

Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing Floor – Part 3

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Ruth goes to the threshing floor to convince Boaz to become her wife and redeemer
2. aim – to cause us to seek the true redeemer, the One who possesses all of what we need
3. passage – Ruth 3:1-18

b. outline

1. The Realization of Naomi (Ruth 3:1-5)
2. The Request of Ruth (Ruth 3:6-9)
3. The Response of Boaz (Ruth 3:10-18)

c. opening

1. **(again)** the **strangeness** of this chapter (read vv. 10-14)
 - a. like the request of Naomi in vv. 1-5 as rather *forward* or *pushy*
 - b. like the approach of Ruth in vv. 6-9 as rather *different* or *obscure* (e.g. “spread your wings”)
 - c. **there is a “strangeness” in Boaz’s response that is often overlooked in reading the story, especially when we read it through the lens of our presuppositions**
 1. strangeness = the tendency to read the Bible with our presuppositions guiding how we “see” the text, and the (sometimes) contradictory revelation that comes when we truly **exegete** it
 2. e.g. seeing this book as a “romantic novel,” expecting it to be a great love story between a young, foreign girl and a kind, rich stranger, who meet, fall in love, and marry
 - d. so **(once again)** we will walk through the story and “glean” its details, looking for relevant theological topics and their application to us today

III. The Response of Boaz (Ruth 3:10-18)

Content

a. Boaz responds to the request (vv. 10-11)

1. “*may you be blessed by the Lord*” – echoing his own statement in 2:12
 - a. **IOW:** that the Lord would (indeed) bless you *through me*
 - b. Boaz had “invited” Ruth to accept his generosity as the *means* through which she could be blessed
 - c. so, Boaz *now* indicates **(by implication, see below)** that he intends to fulfill the request
2. “*my daughter*” – a *qualifier* to the statement which reveals much about his intentions (**see also 3:11**)
 - a. **note:** here is where the “strangeness” begins – why does Boaz refer to Ruth as his *daughter*?
 1. since you don’t (typically!) marry your daughter, what is Boaz *actually* alluding to here?
 2. or, if we read this story as a “romantic novel,” we may overlook the significance of this word
 - b. Boaz intends to take the role of a **father-figure** to Ruth in answering her request
 1. **remember:** Naomi had originally tried to send her daughters-in-law back to their “*mother’s house*” (1:8) in order to find “*rest*” (i.e. the security, protection and provision of a husband; 3:1)
 2. the duty of a parent was to raise a daughter and then find her a husband (in ancient Israel)
 - c. so, Boaz is stepping up as a *father-figure* to serve Ruth in providing her with a husband
 1. true, *he* will become that husband (and desires to be so), but he is approaching this duty *more* as a father-figure than as a romantic partner (and the next statement proves that ...)
3. “*you have made this last kindness ...*” = a statement which demonstrates **(IMO)** the above truth
 - a. **possible:** that Boaz is *flattered* that Ruth would come to *him* for marriage (“romantic novel”)
 1. **i.e.** that Ruth did not go after “*young men*,” but (rather) came to him
 - a. implying that Boaz was a bit older or less “eligible” as a husband
 - b. so, he feels flattered by the fact that Ruth would seek him as a husband (**maybe ...**)
 - b. **probable:** that Boaz sees Ruth’s request as magnanimous towards Naomi
 1. “*first kindness*” = a reference back to his own words to Ruth about her support of Naomi (2:11)
 - a. that Ruth was willing to leave everything familiar and follow Naomi to a foreign land
 2. “*last kindness*” = a reference to Ruth *taking care of Naomi in this request*
 - a. **i.e.** not a kindness *to Boaz*, but a kindness *to Naomi*
 3. **IOW:** that Ruth did not just go and seek her own “rest” by choosing from among the “*young men*” available (“*whether poor or rich*”), leaving Naomi to fend for herself

- a. rather, she put *Naomi's interests in all matters above her own* – she has unselfishly sought a way for Naomi to be taken care of (through her)
 - b. Boaz recognizes this unselfishness, thus he wishes to be the instrument through which Ruth can bring such rest to her mother-in-law
4. “*I will do for you ... for ... you are a worthy woman*” = his pledge based on her character
- a. “*worthy*” – the same word used to describe Boaz in **2:1** = either a person of wealth and pedigree (obviously not Ruth!) or a person of *noble character*
 - b. “*my fellow townsmen know*” = everyone in the community knows what kind of woman she is
 - c. **IOW**: Boaz pledges to take on the role of father-figure in order to be the means through which Ruth’s selfless provision for Naomi is realized – her reputation makes this important to do!
5. **question**: why do people *come to Jesus*; how do they *perceive* Jesus such that they wish to be “connected” to him somehow?
- a. **reality**: there is a “romanticized” version of Jesus that permeates much of western Christianity
 - 1. a perception of “Jesus” as one who loves us (in that modern, emotional-connection sort-of way)
 - a. **i.e.** he wants to “take care of us” and he wants us to (primarily) “take care of” others
 - 2. a perception of “Jesus” that ignores the *real* Jesus found in the Gospels – a Jesus who infuriates the religious leadership, drives away people who come to him, demands absolute self-sacrifice to be his disciple, and focuses his entire ministry upon a bloody cross
 - b. **principle: to come to the biblical Jesus, we must drop our “romanticized” notions of why we come to him – we must come to him on his terms and for what he offers**
 - 1. **IOW**: our presuppositions of Jesus must not cause us to lose the *real reason* we come to him:
 - 2. **to seek him as the savior of our souls, not just the lover of our lives**
 - 3. that he might be **our redeemer** – that he might rescue us from our *primary problem*: death!
- b. Boaz reveals an issue (vv. 12-13)**
- 1. “*there is a redeemer nearer than I*” = there is another relative in the family line that has a “higher” position in the **Levirate Marriage** structure than Boaz
 - a. **note**: we are unsure of 1) what relation Boaz is to Elimelech (**i.e.** where he fits into the family tree), and 2) what the rules were regarding the transmission of responsibility within the family
 - b. and, according to **4:7**, there are a number of “*customs*” that are unknown in this process
 - c. however, Boaz knows this structure and admits before Ruth that he is not the *first choice* legally
 - 2. “*if he will redeem you, good; let him do it*” = if this other relative wishes to do this, I will surrender
 - a. **note (again)**: this goes to show that Boaz is acting as a **father-figure** – his concern is *much more* for Ruth’s needs over his own (**i.e.** if Boaz was only in this for “love,” why would he say this?)
 - 3. “*but, if he is not willing ... I will redeem you*” = (again) he pledges to do this if called upon to do so
 - a. **IOW**: Boaz’s pledge recognizes the **barrier** that stands in the way, but he is willing to do *whatever it takes* to accomplish the redemption of Ruth (even if that means getting out of the way himself!)
- c. Boaz seals his promise (vv. 14-18)**
- 1. “*lie down until the morning*” = do not rush off in the dark; stay here until it is safe to go home
 - a. **note**: clearly no “inappropriate” activity is implied – it may be Boaz’s way of showing his *sincerity* by demonstrating purely “gentlemanly” behavior towards her for the rest of the night
 - b. **or, a metaphor: rest in me ...**
 - 2. “*let it not be known that the woman came ...*” = a caution to Ruth to protect her reputation
 - a. **note**: it is strangely written in English (**i.e.** as though Boaz is speaking to someone else)
 - 1. but, it is highly likely that Boaz says this *directly* to Ruth; it’s probably a translation issue only
 - b. Ruth coming to the threshing floor (esp. at night!) *could be perceived* by others as *inappropriate*
 - 1. **i.e.** given that the village knows her as a “worthy” woman, this visit could ruin that reputation
 - c. so, Boaz instructs Ruth to keep this visit quiet
 - 3. he gives to Ruth “*six measures of barley*” to take back to Naomi
 - a. **possibly**: Boaz gives Ruth this grain as simply another kindness – she hadn’t gleaned much and was still in need, so he grabbed some of his freshly-threshed grain and sent it home with her
 - b. **probably**: Boaz gives Ruth this *as a pledge* towards the promise that he made
 - 1. **note**: the author does not put this on the lips of Boaz, but Ruth recounts what he said when he gave her the grain: “*you must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law*” (**v. 17**)
 - 2. **IOW**: the grain is a pledge of promise *to Naomi* – because the request of Ruth is *actually* for the long-term care of Naomi, Boaz sends the grain back to her to show his good intentions
 - 3. and, Naomi “confirms” this by instructing Ruth to “*wait ... until you learn how the matter turns out*” – **i.e.** let’s see how Boaz “*settles the matter today*” – there is nothing else to do until we see if Boaz will keep his promise

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d. the connection to Christ as redeemer

1. **question:** when we do come to this Jesus, *for the right reason (i.e. for our redemption)*, how does he respond to us – how does he (as the *ultimate* redeemer) parallel Boaz in his response?
 - a. Christ knows the **motives** of why we come (just as Boaz recognized Ruth's selflessness in coming to him not for herself, but for her mother-in-law)
 1. have we come to him seeking *what he offers*, rather than what *we think* he should give us?
 2. have we come to him *in humility*, recognizing that we have nowhere else to turn?
 - b. Christ overcomes the **barriers** that are necessary to redeem us (just as Boaz knew that there was another family member in a higher position than himself, yet still promised to help)
 1. the "barrier" of the eternal Son of God stepping down from his eternal glory, robing himself in the limitations of fleshly existence, enduring the reality of living (sinlessly) in this world, and voluntarily giving himself over to a cruel instrument of death
 2. the "barrier" of fallen men looking to their own religiosity or morality or good intentions, all of which blind them to their need to come to him with an "empty hand" of faith and repentance, which he overcomes by sending his Spirit to draw them effectually to himself
 - c. Christ makes a **pledge** for those he redeems (just as Boaz made a pledge *through* Ruth to her mother-in-law, which confirmed his plans and secured their success)
 1. the pledge of the Resurrection – his "six measures" of hope that secures that those who belong to him will *also* be raised from the dead – that they will be redeemed from their "great need"
 2. the pledge of the Spirit – his "six measures" of help that secures the elect will never be lost – the presence of Christ himself in the lives of his people to see them safely through the judgment
 - d. **Christ is the one who gives true "rest" (Matthew 11:27-30)**

"All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."