

Ruth 3 - Naomi Plans to Find a Husband for Ruth; Ruth's Proposal to Boaz; The Nearer-Kinsman; Ruth Returns to Naomi

III. Naomi's plan to obtain security for Ruth (Ruth 3:1-18)

- (1) Naomi's plan to obtain security for Ruth (3:1-5)
- (2) Ruth's obedience and Boaz's response (3:6-13)
- (3) Ruth returns to Naomi (3:14-18)

Ruth 3

III. Naomi's plan to obtain security for Ruth (Ruth 3:1-18)

- (1) Naomi's plan to obtain security for Ruth (3:1-5)

1 Then her mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek **security** for you, that it may go well for you?"

1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?"

1 Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi, told her, "My daughter, should I not make inquiries about your financial security, so you'll be better off in life?"

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?

- Now that their immediate needs (food and safety) were met, Ruth and Naomi could look toward their greater need

— Ruth took the initiative to propose a plan to obtain food (2:2), now Naomi suggested a plan for rest (security) for Ruth

- "...security" - *manoach*, it may refer to a state of rest or a condition of rest

— In this context, it refers to the condition of rest and security to be attained through marriage, as was already implied in 1:9

— Naomi's concern for Ruth extended beyond her physical needs of food and safety, to Ruth's deeper need for a husband, and hopefully, a son

— The hope of every Jewish woman was that God would bless her with many descendants. If Ruth was able to marry Boaz and have a son, Naomi would also be blessed since Ruth's son would perpetuate Elimelech's line.

— However, Naomi's primary concern was for Ruth's welfare in marriage, since Ruth was such a blessing to her

Naomi had three issues:

(1) How could the name of Elimelech be maintained among the tribes of Israel since both her sons were now dead?

(2) What steps should be taken to protect her inheritance, which Elimelech had left in Naomi's trust?

(3) How could she provide rest and security for her faithful daughter-in-law?

- A marriage between Ruth and Boaz would solve all three problems
- This also meant that Naomi would renounce her own claim to Boaz as the close relative and give it to Ruth, the younger widow

2 Now then, is Boaz not our relative, with whose young women you were? Behold, he is winnowing barley at the **threshing floor** tonight.

2 Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight.

2 Isn't Boaz one of our close relatives? You've been associating with his women servants lately. Look, he'll be winnowing barley at the threshing floor tonight.

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

- "...threshing floor" - a large, flat parcel of ground where there was a prevailing wind. After the grain had been ground, they would throw the grain up in the air and the wind would cause the grain to fall a little bit downwind and the chaff would fall further downwind.

— If done properly, one would end up with two piles, the closer one being good for market, and the further one would be burned as trash

- Threshing floors were typically in prominent places

— David purchased the threshing floor of Arunah, which later became the site of the Temple

— This was not only a time of work, but also a time of celebration

— Typically the afternoon was spent threshing the grain and that night they would have a party (Is 41:14-16)

— So the owners and the seniors would sleep there to prevent theft of the grain

3 **Wash yourself** therefore, and **anoint yourself**, and **put on your best clothes**, and go down to the threshing floor; *but* do not reveal yourself to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

3 Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your *best* clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; *but* do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

3 So get cleaned up, put on some perfume, dress up, and go to the threshing floor, but don't let him see you until after he's finished eating and drinking.

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.

- Naomi lays out four steps that are essential for every sinner:

- "Wash yourself" - if you and I are going to come to Christ, we're told that it's "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5)

— This is similar language used regarding Bathsheba in 2 Sam 11:2

— Our Lord said to Nicodemus: "You may think you're a fine, religious man, and you are, but you need a bath—a spiritual bath. You need the washing of regeneration." Essentially, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7).

— So Naomi tells Ruth, "You've been working hard out in the field. Wash thyself therefore." That's the first step that she is to take.

- "...anoint yourself" - the Spirit of God is the [only] one who can teach us all truth, and all of us need the teaching of the Spirit of God

— That's the only way in the world we can ever understand the Word of God. The Spirit of God must teach us. This is one of the neglected facts today.

— Paul says, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit..." (1 Cor 2:9)

— The Spirit of God is able to teach us and is able to lead us and guide us into all truth

— How important it is to have the Spirit of God as our teacher? "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor 2:10)

- It's mentioned again in 1 John 2:27: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

— This doesn't mean that you dispense with human learning or human teachers

— You and I today are the beneficiaries of that which has been bequeathed to us by the godly men of the past whom the Spirit of God has taught

— And so Ruth's second step was important. She was to wash herself and then to anoint herself

- "...put on your *best* clothes" - being poor she probably did not have a "best dress," so this might mean to exchange her clothes of mourning and widowhood for regular clothes

— Based upon an analogy with 2 Sam 12:20, which also mentions bathing, perfume, and a *simlah* dress when David completed his mourning period for his son, it might imply that Ruth was still wearing the garments of her widowhood

— It might also refer to the outer garment or cape since the word is singular, which would protect her from the chill of the night as well as allow her to remain anonymous

- When you and I come to Christ and accept Him as Savior, we are told that He becomes our righteousness; actually, it's spoken of as a robe of righteousness (Rom 3:22).

— Paul speaks of it as a garment that comes down over the sinner, covering him, so that God sees us in Christ, and His righteousness becomes our righteousness. We stand complete in Him—"accepted in the beloved" (Eph 1:6). This is the robe of righteousness that we have today.

— If all this time she had been wearing the clothes of widowhood and mourning, it would explain why Boaz had not moved to court her, for he would not impose himself on her as long as she was still in a time of mourning

— This also parallels Ezek 16:8-14, which deals with a bride preparing for her wedding

- Naomi then told her the next action she was to perform...stake her claim! (v4)

4 And it shall be when he lies down, that you shall take notice of the place where he lies, and you shall go and **uncover his feet** and **liedown**; then he will tell you what you should do."

4 It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do."

4 When he lies down, be sure to notice where he is resting. Then go over, uncover his feet, and lie down. He'll tell you what to do."

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.

- "...uncover his feet" - Naomi's plan was in harmony with Israel's laws and social conventions; she was not suggesting anything improper, much less immoral

— While it is true that in the phrase "uncover his feet," "feet" can be a euphemism for sexual organs, Naomi was not suggesting Ruth remove Boaz' pants. This is an alternate interpretation, which doesn't hold water when the primary interpretation makes sense.

— Naomi was telling Ruth to remove the blanket or cloak (v15) covering Boaz' legs and feet, while he slept at the threshing floor. She would then ask him to cover her with it (v10).

This was a symbolic way of requesting Boaz' protection as her husband (Cf. Deut 22:30; 27:20; Ezek 16:8; Mal 2:16)

- "...lie down" - the Hebrew reads "the place where the feet are"

— She was to lie down at his feet after uncovering him

— She was to take the servant's position in which the servant lies diagonally at his master's feet

— The position was a lowly one; it represented Ruth as a petitioner

5 And she said to her, "All that you say I will do."

5 She said to her, "All that you say I will do."

5 Ruth replied, "I'll do everything you've said."

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

- Ruth again submitted to the counsel of Naomi, under whose authority she had placed herself (Cf. 2:2)

(2) Ruth's obedience and Boaz's response (3:6-13)

6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her.

6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her.

6 So she went out to the threshing floor and did precisely what her mother-in-law had advised.

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

- It may appear that Ruth was inappropriately aggressive, but Boaz had previously indicated his strong affection for her (2:11-17); Ruth was only encouraging him to pursue his interest in her

7 When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down.

7 When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down.

7 After Boaz had finished eating and drinking to his heart's content, he went over and lay down next to the pile of threshed grain. Ruth came in quietly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

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.

- Boaz would lie down by one heap of his grain, and his servants would be scattered in other areas of his property guarding the heaps of grain there, thus affording a measure of privacy for Boaz and Ruth

— Ruth evidently assumed, or hoped, that Boaz was the closest single male relative of her husband Mahlon (4:10). If so, he could marry her if he desired.

— By laying at his feet, Ruth was inviting Boaz to exercise the legal right of her *levir* (brother-in-law)

8 And it happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and **bentforward**; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet.

8 It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet.

8 In the middle of the night, Boaz was startled awake and turned over in surprise to see a woman lying at his feet.

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

- "...bent forward" - *laphath*, the causative stem means "to grasp; to twist, grasp, turn; grasp with a twisting motion"

— It is used that way of Samson (Judges 16:29)

— From Semitic cognates, it could also mean "to turn over," "to feel," "to grope about," perhaps groping for his mantle

— Likely because his feet were cold

9 So he said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth your **slave**. Now spread **yourgarment** over your slave, for you are **aredeemer**."

9 He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative."

9 He asked her, "Who are you?"

She answered, "I'm only Ruth, your servant. Spread the edge of your garment over your servant, because you are my related redeemer."

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.

- "...slave" - *'amah*, thus she presented herself as one who was eligible for marriage

- "...your garment" - *kanaph*, wing, extremity, edge, border, corner, shirt; skirt, corner (of garment), hem, border, fringe, bottom edge of skirt or train

— This refers to the corner of the garment, and it refers to the fact that a man spreads this over his wife, as well as himself (Deut 22:30; 27:20)

— Boaz had prayed for the Lord "under whose wings" Ruth had taken refuge, to reward her (2:12)

- Do not misunderstand this passage. In our culture it would seem that she is propositioning him, but there is much more going on here

— When Ruth says this to Boaz, she is making a claim for Boaz to take her as a wife

because he is obligated under the Law of the Levirate marriage (2:12; Deut 22:30; 27:20; 1

Kings 19:19; Ezek 16:8; Mal 2:16)

[No matter how much Boaz loved Ruth, he had to await her move! How about you?]

- "...a redeemer" - by invoking the term *goel*, the kinsman-redeemer custom, Ruth subordinated her own happiness to her family duty of providing Naomi with an heir
— Ruth is asking for more than just for Boaz to take her as his wife...since she invoked the *Goel*, she also invokes the Law of Rememtion and Levirate Marriage, and is asking for Boaz to redeem Naomi's land as well

10 Then he said, "May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last **kindness** to be better than the first, by **not going after young men**, whether poor or rich.

10 Then he said, "May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich.

10 He replied, "May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter. You've added to the gracious love you've already demonstrated⁸ by not pursuing younger men, whether rich or poor.

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.

- "...kindness" - *hesed*, loyal love (Cf. 1:8; 2:20)

— Naomi had prayed that God would "deal kindly" with Ruth, just as they had dealt with her (1:8)

— She also prayed that Boaz would experience God's blessing for his loyal love to Naomi, Ruth, and their husbands (2:20)

— Now, Boaz blessed Ruth and acknowledged that she had been God's channel of blessing to him out of loyal love to him

- "...not going after young men" - the younger men were not *goelim*, for that would have only benefited Ruth and not Naomi

— She considered her own happiness as secondary, so she chose Boaz because of how he could benefit both Ruth and Naomi

11 So now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you say, for all my people in the city know that you are a **woman of excellence**.

11 Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.

11 Don't be afraid, my daughter. I'll do for you everything that you have asked, since all of my people in town are aware that you're a virtuous woman.

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.

- "...woman of excellence" - *hayil*, woman of excellence; of noble character
- The same Hebrew word describes Boaz in 2:1
- Thus, Ruth was worthy to be the wife of Boaz
- The word *hayil* also describes the ideal woman in Prov 31:10 (Cf. Prov 12:4; 19:14)

12 But now, although it is true that I am a redeemer, yet there is also a **redeemer more closely related** than I.

12 Now it is true I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.

12 It's true that I'm your related redeemer, but there is another related redeemer even closer than I.

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

- "...redeemer more closely related" - there is someone closer who would have first right of refusal on marrying Ruth

— Under the Mosaic Law, the duty fell upon the closest male relative, unless he waved his right of priority

— This may explain why he did not make his own move earlier

— Before Ruth and Boaz can be together, the 'Nearer Kinsman' would have to waive his rights

13 **Remain this night**, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, **as the LORD lives**. Lie down until morning."

13 Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning."

13 Stay the night, and if he fulfills his duty as your related redeemer in the morning, that will be acceptable. But if he isn't inclined to do so, then, as the LORD lives, I will act as your related redeemer myself. So lie down until morning."

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.

- Boaz promised to marry Ruth, if the nearer kinsman (closer relative) chose not to exercise his right to do so

- "Remain this night" - *lun*, by the use of this verb, all ambiguity is removed concerning the sexual implication between the two; the Hebrew word used is *lun*, not *shachav*; *shachav* carries a sexual connotation, *lun* does not

- When they were in the very crucible of temptation, they proved themselves righteous by choosing integrity over passion
- The plan is spelled out next, and its beginning shall be in the morning
- Boaz promised to resolve the issue the very next day; it will not be allowed to linger indefinitely any longer
- Even though Boaz wanted to marry Ruth, he did not violate the Mosaic Law to do so; his submission to God's Law reflected his submission to God Himself
- "...as the LORD lives" - Boaz puts himself under the oath: "as YHWH lives"
- Then came his final instructions: lie down until the morning

(3) Ruth returns to Naomi (3:14-18)

14 So she lay at his feet until morning, and got up **before one person could recognize another**; and he said, "Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."

14 So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."

14 So she lay down at his feet until dawn approached, then got up while it was still difficult for anyone to be recognized. Then he told her, "It shouldn't be known that a woman has come to the threshing floor."

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.

- "...before one person could recognize another" - morning, but still dark

- Ruth had risked danger to her reputation by sleeping on the threshing floor, as others may have seen her and assumed something immoral had taken place

— Thus, Boaz protected Ruth's reputation by urging his other reapers to keep things quiet

15 Again he said, "Give me the shawl that is on you and hold it." So she held it, and he measured **six measures of barley** and laid *it* on her. Then she went into the city.

15 Again he said, "Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it." So she held it, and he measured six *measures* of barley and laid *it* on her. Then she went into the city.

15 So he said, "Take your cloak and hold it out." She did so, and he measured out six units of barley and placed them in a sack on her. Then she left for town.

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.

- "...six *measures* of barley" - Boaz previously gave Ruth "an ephah" of barley to carry back to Naomi, in addition to what she gleaned

— This was a "code" for Naomi (Cf. v18)

— What "measure" was used is unclear ("measure" was supplied by the translators); if one "measure" was an ephah, Ruth would've had to carry over 200 pounds; if one "measure"

was a "seah," Ruth would've had to carry 60-95 pounds

— Whatever the measure was, it is likely that Boaz was even more generous here than he was previously

— Boaz gave the barley to Naomi, not Ruth (Cf. v18)

16 When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did it go, my daughter?" And she told her all that the man had done for her.

16 When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did it go, my daughter?" And she told her all that the man had done for her.

16 When Ruth returned to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked her, "How did it go, my daughter?"

Then she related everything that the man had done for her.

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 She also said, "These six *measures* of barley he gave to me, for he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"

17 She said, "These six *measures* of barley he gave to me, for he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"

17 Ruth also said, "He gave me these six units of barley and told me, 'Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"

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.

- Did Boaz think Naomi was hungry? No...remember all the food that Ruth already brought into the house, plus the leftover lunch

- Verse 17 accomplishes two things:

(1) This verse provides a transition for Ruth's exit from the story...from this point on she plays a passive role

(2) It puts Boaz and Naomi on center stage, since from this point on, they are the active players in the story

18 Then she said, "Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man **will not rest** until he has settled it today."

18 Then she said, "Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today."

18 Naomi replied, "Be patient, my daughter, until you learn how this works out, because the man won't rest until he finishes everything today."

18 Then said she [Naomi, saying to Ruth], 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.

- "...will not rest" - Naomi understood the "code" from Boaz in the six "measures" of barley: Boaz would not rest until the matter is resolved (Cf. v15)
- How long did it take God to create the earth? Six days (Gen 1; Ex 20:11); on the Seventh day He rested
- Boaz would not rest until he had provided rest for Ruth, the rest Naomi sought for her
- Until then, Ruth must "sit still" and wait...; her waiting was a demonstration of her faith, and a foretaste of the rest she would enter into shortly
- In the same way, Christians must wait now until our Redeemer brings our redemption to completion; at that time, we will rest finally and fully in His presence

Ruth 3 Summary

- The situation by the end of this chapter is that Naomi's prayer of Ruth 1:8-9 is about to be answered
 - Ruth will find *manoach* ("rest") in marriage
- The famine will no longer be a factor, since Boaz's gift assured the woman of plenty to eat
- Ruth no longer identifies herself with her lower status but with her own name
 - She was no longer simply just the Moabitess