

**SEARCHING FOR CHRIST IN THE BOOK OF RUTH
THE ROMANCE OF REDEMPTION
YAHWEH'S PREPARATION FOR HIS TRUE KING**

**Ruth, chapter 2 / Fullness and Friendship
Ruth finds favor in Boaz's fields [and also in his sight]**

I | INTRODUCTION / CONNECTIONS / CONTEXT

1 / FLASHBACK: before we even get started on this lesson, I want to 'flashback' to some previous comments we have made about Moab and Moabites. The Writer names Moab or identifies Ruth as a Moabite 13 times in this short story. I have told you before that the very mention of or reference to the name had a visceral 'cringe-factor' for Israelites. Let's just refresh our minds how an Israelite would have associated the mention of this name:

[1] **Genesis 19.30-38**: the Moabites descended from a sordid incestuous conception plot between Lot and his daughters following their fleeing burning Sodom.

[2] **Numbers 22-24**: Balak, king of Moab, is the one who hired Balaam to come and curse the Israelites when they arrived in his regions [but Yahweh turned it into blessing...]

[3] **Numbers 25**: when the cursing of the Israelites failed, Balaam then advised the king of Moab to seduce the men of Israel with their daughters | 24,000 Israelites died in the ensuing plague

[4] **Deuteronomy 23.3-6**: at this same time, they refused to meet the Israelites with bread and water when they came out of Egypt into their regions – Yahweh forbade them entrance into the assembly for ten generations.

[5] **Judges 3.12-14**: since the story of Ruth happened 'when the judges ruled,' the eighteen years of oppression from Eglon king of Moab would have been fresh in their memories.

2 / AND YET – Yahweh loves Ruth and chooses her to be in the lineage and genealogy of His Messiah [Matthew 1.5-6] by redeeming her through marriage to Boaz [Ruth 4.13-22] – see chapter 1.22...

3 / We would do well to examine our own hearts and the ways we look at and evaluate other groups of people ... to see if we allow ourselves to entertain 'cringe-factors' toward any person or groups of persons that are contrary to the ways God sees them and evaluates them. See 1 Corinthians 6.9-11 & James 2.1-13 & Revelation 5.9-10.

II | PLEASE KEEP IN MIND...

1 / Our focus and theme for this study is: **SEARCHING FOR CHRIST IN THE BOOK OF RUTH / THE ROMANCE OF REDEMPTION / YAHWEH'S PREPARATION FOR HIS TRUE KING!**

2 / We can't – and we won't try – to explore or expound every detail or lesson that is in this rich little story ... we want to focus on our main theme and search...

3 / We don't know who the human narrator is of this book – but we do know who the Divine Author is: He is God, or more specifically 'the Spirit of Christ who was in them' [see 1 Peter 1.10-12].

4 / God knows where He is going – both in the orchestration and preparation of the unfolding events of this part of human history and His unfolding historical/redemptive metanarrative ... and also in the writing of the Story that will prepare us to recognize Christ when He comes 'in the fullness of time.'

5 / Therefore, what we are witnessing and studying is a 'pre-enactment' of the coming of Jesus Christ into our world: [1] who He will be born from [human family and lineage]; [2] what roles He will fulfill ['Redeemer']; [3] what ministry He will perform: *save His people from their sins [including 'the nations' & Gentiles: compare Ruth's recognition of her 'foreigner' status in 2.10 with Yahweh's Gospel promise to include those same 'foreigners' in Isaiah 56.6-8], and *give them 'rest' [Ruth 2.12; 3.18].

III | SO, LET'S SEE HOW GOD CONTINUES TO 'PRE-ENACT' THE 'STORY OF JESUS' IN CHAPTER 2!

The narrator is pointing our attention to the sovereign and gracious Providence of God by setting up some contrasting themes:

1 / Emptiness and Fullness – Naomi registers her bitter complaints against God in **ch 1.20**: **“I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty...”** – and yet she has no idea just how FULL the LORD is preparing to make her again. But, by the time we get to the end of the narrative, we find out! **see ch 4.13-17**. We would do well here to quote that instructive and inspiring hymn of William Cowper—both to Naomi and also to ourselves:

- **God moves in a mysterious way / His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea / And rides upon the storm.**
- **Deep in unfathomable mines / Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs / And works His sovereign will.**
- **Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; / The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break / In blessings on your head.**
- **Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, / But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence / He hides a smiling face.**
- **His purposes will ripen fast, / Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste, / But sweet will be the flower.**
- **Blind unbelief is sure to err / And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter, / And He will make it plain.**

2 / Famine and Harvest – chapter 1 begins with **famine in the land of Bethlehem [*House of Bread*] [v 1]** ... and now **the LORD has given them food again [v. 6]** ... and the LORD has brought them back [*‘returned them’*]: [1] to a specific place [**Bethlehem**]; [2] at a specific season of time [**beginning of barley harvest**]; [3] and here in **chapter 2**, we’ll see how He directs their very physical steps to a specific field where Ruth and Boaz can meet [**ch 2.3**]...because... Ruth and Boaz will have to meet / before Boaz can have the opportunity to redeem her and Naomi / and they can marry / and have a child / who will be the grandfather of David / who will be the royal Covenant progenitor of Christ! [**see Matthew 1.1, 5-6**]

IV | HOW DOES GOD MAKE THAT HAPPEN?

1 / v 1 | God prepares and introduces Boaz to be His ‘pre-enactment’ of Christ, our Redeemer

Note how the narrator sets up Boaz as a qualified ‘redeemer’ [**Hb: *go-el***] because that is his Divinely-appointed role he is going to fulfill as a ‘pre-enactment’ motif for **Christ, our Redeemer**. [1] **Naomi had a relative of her husband’s**; [2] **a worthy man** [great in personal character and qualifying wealth] the same word is used of Ruth in **ch 3.11** in the sense of the Godliness, virtue, beauty, and ‘worthiness’ of her character. [**This is the word for the ‘virtuous / excellent’ wife in Proverbs 31.10.**]; [3] **of the clan of Elimelech** [a necessary, qualifying relationship]; [4] **whose name was Boaz**.

2 / v 2 | God puts in Ruth’s heart and desires to assume responsibility to help provide for her and Naomi. Ruth expresses not only her covenant love for Naomi, but a courageous love!

[1] God had commanded and provided for the feeding of the poor, sojourners, widows, and orphans from the ‘gleanings’ of their harvests [**see Leviticus 19.9-10; 23.22; Deuteronomy 24.19-22**].

[2] More than that – God commanded them to treat the oppressed and the sojourners among them the same ways He treated them when they were in that same condition [**see Deuteronomy 10.12-22**].

3 / v 3 | God directs Ruth’s path that day to the field of His sovereignly-chosen ‘redeemer’

[1] Yes, **‘she happened...’** to come to this specific plot of harvest-field – but does anyone doubt God’s sovereign and Providential direction of her steps and path? [**see, for example: Genesis 24.26-27;**

Proverbs 3.5-6]. *“Such commentary subtly points to the Lord’s providential hand at work. Indeed, we might picture a certain twinkle in the narrator’s eye in writing these words, knowing that the attentive reader/listener will soon interpret Ruth’s arrival to Boaz’s field as evidence of the Lord’s sovereign grace, not mere circumstance.”* Mary Willson Hannah, *ESV Expository Commentary*.

[2] Note also how the narrator reminds us *again* of Boaz’s relationship with Elimelech—this is a continuing thread/theme of this Book: **redeemer/redemption!**

4 / vv 4-7 | God Providentially directs Boaz to visit this specific portion of his harvest-fields that day

- Take note of Boaz’s greetings and interactions with his reapers and what it says about his character and especially about his spiritual faith in YHWH: **“And behold Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, ‘The LORD be with you!’ And they answered, ‘The LORD bless you.’”** Again, the narrator is pointing us to Boaz’s personal faith and covenant loyalty to Yahweh, the God of Israel. *“This exchange portrays Boaz’s godly leadership in cultivating a gracious work environment, especially by seeking the Lord’s blessed presence among his supervisees.”* [Hannah]. It’s like a glistening jewel of covenant faithfulness to Yahweh in the moral and spiritual dunghill of the surrounding culture. In the day when the prevailing rule of the majority, mainstream culture was **“And in those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes”** [Judges 21.25; Ruth 1.1], Boaz was like a throwback to Joshua’s confession: **“And if it is evil in your eyes to serve The LORD, choose this day whom you will serve ... But as for me and my house, we will serve The LORD!”** [Joshua 24.15, 31; Judges 2.6-10].
- Boaz’s questions re: **‘Whose young woman is this?’** is only an acknowledgement that he doesn’t recognize her from among the other Bethlehem villagers and residents. As if to ask: *“Whose family is she from? What family does she belong to?”*
- When the foreman associates her with Naomi, Boaz immediately recognizes her family connection—and he will identify with her, at least by association!
- And, Boaz is very interested! His heart is drawn to Ruth and Naomi—he begins to exercise not only his public social responsibility, but more personally, a family responsibility toward Ruth and Naomi. And, even as the narrator wants to start subtly revealing, Boaz is taking a personal attraction and interest in Ruth! *This Divinely-appointed and -orchestrated Romance of Redemption is beginning to blossom!*

5 / vv 8-12 | God opens up Boaz’s heart of responsibility, sympathy, compassion, and even the beginnings of affection toward Ruth

There are actually four conversations between Boaz and Ruth sub-set into this exchange:

[1] Boaz to Ruth, vv 8-9

- Boaz appeals to Ruth to continue returning back to his fields to glean [with a subtle, implied commitment to see that she is adequately **provided for...both in grain and water**]
- He also promises her **protection** by charging the young men not to touch or harass her. And as we have seen from our previous study in Judges, this warning was appropriate given the immoral climate of their surrounding society!

[2] Ruth to Boaz, v 10

- Ruth expresses her humility, respect, and gratitude for Boaz’s **favor**—his offers of hospitality and grace – she recognizes that she is a **‘foreigner’** with no ‘rights’ other than those commanded by the law for social conduct, like gleaning. [NOTE also the narrator’s repetition of **‘favor’** in vv 2, 10. **Favor** is what she set out this morning to look for—and now she has found it!]
- But, he is going way above and beyond merely what the law requires. He is showing her extreme grace! *Boaz is not a ‘minimalist’ when it comes to faithfulness to Yahweh’s law!*

[3] Boaz to Ruth, vv 11-12

- Boaz recognizes not only her human and family love shown to her mother-in-law, Naomi, but also her profession of faith and commitment to Yahweh, the God of Israel. **“The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by The LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!”** [This image will come up again in ch 3.9...]
- He recognizes her as a sister in their mutual covenant faith, a fellow heir in the covenant, and a recipient of God’s grace!

[4] Ruth to Boaz, v 13

- Ruth finally acknowledges her indebtedness to Boaz for his gracious favor: **“I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant...”**
- and, in addition to identifying herself as a ‘foreigner’ [v 10], she now also calls herself ‘your servant,’ though not one of his native-born, citizen-servants—in itself, a promotion of status!

6 / vv 14-16 | God moves Boaz even further to invite and accept Ruth into his own personal and intimate fellowship [*Much as Jesus did when He said to His disciples: “No longer do I call you servants ... but I have called you friends...” (John 15.15).*]

- He shares his own meal with her: **“Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine...”**
- He personally serves her: **“So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain...”**
- He feeds her until she is not just satisfied, but has leftovers to take home [NOTE how the ‘fullness’ theme continues to be drawn out]: **“And she ate until she was satisfied, and ... some left over...”**
- He commands his reapers to purposely **“pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her!”**
- He commands his reapers to respect her and treat her graciously: **“...and do not reproach her...rebuke her.”**

IS NOT ALL THIS – AND SO MUCH MORE – WHAT CHRIST HAS GIVEN AND DONE FOR US BY HIS COMING AND IN HIS GOSPEL? SEE JOHN 1.16: “FOR FROM HIS FULLNESS WE HAVE ALL RECEIVED, GRACE UPON GRACE!”

7 / vv 17-23 | God begins to reveal His sovereign covenant mercies of grace to Naomi ... as she begins to recognize the unfolding of Yahweh’s plan and provision of her redemption

[1] Boaz not only generously supplied Ruth with grain in the field, but he also loaded up her ‘go box’ to take home with her to Naomi. When Naomi saw the exceeding generosity with which Ruth had been treated, she obviously wanted to know where and by whom this grace had been received

- **“Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!”**

[2] When Ruth names Boaz, Naomi can’t contain her excitement and enthusiasm—she immediately recognizes Boaz as well-qualified to be her ‘redeemer’ [*go-el*]¹—if only he will be willing!

- She blesses Boaz in the Name of Yahweh: **“May he be blessed by The LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!”** She recognizes his ‘*hesed*’ or covenant/steadfast love.
- She exclaims, **“The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers!”**

[3] Obviously, Naomi charges and encourages Ruth to continue to receive the benefits of Boaz’s gracious overtures of grace and provision.

[4] Verse 23 highlights BOTH Boaz’s continued generosity to Ruth and Naomi “until the end of the barley and wheat harvests” AND Ruth’s committed ‘steadfast love’ to her mother-in-law—AND ALL OF THIS FROM YAHWEH’S PURPOSE AND PROVISION TO ‘REDEEM’ THEM...AND US...THROUGH THE COVENANT KING YET TO BE BORN AND ANNOUNCED!

BUT NAOMI HAS YET OTHER AND MORE PLANS FOR THE SECURITY OF THEIR FUTURES TO COME! AND SO DOES GOD!