



## Lesson 92

# Ruth Marries Boaz

### Story Elements

- **Text:** Ruth 3:1-4:22
  - **Setting:** circa 1100 B.C. in Bethlehem
  - **Main Characters:** God, Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi
  - **Plot:** Naomi instructs Ruth on how to initiate a relationship with her kinsman redeemer Boaz.
- **Key word(s):** \_\_\_\_\_ (4:4, 6, 7)
  - **Climax:** *Ruth 4:5* Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.

### Laying at His Feet

1. (3:1-5) With the end of the barley harvest, Naomi saw an opportunity for Ruth to approach Boaz about his responsibility as a kinsman redeemer.
  - a. The harvested barley would be threshed in the evening (to take advantage of the evening breeze), after which the workers would sleep near the grain pile. “The threshing floor was usually out in the open, and so it was necessary for the owner or some trusty servant to \_\_\_\_\_ over the grain. Boaz ate his supper and slept at the far end of the grain pile. This practice continued throughout the centuries so long as threshed grain was kept outside in the open.”<sup>1</sup>
  - b. Naomi instructed Ruth to go to the post-threshing festivities and to watch where Boaz retired. Then, when it was dark, she was to lay down at Boaz’s feet *and he will tell thee what thou shalt do*.

NOTE → This scene seems almost scandalous. For a clearer understanding of this event, note:

- (1) Ruth was instructed to lay down at Boaz’s feet, not **next** to him. This was a servant’s position and an act of \_\_\_\_\_, not seduction.
- (2) Ruth’s stealthy approach was on account of her need to speak with him in \_\_\_\_\_, and her equally stealthy exit (cf. 3:14) was because “if this matter should take wind, it might prejudice the freedom of the other kinsman’s choice, and he would make this his reason for refusing Ruth, that Boaz and she had been together.”<sup>2</sup>
- (3) Boaz asked Ruth to stay the night for her own \_\_\_\_\_ (3:13), not for romantic reasons. The previous stories in the book of Judges illustrate the necessity of not venturing out after dark.

### Spreading Over His Skirt

2. (3:6-7) Ruth followed Naomi’s instructions and laid down at Boaz’s feet.
  - a. (3:8-9) Sometime in the middle of the night, Boaz awoke suddenly and discovered someone was sleeping at his feet. Ruth answered his startled inquiry, *I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near \_\_\_\_\_*.

APPLICATION → “The expression ‘spread the corner of your garment’ implies protection, and here signifies protection of a conjugal nature. When marriages were solemnized among the Israelites, the man threw the skirt of his *talith* or robe over his wife and covered her head with it.”<sup>3</sup>

Matthew Henry paints this scene with gospel colors: “Thus must we by faith apply ourselves to Jesus Christ as our next kinsman, that is able to redeem us, come under his wings, as we are invited (Mt. 23:37), and beg of

<sup>1</sup> James M. Freeman and Harold J. Chadwick, *Manners & Customs of the Bible* (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1998), 202.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 378.

<sup>3</sup> Freeman

him to *spread his skirt over us*. 'Lord Jesus, take me into thy covenant and under thy care. *I am oppressed, undertake for me,*'<sup>4</sup>

- b. (3:10-11) *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*. By this, Boaz meant that Ruth's virtue was not only exemplified in her loyalty to her mother-in-law, but in her seeking to remarry according to her husband's lineage and not according to her own personal \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. (3:12-15) But there was another man closer in relation to Elimelech's family than Boaz. This nearer kinsman must have right of first \_\_\_\_\_. Boaz assured Ruth that he would settle the affair the following day, and he dismissed her early in the morning with another generous ration of grain.

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## Plucking off His Shoe

- 3. (4:1-4) Boaz went to the city gate (where official business was conducted) and hailed the nearer kinsman. Boaz informed the man that he was next in line to redeem land that Naomi's husband had owned.<sup>5</sup>
  - a. (4:5-6) The man initially wanted to purchase Elimelech's property, but when he learned that he must also redeem (marry) Ruth he declined, wishing not to \_\_\_\_\_ his own inheritance (to decrease how much his current offspring would get if more children were born to Ruth).

NOTE → "Some have supposed from the association of the *go'el* with marriage...that it was his duty to marry the widow of a deceased kinsman. But according to Deuteronomy 25:5, **this duty was only obligatory on a brother-in-law, and one who was living with his deceased brother and his wife**. Boaz had no such relation to Ruth, and was not obliged to marry her<sup>6</sup>...Also, there is no evidence that the unnamed kinsman spoken of by Boaz was a brother-in-law to Ruth."<sup>7</sup> That is, the brother-in-law was obligated to marry the childless widow, and then had the opportunity to redeem property - but any other relative had an opportunity to redeem property but would then be obligated to marry the widow.

- b. (4:7-10) Upon the other kinsman's declination, his shoe was symbolically plucked off, and Boaz redeemed Elimelech's property and married Mahlon's widow.
  - c. (4:11-12) The city elders shared their well-wishes with Boaz and his new wife Ruth, praying, *The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of \_\_\_\_\_*.
- 4. (4:13-17) Ruth and Boaz were indeed blessed with a child which they named Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, the grandfather of David, and part of the lineage of the \_\_\_\_\_.

APPLICATION → The story of Ruth is a beautiful depiction of the mercy and grace of God who *raiseth up the poor out of the dust, And lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; That he may set him with princes, Even with the princes of his people*. Psalm 113:7, 8

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**Answer Key:** Key word(s): redeemer • 1. a. keep watch; → humility; private; safety • 2. a. kinsman; b. wishes; c. refusal • 3. a. mar; c. Israel • 4. Messiah

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<sup>4</sup> Henry

<sup>5</sup> Probably the land was mortgaged, an indication that Elimelech fled Bethlehem because the famine had made him financially insolvent.

<sup>6</sup> Boaz did not marry Ruth out of obligation but out of love.

<sup>7</sup> Freeman, 202–203.