ruth's reputation (3:14). He would not send her away empty-handed, but provided a generous amount of grain for her and her mother-in-law (15,16b).
- D. How did Boaz carry out his responsibility, and how did God bless Ruth (4:1-22)?
1. After observing Ruth carefully over time, Boaz knew what kind of person Ruth was and trusted her. So he did not become upset when she did something unexpected. He had a shepherd's heart. He understood how vulnerable she was and he protected her and provided for her.
  2. Boaz was responsible toward God and his law, toward the family of Naomi, and toward Ruth. He took action in response to Ruth's proposal. He summoned the other guardian-redeemer and some elders and held a public meeting. He acted in accordance with the law, giving the other guardian-redeemer the option to redeem Naomi's estate and Ruth. He gathered proper witnesses. He was transparent and legally valid in all his actions so that everyone could understand and accept and bless his



action, and no one could raise an issue about it later. We can learn his honesty, transparency and integrity as a man of God when we must do something.

3. Boaz was in a position of power in his society and Ruth was very vulnerable. However, Boaz did not treat with a condescending attitude. Rather, he was loving, generous, compassionate, kind and understanding and treated her like a princess. He shows us how to use power and privilege in a way that saves and blesses the needy.
  4. Boaz carried out his responsibility as he promised to Ruth. As a result, Ruth became the wife of Boaz and a member of God's people.
  5. The elders and the people at the gate not only became witnesses, but they also blessed Ruth to become like Rachel and Leah and Tamar (11-12).
  6. In addition, the women blessed Naomi and recognized that Ruth was better than seven sons.
  7. Through the witnesses we can see how Ruth was fully accepted and honored among the people of Israel.
- E. In what respect is Boaz a guardian-redeemer, a type of Christ?
1. Why was Naomi in desperate of a guardian-redeemer?
    - a) When Naomi's family moved to Moab they gave up the right to manage their property. It seems that someone else had taken it over. While she was in Moab, her husband and her two sons died. As a widow, she had no right to claim the property. When she came back to Bethlehem, she could not move into her former residence and resume her family business.

- b) To survive, she had to glean fields as one of the marginalized people. Her situation was quite desperate. Without a guardian-redeemer there was no way for her to restore her family name and property.
2. The first guardian-redeemer was unwilling to redeem Naomi's family when he found he would have to marry Ruth. This would endanger his own estate. If he had a male heir by Ruth, the first son would be considered the heir of Elimelech. If there was a second son, he could be the heir for the guardian-redeemer. If Ruth had only one son, the status of the guardian-redeemer's own estate would become unclear. It was a risk.
  3. On the contrary, Boaz's first concern was Ruth, not the property. He was willing to redeem Naomi's family line by accepting Ruth as his wife. It meant that his heir born through Ruth would be counted as Elimelech's and not his. In this respect, Boaz puts his own family line at risk. His announcement tells us that his motive of redemption was very pure; he was self-sacrificing (10). When a son was born to Boaz and Ruth, people recognized that Naomi had a son (17; Dt 25:6).
  4. When Boaz sacrificed himself to redeem Elimelech's family line, God blessed him to be included in the genealogy of David, who was the shadow of the Messiah (4:21-22; Mt 1:5-6).
  5. Boaz is a type of the Messiah in terms of redemption. He became the grandfather of King David, a shadow of the Messiah. Jesus is the Son of David. Jesus is our guardian-redeemer who came to buy us back into God's family (Isa 59:20). As the Messiah, Jesus had all authority in heaven

and on earth. But he did not use this authority to crush weak people. He used it to save people from the power of sin and death and to raise them as children of God. He had a compassionate heart toward sinners and was willing to sacrifice himself to save them. He did this publicly, and in the way that God ordained, fully satisfying the requirement of the law.

6. As Boaz sacrificed himself to redeem Naomi's family line, so the Messiah gave up himself to redeem us from the curse of the law and our sins. Galatians 3:13a says, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us." Titus 2:14 says, "(Jesus Christ)...who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people who are his very own, eager to do what is good." The Messiah, Jesus, redeems us from the power of Satan, sin and death and makes us his pure and beloved bride, washing us by his precious blood (Gal 4:5; 1Pe 1:18-19).

## **V. What can we learn about God?**

### **A. God renews our lives.**

1. 4:15a says, "He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age."
  - a) As the book of Ruth began, Naomi's life was miserable. Her husband had died, and her two sons had died. She had no standing and no hope of an heir in her old age. Her family line was destined to disappear. It seemed that her life was over.
  - b) Ruth was a Moabite. The Moabites were idol worshipers "the people of Chemosh" (Nu 21:29; 2Ki 3:27). Ruth grew up in an idol worshipping culture.

Ruth was also a young widow. She could have no hope of acceptance in Israel, not to mention having a hope of marriage.

c) It was not easy for Naomi and Ruth to make decisions of faith. But when they did so God blessed them abundantly. God works for the good of those who love him (Ro 8:28). God renews those who hope in him (Isa 40:31). In God there is hope. God is the source and sustainer of life.

2. Like Naomi, we were dead in our transgressions and sins (Eph 2:1). Like Ruth, we were foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world (Eph 2:12). But when we believed in Jesus, God made us alive and saved us from our sins (Eph 2:5). He changes our status to be his beloved children, members of God's household and heirs of his kingdom (Ro 8:16-17; Eph 2:19; 3:6). In this way God renews our lives.

B. God uses those who live by faith.

1. God uses those who live by faith, even poor widows and Gentiles. God does not show favoritism, nor is he prejudiced. God blesses anyone who comes to him by faith and uses them in his redemptive history.
2. In the time of Judges, everyone did as they saw fit in their own eyes. It was a time of lawlessness and moral chaos. The book of Ruth focuses on a few people who live by faith in God during dark times. Even though times were dark, God worked through a few people who lived by faith in him and accomplished his great salvation plan. God changes the course of history through a few people who live by faith. Those who live by faith can be world changers!