

Ruth Chapter 2

“Kinsman of her husband”: Possible as close as a brother of Elimelech (4:3), but if not, certainly within the tribe or clan. “A mighty man of wealth”. Literally “a man of valor” (Judges 6:12; 11:1), who had unusual capacity to obtain and protect his property.

“Boaz”: His name mean “in him is strength.” He had never married or was a widower (1 Chron. 2:11-12; Matt. 1:5; Luke 3:32).

Ruth 2:1 "And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name [was] Boaz."

“Kinsman” is the marginal reading of the Hebrew text. The consonantal text indicates that “Boaz” was a close acquaintance. The point of the verse appears to be that Elimelech’s relative was well-known both to “Naomi” and her husband. Only because Naomi was Elimelech’s wife could Boaz qualify to become the “goel” (see the note on 3:9), so that Naomi could seek his help in the matter of her “husband’s” estate. Boaz was a man of substance, having both personal wealth and an impeccable reputation.

“Boaz” was a wealthy landowner in Beth-lehem in Judah who lived “when the judges ruled” Israel (the twelfth century B.C.). He was kind to Ruth, a Moabite widow of his kinsman Mahlon, whose mother Naomi, was the sole survivor of an Ephrathite family. Boaz ultimately married Ruth and redeemed Naomi’s land. Boaz’s first son by Ruth, Obed, was pledged as Mahlon’s, thus perpetuating the memory of the deceased upon his estate (Deut. 25:5-10). Obed was also deemed Boaz’s first son and thus served to link Boaz's ancestry in the tribe of Judah to Obed's grandson, David the king. Boaz appears in the seventh position of David’s genealogy (4:18-22; 1 Chron. 2:9-15) and is thus related to Jesus Christ David’s greater son (Matt. 1:3-6; Luke 3:31-33).

Boaz, a relative of Naomi’s deceased husband, Elimelech, was also a man of distinction and “wealth” (sometimes translated “valiant” or “mighty”), who would use his influence and resources to be God’s special provision for Ruth.

In the last lesson, we found that Naomi takes her son's wife, Ruth, and returns to Bethlehem. This is a continuation of that. Boaz was a near kinsman of Elimelech. The name "Boaz" means in him is strength. It seems to have been a Hebrew name. It seems that Boaz was a wealthy man, but was also held in high esteem by the people of Bethlehem as well.

Ruth 2:2 "And Ruth the Moabite said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after [him] in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter."

“Glean”: The Mosaic Law commanded that the harvest should not be reaped to the corners nor the gleanings picked up (Lev. 19:9-10). Gleanings were stalks of grain left after the first cutting

(compare 2:3, 7-8, 15, 17). These were dedicated to the needy, especially widows, orphans and strangers (Lev. 23:22; Deut. 24:19-21).

Because of God's heartfelt care for the underprivileged, He installed a provision in the Old Testament law that some grain would be left during the harvest so that the poor, the widowed, orphans, and strangers could "glean" the "heads" (Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 24:19-22) to survive. God's people ought to care that much, too.

The right of the poor to pick up the grain left by the reapers was guaranteed by the Law of Moses (Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19).

We remember that, the Hebrews were never to harvest the last of the crop. They were to leave enough for the widows and orphans to glean. All the poor had the right, as well as the privilege of gleaning from the field after it was harvested. This was a humiliating experience, especially for Naomi, who had been a proud Hebrew herself. Perhaps that is why it is mentioned again, that Ruth was a Moabitess. She is a Moabitess by birth, but a Hebrew by marriage to a Hebrew. In this particular instance, the gleaning seemed to be of ears of corn. Ruth is not too concerned about what the workers feel, but wants to find favor in the owner of the field's sight. Ruth seeks and receives permission from Naomi to do this.

Ruth 2:3 "And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field [belonging] unto Boaz, who [was] of the kindred of Elimelech."

"She went, and came": Here was a classic example of God's providence at work.

"Part of the field" Possibly a large community field in which Boaz had a plot.

Ruth "happened" to come to the section of the "field" belonging to "Boaz." Naomi later recognized that this was through the providence of a gracious God (verse 20).

"Hap" is speaking of her good fortune. She was fortunate that she went to the field of Boaz to glean. This seems as if this was by chance, but we know the LORD arranged this circumstance.

Verses 4-17: Note throughout how Boaz manifested the spirit of the law in going beyond what the Mosaic legislation required by:

1. Feeding Ruth (2:14);
2. Letting Ruth glean among the sheaves (2:15; and
3. Leaving extra grain for her to glean (2:16).

Ruth 2:4 "And, behold, Boaz came from Beth-lehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD [be] with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee."

“The Lord be with you”: This unusual labor practice speaks to the exceptional godliness of Boaz and his workers.

The fields were just out of Bethlehem. It seemed that Boaz lived in the city, but owned fields here, where Ruth was gleaning. Just by his greeting, we know that Boaz was a man of God. He was not cruel to his workers. They seemed to have a respect for him as well. They answered him "The LORD bless thee". This was an ideal relationship between the owner of the land and his workers.

Ruth 2:5 "Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel [is] this?"

To direct them their work, what part each was to do, and to see that they did it well. To take care for provisions for them, and to pay them their wages when their work was done. Josephus calls him that had the care of the field, and all things relative to it. The Jews say, he was set over two and forty persons, whom he had the command of.

“Whose damsel is this?” To whom does she belong? Of what family is she? Whose daughter is she? Or whose wife? For he thought, as Aben Ezra notes, that she was another man's wife. The Targum is, of what nation is she? Perhaps her dress might be somewhat different from that of the Israelite women.

Ruth has caught the eye of Boaz. We may safely assume from this, that Ruth was beautiful. She did not look like the other paupers in the field, and this is why he asked who she was. He thought she might be one of the Hebrews caught on bad times.

Ruth 2:6 "And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It [is] the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab:"

Who had taken a great deal of notice of Ruth, and had conversed with her, and so was capable of giving answers to his master's question.

"It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi, out of the country of Moab”: Perhaps he had not got knowledge of her name, and therefore only describes her by the country from whence she came. And by her coming from thence along with Naomi, when she returned from Moab, with whose name Boaz was well acquainted, and of whose return he had been informed. And perhaps had seen her in person, and even Ruth also, though he might have forgot her. The Targum makes the servant to add, that she was become a proselytess.

Probably, word had gotten to Boaz that Naomi had brought a beautiful damsel back with her from Moab. Now Boaz has seen her with his own eyes. Perhaps Ruth had told the servant in charge who she was, as he probably made it his business to know who was gleaning in his master's field.

Verses 7, 17: Morning ... evening”: Ruth proved to be diligent in her care for Naomi.

Ruth 2:7 And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house.

“Sheaves”: Bundles of grain stalks tied together for transport to the threshing floor.

“The house”: Most likely a temporary shelter built with branches by the side of the field (3:18).

We see from this that, she had asked permission to glean. She had worked diligently all morning gathering food for herself and for Naomi. It appears there were little huts (called a house here), where they went to rest after gleaning in the fields. It seems Ruth spent very little time in this house as she worked diligently.

Verses 8-16: First, Ruth found “refuge” under the protective “wings” of Yahweh, the God of Israel (2:12). Then He gave her Boaz, her kinsman-redeemer, and she came under his protective covering.

Ruth 2:8 "Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens:"

“My daughter”: Boaz was about 45-55 years old and a contemporary of Elimelech and Naomi. He would naturally see Ruth as a daughter (3:10-11), much like Naomi did (2:2, 22; 3:1, 16, 18). Boaz contrasted himself with younger men (3:10).

“My maidens”: The ones who tied up the sheaves.

It seems that Boaz sought her out and spoke to her. She would not have been with the other harvesters. She would have been in the rear picking up what they had left. He had to seek her out specifically. "My daughter" was usually an expression of an older person for a young lady. It seems that Boaz immediately wanted to help this beautiful maiden, who was related to him by marriage. He tells her to not seek other places to glean. He wants to help her. She would be very near the young women, who were harvesting the corn. In fact, she would be the first to glean. This would be an advantage for her.

Ruth 2:9 "[Let] thine eyes [be] on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of [that] which the young men have drawn."

“Young men”: The ones who cut the grain with hand sickles (2:21).

It seems that Boaz, has given orders to the young men not to touch Ruth. She is to drink of the water they have drawn. She is not to be treated with disrespect by anyone. She is Boaz's kins-

woman. She is to stay near the women harvesters. It appears that Boaz has already taken an interest in Ruth.

Verses 10-11: Ruth “found favor” in Boaz’s eyes because she had previously found favor in God’s eyes.

Ruth 2:10 "Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I [am] a stranger?"

“A foreigner”: Ruth remained ever mindful that she was an alien and, as such, must conduct herself humbly. Possibly she had knowledge of (Deut. 23:3-4). She acknowledged the grace (literally “favor”) of Boaz.

She humbly says she does not understand why he has chosen her to bless. She bows herself before him to show her humbleness. She realizes that Boaz is showing her special favor. She has never met him before, so it is difficult for her to understand.

Ruth 2:11 "And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and [how] thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore."

“Fully been showed me”: This speaks to both Naomi’s quickness to speak kindly of Ruth and Boaz’s network of influence in Beth-lehem. Ruth remained true to her promise (1:16-17).

Besides her being a very beautiful woman, who caught his eye, he has great admiration for her attitude toward Naomi. He realizes that Ruth had given up much to come to this strange land to help her mother-in-law.

Verses 12-16: Boaz saw Ruth in her need, as a widow without resources and as a woman who had endured hardship, and blessed her (2:12). He then welcomed this impoverished, despised foreigner by personally giving her his food, demonstrating to any onlooker that Ruth should be treated with respect and kindness. He further provided for her by telling his workers to “purposely” leave extra gleanings for her. His actions revealed Boaz as a man of pity, of prayer, of provision and of protection.

Ruth 2:12 "The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."

Boaz's appreciation of Ruth's kindness strikes a similar chord in his own feelings. He recognizes his opportunity to give protection and provision as would the "God" in whom this young Moabitess had only recently "come to trust."

"Wings ... come to trust": Scripture pictures God as catching Israel up on His wings in the Exodus (Exodus 19:4; Deut. 32:11). God is here portrayed as a mother bird sheltering the young and fragile with her wings (Psalms 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:1, 4). Boaz blessed Ruth in light of her newfound commitment to and dependence on the Lord. Later, he would become God's answer to this prayer (compare 3:9).

Boaz is aware and is telling the beautiful maiden, that God is with her. He knows that God is blessing Ruth in every way. It appears to me, that Boaz has special feelings toward Ruth already. He not only thinks she is beautiful, but is appreciative of her character as well. Boaz speaks a blessing upon her when he says, "The LORD recompense thy work". One of the words that could have been translated here for recompense, is prosper. It seems that Ruth has learned to put her trust in the LORD.

Ruth 2:13 "Then she said, Let me find favor in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens."

Or rather, since she had found favor in his sight already. The words are to be considered, not as a wish for it, but as acknowledging it, and expressing her faith and confidence, that she should, for time to come, find favor in his sight, and have other instances of it. For so the words may be rendered, "Let me find favor", for which she gives the following reasons.

"For that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid": Had spoken in her commendation, and wished her all happiness here and hereafter. Said kind and comfortable words to her, to her very heart, as in (Isa. 40:2), which were cheering, refreshing, and reviving to her.

"Though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens": Not worthy to be one of them, or to be ranked with them, being meaner than the meanest of them, a poor widow, and a Moabitish woman. The Septuagint and Syriac versions leave out the negative particle, and read, "I shall be as one of thine handmaids".

She thought it was an advantage to be a handmaiden of so kind a person as Boaz. She wanted to please Boaz. She knew that he had power to help her and Naomi in their need. She also was not assuming that she would get the same treatment as the Hebrew handmaidens.

Ruth 2:14 "And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched [corn], and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left."

"Vinegar": Sour wine, mixed with a little oil, used to quench thirst.

This was an invitation to eat with Boaz and the reapers. She accepted and ate with them. It seemed at the meal, Boaz passed the parched corn to her to eat with the bread. She left as soon as the meal was over. The vinegar here is speaking of the sour wine.

Ruth 2:15 "And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not:"

“Among the sheaves”: Boaz granted her request (2:7), to go beyond the letter of the law.

Boaz was making sure that Ruth could get all she needed for herself and for Naomi. His instructions for her to be allowed to glean of the sheaves, was the place where there would be more to glean. It really was instructions so she would have no problems, regardless of where she gleaned. He is showing great partiality to Ruth.

Verses 16-19: “Boaz’s” extraordinary goodness in seeing to it that Ruth had special privileges in the gleaning enabled her to gather several days’ supply in complete safety. Her “mother-in-law” recognized that Ruth must have received distinct favor from someone and wanted to know his name.

Ruth 2:16 "And let fall also [some] of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave [them], that she may glean [them], and rebuke her not."

That is, when they had reaped a handful, instead of laying it in its proper order, to be taken up by those that gathered after them. Or by themselves, in order to be bound up in sheaves, scatter it about, or let it fall where they reaped it.

"And leave [them], that she may glean them, and rebuke her not”: For taking them, as if she did a wrong thing.

He instructed his harvesters to leave some extra for her to pick up. Boaz is getting more and more generous to Ruth as the day goes on. The harvesters are instructed to make sure she has all she can carry.

Ruth 2:17 "So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley."

An “ephah of barley equated to 22-30 pounds. This represents a tremendous amount of grain left in the field. Boaz’s gracious generosity and Ruth’s hard work (2:7) paid off.

They beat the grain with a stick, or beat it against a rock to get the barley out. An Ephah would be 3 pecks of grain. This would feed these two ladies for a good while. She did not quit until the job was done. She was industrious, as well as of good character.

Ruth 2:18 "And she took [it] up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed."

“She had reserved: Not the gleaned grain, but rather the lunch ration which Ruth did not eat (compare 2:14).

It seems, when Ruth had eaten the corn that Boaz had given her, she saved some back to take to Naomi to eat. She gave that to Naomi, and brought the ephah of barley as well.

Verses 19-20 That Boaz, a close relative, “did take notice of” Ruth, encouraged Naomi to think that the Lord had “not forsaken His kindness” to them after all. God always sends someone to be His representative in response to the needs of His children.

Ruth 2:19 "And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned today? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day [is] Boaz."

In what part of the field of Bethlehem? Or on whose land, that she had gleaned so much? Not that she suspected that she had got it in an illicit manner, but supposed she had been directed by the providence of God to a spot of ground where there was good gleaning. Or that she had met with some hand that had dropped ears of corn plentifully in her favor.

"And where wroughtest thou?" Which is the same question repeated in other words, and shows that gleaning is a work, and a hard work too. Closely followed, to be stooping and picking up ears of corn a whole day together.

"Blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee": She knew by the quantity of corn she brought home, that she must have had kindness shown her by somebody. And especially she knew it by the food she brought home, and therefore pronounced the man blessed, or wished him happiness, before she knew who he was. Though perhaps she might guess at him, or conjecture in her mind who it was that had taken notice of her.

"And she showed her mother in law with whom she had wrought": That is, with whose reapers, men and maidens, she had wrought, whom she followed in gleaning, they working in one sort of work, and she in another, yet in the same field.

"The man's name with whom I wrought today is Boaz": That is, in whose field, and with whose servants, she wrought. For Boaz wrought not himself, unless this can be understood of her eating and drinking with him. But the other sense is best.

The mother-in-law is so pleased with what Ruth has brought back, she wants to know the details of her gleaning. She is aware that Ruth was greatly blessed with so much from one day's

gleaning. Naomi would well remember the name of Boaz. He was a close relative of her husband.

Ruth 2:20 "And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed [be] he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man [is] near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen."

“His kindness”: Naomi began to understand God’s sovereign working, covenant loyalty, lovingkindness and mercy toward her because Ruth, without human direction (2:3), found the near relative Boaz.

“One of our next kinsmen”: The great kinsman-redeemer theme of Ruth begins here (3:9, 12; 4:1, 3, 6, 8, 14). A close relative could redeem;

1. A family member sold into slavery (Lev. 25:47-49);
2. Land which needed to be sold under economic hardship (Lev. 25:23-28); and/or
3. The family name by virtue of a levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5-10).

This earthly custom pictures the reality of God the Redeemer doing a greater work (Psalms 19:14; 78:35; Isa. 41:14; 43:14), by reclaiming those who needed to be spiritually redeemed out of slavery to sin (Psalm 107:2; Isa. 62:12). Thus, Boaz pictures Christ, who as a Brother (Heb. 2:17), redeemed those who;

1. Were slaves to sin (Rom. 6:15-18);
2. Had lost all earthly possessions/privileges in the Fall (Gen. 3:17-19); and
3. Had been alienated by sin from God (2 Cor. 5:18-21).

Boaz stands in the direct line of Christ (Matt. 1:5; Luke 3:32). This turn of events marks the point where Naomi’s human emptiness (1:21), begins to be refilled by the Lord. Her night of earthly doubt has been broken by the dawning of new hope (Rom.8:28-39).

(See the note on 3:9).

Naomi speaks the blessing of God upon Boaz. She thinks Boaz has befriended Ruth in memory of her husband, Elimelech. She is undoubtedly aware that part of the reason he was so kind, is because he is struck by the beauty of Ruth. She is not only physically beautiful, but has inward beauty and manners as well. This is the first time that Ruth is aware that Boaz is their near-kinsman.

Ruth 2:21 "And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest."

Besides the favors he has shown me already, he has given me reason to expect more, for he has given me this strict order.

"Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest": Both barley harvest and wheat harvest; his will was, that she kept following them, and gleaned after them, as long as both harvests lasted. The Septuagint version is, "with my maidens", and which agrees with (Ruth 2:8), where the order of Boaz is expressed. And with the instructions of Naomi in the next verse, who so understood it; but if we understand it of young men here, there is no contradiction. For both young men and maidens wrought together in the same field, either in reaping or binding up. So that if she kept fast by the one, she also would do the same by the other.

Ruth hides nothing from Naomi. She tells her what Boaz said unto her. We see that Ruth was very pleased by the kindness Boaz has shown her. She appreciates him allowing her to come again and glean from the field, until harvest is over. She is especially pleased of being able to glean so near the harvesters, until the entire harvest is over. She will be able to get a great deal of needed food for herself and Naomi.

Ruth 2:22 "And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law, [It is] good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field."

"They meet thee not": Ruth the Moabitess would not be treated with such mercy and grace by strangers outside of the family.

Naomi realizes what Boaz is trying to do for them and encourages Ruth to stay and glean in that field, until harvest is completely over.

Ruth does just as her mother-in-law tells her. Naomi wants her to stay by the maidens to stay out of danger.

Ruth 2:23 "So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law."

"The end of ... harvest": Barley harvest usually began about mid-April and wheat harvest extended to mid-June, a period of intense labor for about two months. This generally coincided with the seven weeks between Passover and the Fast of Weeks, i.e., Pentecost (Lev. 23:15-16; Deut. 16:9-12).

Ruth did just as she was instructed of Naomi. The wheat harvest would extend this harvesting by over a month. It appears that Ruth spent a lot of time in the field of Boaz. Perhaps Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz would all welcome the opportunity of a casual meeting now and then. Ruth would undoubtedly see him, as he came to inspect the fields. We are not told of any home visits, but it would have been in order, since he was a near relative. She lived with Naomi and gleaned for both of them.

Ruth Chapter 2 Questions

1. Who was the wealthy kinsman of Naomi's husband?
2. What does "Boaz" mean?
3. What did Ruth say to Naomi, that she wanted to do to get them something to eat?
4. What is Ruth called in verse 2?
5. What was gleaning?
6. Who was allowed to glean?
7. Ruth was a Moabitess by _____, but a Hebrew by _____.
8. Who does Ruth want to find favor with?
9. What is "hap", in verse 3, speaking of?
10. Boaz came from _____.
11. How did he greet his workers?
12. What did Boaz ask the servant that was over the reapers?
13. What can we safely assume about Ruth?
14. How did the servant answer Boaz?
15. She had asked permission to _____.
16. What does Boaz call Ruth in verse 8?
17. What does he tell her to do?
18. What instructions does Boaz give the young men about Ruth?
19. Who is Ruth to stay near?
20. What humble statement does Ruth make in verse 10?
21. What has been told Boaz that makes him admire Ruth?
22. What blessing does Boaz speak on Ruth?
23. What did Boaz invite her to eat with him?
24. What special favor did Boaz tell his young men to show Ruth?
25. How long did she glean in the field that day?

26. How much barley did she get?
27. What special thing had Ruth saved for Naomi?
28. What questions did Naomi ask Ruth about her gleaning?
29. When does Ruth become aware that Boaz is their near-kinsman?
30. What does Naomi tell Ruth to do?
31. How long did Ruth glean from Boaz's fields?
32. What were some advantages, besides the food, they all received from the extended gleaning?
33. She lived with _____.