

**Review**

In our study of Ruth, we have already examined several things about the book of Ruth as we overviewed it and looked at chapter 1:

1. The book was set during the period of the Judges (1:1). Since there was a famine, it appears to have been a time of spiritual decline because of provisions of the Mosaic covenant. When the famine was alleviated, this was probably because there was a period of spiritual growth in Israel.
2. The Moabite curse, in which no Moabite could enter the congregation of Israel, comes into play here (Deut 23:3, Neh. 13:1). We looked at the timing of things to see how it compared to the “10 generations” clause in Deut. 23:3, but then noted that this clause really was intended to ensure that no Moabite ever came into the congregation. Only by God’s grace was it possible for Ruth to become a convert.
3. Even before Ruth’s entrance into Israel comes into play, she was married to the Israelite Mahlon. Israelites were not supposed to marry Moabites (Deut. 7:3, Ezra 9:1, Neh. 13:23).
4. The idea of Gentile conversion is prominent in 1:16-17. We noted how this was a real faith, not accompanied with fake weeping.
5. We saw the idea of “finding rest” as it related to marriage security (1:9).
6. We noted the position of Ruth and the other women, Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba, in the genealogy of Christ. Of these, only Ruth was virtuous in character!

Then in chapter 2 we saw some further truths:

1. In 2:3 the Bible says Ruth “happened” to come upon the field of Boaz. As we know, “chance” is only from a human perspective; God’s hand guided Ruth to that particular field at that particular time.
2. Boaz provided food, protection, and a blessing to Ruth.
3. In 2:6, the race question becomes a big issue again. We can see how an Israelite obedient to the law would be cognizant of this; however, there is no place for racism in our dealings with people today.
4. The gleaning law of Lev. 19:9-10 comes into play in chapter 2. It is related to Ex. 23:9 where the Israelites were to treat strangers in a kind way since they were strangers in a foreign land (Egypt) at one time also.
5. Note that Boaz’s blessing includes a statement that he has seen Ruth come under the wings of the God of Israel, indicating a true conversion and good personal testimony to that effect. She left her parents, land, and gods to come to a new people, a new land, and a new God.

**Chapter 3**

Now we come to chapter 3. Basically, this chapter gives the plan of Naomi and Ruth and how they are going to implement it. The idea is to discreetly ask to Boaz to initiate the redemption of property rights for Naomi’s parcel of land, and that he initiate the marriage proceedings for Naomi’s daughter-in-law Ruth. Note the following in this regard:

1. Naomi is seeking security or “rest” for her daughter-in-law (3:1). This implies marriage, as 1:9 suggests, and the security that comes in the home of a man, particularly a well-respected and wealthy man. Naomi is past child-bearing age, and since part of the problem is to extend the family name for Elimelech, she is not a real candidate—but Ruth is, since she is the widow of Elimelech’s son Mahlon.
2. Naomi reminds Ruth that Boaz is a perfect candidate—he has already shown her a great deal of kindness, and he is a “close relative.” That is, he is close enough to be one of their redeeming relatives (3:2). On this concept of the **redeemer**, see below.
3. The plan is for Ruth to dress up very nicely, go to Boaz in the night, and get his attention in a way so as to not attract attention to anyone else (3:3-5). They have

thought carefully through the situation and determined this is best way to make their request known to Boaz. They are not trying to trap him or anything nefarious like that. But just like a young man today puts a great deal of thought into how to propose marriage to his girlfriend, so Naomi and Ruth are thinking the most appropriate way to make known their availability, when virtuous Boaz would have expected Ruth to go after a younger man (3:10).

4. Ruth followed Naomi’s instructions. She waited until Boaz was asleep, went quietly and moved his covering off of his feet, laid down at his feet, and apparently covered herself with the part of his garment to symbolize what she was asking (3:6-7).
5. When Boaz awoke (3:8, he had cold feet!) he saw Ruth and she told him why she was there.
6. What exactly is going on here? Was this on the up-and-up, so to speak?
  - a. Hebrew law made provision for the redemption of property and propagation of the family name in the case of a husband’s death. Naomi and Ruth are asking that this particular law be fulfilled in their case. Boaz seems to be the best candidate to them.
  - b. All of this was done virtuously. Boaz thought so and this was in accord with the reputation of Ruth (3:10-11).
  - c. Apparently this custom was local to Israel. I found a helpful reference in John J. Davis and John C. Whitcomb, *Israel: From Conquest to Exile*, Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1969-70, p. 166. It quotes from Pfeiffer, “‘The custom of a man’s placing a corner of his garment over a maiden as a token of marriage is known among the Arabs.’ The situation described in Ruth 3 perhaps parallels this modern Arabic custom...” However, this practice is not known to at least some Arabic peoples today, though it may still be part of Bedouin culture.
  - d. Ruth’s removal of the garment/blanket and probable covering of herself with part of it symbolizes security (3:1) and protection (3:9, the wing idea, and 2:12). She is asking him to take her under his wing in marriage.
  - e. It was also done legally (3:12-13) because Boaz realized he had to offer the opportunity to the nearer kinsman before he could take it himself. We’ll see these details in the next chapter.
7. Ruth returns in the early morning to her mother with

**The Redeemer: Duties**

The Bible tells us of four duties of the redeemer.

1. Redemption of a brother’s property (Lev. 25:23-28). The time limit on this was to the year of Jubilee. The property was valued in accordance with how many years remained until the Jubilee, as that number of years was how long it could produce wealth for the “owner” or “leaser.” The land ultimately belongs to God (Lev. 25:23). Apparently he was not required to do this duty (25:25 says “may”) since the Jubilee year would come eventually and release the land to its original occupants.
2. Avenging the blood of a slain brother (Num. 35:9-28; Deut. 19:1-3; Joshua 20). The time limit here was until the death of the high priest.
3. Levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5-10).
4. Redemption of a brother from indentured servanthood (Lev. 25:47-55). The time limit on this was to the year of Jubilee, and again the valuation was made based on how many years there were left until Jubilee (50-52). The brother ultimately belongs to God (55, cf. v. 46), like the land, and so could not be sold permanently into slavery.