

Ruth 3-4
August 29, 2010
And They Lived Happily Ever After

I. The Story So Far

The story has been introduced. Naomi and Ruth have journeyed from Moab to Bethlehem, which was Naomi's native city. Ruth has accepted the LORD as God, and both women are depending on Him for their very lives. A godly, well-off, and gracious "kinsman-redeemer" has seen fit to make sure that Ruth and Naomi have what they need and assisting Ruth in gleaming his fields. A couple of months have past.

II. Naomi Directs Ruth to Marriage: Ruth 3:1-6

- 3:1 Naomi broaches the subject of marriage to Ruth in a gentle way. "Home for you" is really "place of rest." Even though marriage involves work for women, the Bible often refers to marriage as rest for the woman.
- 3:2 Obviously, Naomi has been noticing what has been happening with Boaz; she might have been the instigator before, but now she is definitely identified as pushing for the two to get married.
- 3:3 Threshing would begin toward the end or shortly after wheat was harvested to take advantage of the dry summer season; the threshing floor would have been on a hilltop to take advantage of the wind.
- 3:3 "Best" is not in the Hebrew, although all the translations use it. Ruth might be leaving behind her mourning for her husband. "Best" might make sense in the context as she is attempting to attract a man.
- 3:4 "Feet" might not be Boaz's true feet, as the term is sometimes used euphemistically; "uncover" is also used in sexual contexts. A sexual encounter would be Biblically the same as being married. Washing as noted at the beginning of verse 3 is also a prerequisite for a sexual relationship.
- 3:4 Some attempt to rehabilitate this situation as not implying an offer of sex. Boaz has shown that he is an extremely honorable man; basically, Naomi is telling Ruth to put herself under his control for him to do the honorable thing. This seems more than a little brazen to us today, but it does facilitate Boaz leaping to consideration of marriage.
- 3:5 Ruth is always obedient to Naomi. One wonders what she thinks about this situation, but it is left to our imagination to think as she was thinking. Even if we follow the rehabilitation logic, this is a major gamble for Ruth; she is taking huge risks. She is trusting Naomi, and she is trusting God.

III. The Discussion: Ruth 1:7-15

- 3:8 Ruth does as she is told. It is not identified what "startled" Boaz. Literally, he "shuttered with fear" which some interpret that he shivered because he was cold because his feet were uncovered. More likely, it was the pounding of her heart that startled him.

- 3:9 The word for “servant” is different than the one used earlier. This “servant” was one eligible for marriage with her master.
- 3:9 “Spread the corner...” is used by God to signify “marriage” to Israel in:

Ezek 16:8

8 "Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine.

NIV

If you review the next few verses in Ezekiel 16, it becomes evident that Ruth was preparing for marriage.

- 3:9 Ruth says that he is “a kinsman-redeemer,” rather than “my kinsman-redeemer.” So, she might be aware of a closer kinsman-redeemer.
- 3:10 Certainly, no woman today should be counseled to do as Ruth has been, but look at Boaz’s remarkable statement. Wow! Is it possible for there to be more correct or supportive statement? Naomi’s sense, perhaps from God, that he is an honorable man is verified.
- 3:11 He continues by noting her suggestion of marriage and that he will pursue it! Notice also that he refers to her noble character. (NOTE: “Woman of noble character” could be translated “strong woman.”) The same phrase is used in (Note: “Woman” and “wife” are the same word in these two verses:

Prov 31:10

10 A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.

NIV

- 3:13 The word “redeem” appears four times in this verse in the original language. We should not view this verse as suggesting that Boaz does not want to marry her, but rather that he wants to do the right thing. In either case, Ruth will have the “rest” mentioned above by Naomi. Indeed, Boaz will not “rest” until she is assured of her “rest.”
- 3:13 Without adding to Scripture, it is hard to imagine that either slept much that night. There was probably a lot more said than is recorded in these view verses (see verse 3:17 for one addition).
- 3:14 Leaving in the middle of the night would have been dangerous for the woman. Everything in this chapter indicates that Boaz is totally dedicated to doing what is right.
- 3:15 Before leaving, he gives her some barley to take back to Naomi, showing his approval of what has happened. Boaz heads to town to pursue the situation with all the zest that he has in him. (NOTE: The actual unit of the measure is not identified.)

IV. Debrief with Naomi: Ruth 3:16-18

- 3:16 If Boaz and Ruth did not sleep much, we might also speculate that Naomi had not slept much either.

- 3:17 To Naomi, the “six barleys” indicated that Boaz was already actively taking action as their redeemer. In other words, he wanted the “job” as husband.
- 3:18 Naomi points out to Ruth that she had done her part; now, it is now up to Boaz to do his part. Ruth’s final words in this book are in verse 17

V. Court Proceeding: Ruth 4:1-12

- 4:1 Sitting at the town gate would indicate that Boaz is ready for official business. Many times, there were benches located at the town gate for such “sitting.”
- 4:1 The closer kinsman-redeemer is anonymous. Perhaps, the name was omitted so that his descendants would not be embarrassed by this incident. “My friend” means something like “such a person”; the commentators say that it can be translated “Mr. So-and-So.”
- 4:3 With the “court” assembled as witnesses, Boaz launches into his speech.
- 4:5 While the man was happy to take the land, how will he feel about acquiring a wife, especially a foreign one? (Note: “From Ruth” is the MT, along with the KJV.)
- 4:6 The other kinsman-redeemer renounces his claims and then takes off his sandal, thereby making the act official.
- 4:7 As noted last week Boaz and Ruth’s marriage does not follow the rules fully of a levirate marriage. Here are the appropriate verses:

Deut 25:5-10

5 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. 6 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.

7 However, if a man does not want to marry his brother's wife, she shall go to the elders at the town gate and say, "My husband's brother refuses to carry on his brother's name in Israel. He will not fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to me." 8 Then the elders of his town shall summon him and talk to him. If he persists in saying, "I do not want to marry her," 9 his brother's widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, take off one of his sandals, spit in his face and say, "This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother's family line." 10 That man's line shall be known in Israel as The Family of the Unsandaled.

NIV

- 4:9 This is a formal legal proceeding. Verses 9 and 10 give Boaz’s interpretation of the events.
- 4:10 In a few verses, Ruth’s son is noted as the son of Boaz. It is not clear how to reconcile these two statements. Apparently Obed was the only son and represented the inheritance of both “fathers.”
- 4:11 The elders agree with Boaz, and offer their blessing to him. Ephrathah is another name for Bethlehem.

VI. The Outcome: Ruth 4:13-22

- 4:13 The LORD blesses the marriage with a son. Remember that Ruth had been married before, but had not had any children.
- 4:14 Naomi is Mari, bitter, no longer. Here, the “kinsman-redeemer” is the baby
- 4:16 A wonderful ending image!
- 4:18 Most Judahites are of the line of Perez.

At the end of this book, we see the exaltation of Naomi. Clearly, Ruth and Boaz were equally blessed. By emphasizing Naomi, though, we have several lessons:

- While Ruth and Boaz’s lives were undoubtedly wrecked according to the societal norms of the time, Naomi was in a more hopeless situation. Thus, we see what the LORD can do in even the worse of situations.
- By showing the care for Naomi, we have additional verification of the character of Ruth and Boaz.
- We can see how God can act in ways that we might not be able to imagine.

VII. End of Study of Judges

During the time of the Judges, we see that God’s chosen people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes. It was a time of ignorance and a time where self-honor was more important than God’s. We see that bad situations lead to worse. We see the heaping up of wrong upon wrong upon wrong. We see a people who are withdrawing from God, rather than coming closer to Him.

The book of Ruth is a great ending to that time. Here we see the opposite where people are attempting to lead their lives according to God, showing love and kindness to those around them. The ending of this story can be compared to a child’s story where the Prince and Princess live happily ever after.

In our lives, we might not have a storybook ending (on this earth) if we follow God fully. However, if we pile sin on sin, we can be sure that our situation will get worse even while living this life. The bigger question than what we can get out of following God is whether we are willing to trust Him completely. Ultimately, his will being done will result in the best possible conclusion. Why would we not want to align to it, rather than attempting to live our lives swimming upstream?

Rom 8:28

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

NIV