

Ruth is Introduced to Boaz – Part 1

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Ruth is introduced to Boaz, who shows great kindness to her, a foreigner and widow
2. aim – to cause us to recognize the immeasurable kindness of God in his providence towards us
3. passage – Ruth 2:1-23

b. outline

2. The Gleaning of Ruth (Ruth 2:1-7)
2. The Introduction of Boaz (Ruth 2:8-16)
3. The Report to Naomi (Ruth 2:17-23)

c. opening

1. the **focal character** of the book
 - a. (**again**) Naomi is the *central* character of the book – it's really about her ...
 1. **note:** this chapter both begins and ends with a reference to Naomi
 - b. but ... Ruth is the **focal** character of the book because of three (3) specific events within it:
 1. her response of faithfulness to the God of Naomi (**previously**) in **1:15-18**
 2. her kindness towards Boaz following his kindness towards her in **chaps. 2-3**
 3. her place as the mother of Obed and the great-grandmother of David in **chap. 4**
 4. so, this chapter turns to focus on Ruth specifically, setting up the events of **chaps. 3-4**
2. the **structure** of the chapter
 - a. the chapter is divisible by the individuals around whom the story revolves:
 1. first, Ruth as she goes out to glean; second, Boaz as he is kind to Ruth; finally, Naomi as she hears the report of Ruth and recognizes the place and importance of Boaz
 - b. so ... we will work through the storyline (**i.e.** what is happening) verse-by-verse, discussing certain *theological* realities that appear along the way (**i.e.** as a running commentary)

I. The Gleaning of Ruth (Ruth 2:1-7)

Content

a. the introduction of Boaz (v. 1)

1. the first verse is an insertion by the author of a *fact* that frames the rest of the story
 - a. **i.e.** a *parenthetical note* that tells us something that we need to know in *reading* the story – it is *not* an indication of what Ruth knows or what Naomi has *told* Ruth before she goes out
 - b. **LOW:** the writer frames the story around the fact that Ruth *does not know about* Boaz
 1. the phrase “*in whose sight I shall find favor*” in **v. 2** is an indication that Ruth hopes to glean in fields where the owner is *favorable* to that, and allows her to keep what she gleaned
 2. the phrase “*and she happened to come*” in **v. 3** is an indication that Ruth gleaned in *many* fields, and only “happened” onto the field of Boaz *in the process of moving from field to field*
 3. the phrase “*where did you glean today*” in **v. 19** seems to indicate that Ruth *was not* sent specifically to the fields of Boaz nor to him in particular
 4. the phrase “*the man is a close relative of ours*” in **v. 20** sounds like an exclamation of *discovery*, that Ruth had happened upon someone that *only now* reminds Naomi of her relative
2. the first verse tells us about:
 - a. the relationship of Boaz to Elimelech, thus to Naomi (his surviving spouse) – he is a “*relative*”
 1. we are not told exactly what *kind* of relative he is (**i.e.** an uncle, cousin, or close in the clan)
 2. given that there is a redeemer that is “*nearer*” (**3:12**), it is probable that Boaz is not an uncle or cousin, but simply someone in the clan close enough to be a property redeemer
 - b. the character of Boaz as an Israelite – he is a “*worthy*” man
 1. which can mean he is wealthy (**i.e.** as a landowner), or that he is a man of good character
 2. the flow of the story *clearly* indicates that he was a wealthy landowner (with a *supervisor*)
 3. the term can also mean that he was one that (in his context) knew Yahweh and lived for him
 - a. **e.g.** the greeting he gives the reapers (**v. 4**) seems to indicate that (**see below**)
3. so, the first verse sets the stage for the rest of the story – Ruth goes out to glean for survival and winds up in the fields of a good man who eventually becomes Naomi's redeemer and Ruth's husband

b. the gleaning of Ruth (vv. 2-3)

1. Ruth seeks permission from Naomi to go and glean (or simply announces she is going)
 - a. being newly arrived from Moab (at the time of the harvest; **1:22**) they would not have any food stores from which to draw – and (probably) very little money to purchase food
 - b. **note:** the story does not indicate that *Naomi* went out to glean (**i.e.** due to age, pride, depression?)
2. Ruth goes to glean in the fields
 - a. gleaning = the process of “cleaning” a field after harvest of any grain left behind (**note Kansas**)
 1. the Law specifically commanded harvesters to leave the “edges” of the field unharvested for the poor, the sojourner, the orphan, and the widow (**Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19**) – a provision which reminded the Israelites that they had once been slaves in Egypt (**see below**)
 - b. since the Israelites had been confined to the hill country during this time (**see Judges 1:27-36**), their fields would generally be small and rocky, so Ruth would have to work many of them
 - c. since it was harvest time, Ruth would (probably) be competing with others for the gleanings
 - d. **IOW:** this would be difficult, back-breaking work that would yield little (**see vv. 15-16**)
 1. but it reveals more of the character of Ruth – **i.e.** her devotion to her mother-in-law to work as such is a great juxtaposition to the response of Naomi to *her* circumstances

c. the appearance of Boaz (vv. 4-7)

1. Boaz arrives from Bethlehem – probably to get a report on the progress of the harvest
 - a. **note:** he has a “young man” supervising the reapers (**v. 6**); this is probably not for oversight
2. Boaz greets the reapers in a way that signifies his knowledge of and devotion to Yahweh
 - a. “*the LORD be with you*” = may Yahweh give you the strength needed to carry out this task
 - b. they respond “*the LORD bless you*” = may Yahweh make your harvest bountiful (for all to do well)
 1. “*bless*” = to make your life and work fruitful (**e.g. Genesis 1:28**)
 - a. the foundational “*blessing*” of God to the human race is to “*be fruitful and multiply*” – the *primordial* command given to Adam and Eve was to reproduce, fill the earth with people, and use the resources of the earth to advance human flourishing in all its aspects
 - b. the work of growing and harvesting food is part of this primordial command – the curse of God upon Adam would *hinder* this ability, but not remove it
 - c. **IOW:** the blessing of God is such that he *still* provides for the human race through the *ordinary means* of planting and cultivating and harvesting (and, in this case, gleaning)
 1. this is why Jesus includes “*give us this day our daily bread*” in the Disciples Prayer
 2. we rely upon the *grace of God* in providing even our basic necessities
 2. **note:** the statement amounts to a bit of **foreshadowing** – the “fruitfulness” of Boaz will be God bringing through him a child of destiny (**applied below**)
 - c. Boaz represents a man whose connection to God results in *God-like behaviors* (**see next**)
3. Boaz takes notice of Ruth
 - a. he asks “*whose*” young woman is this – who does this woman work for? (**i.e.** is she a hired worker, is she a slave, is she married and working for her husband, or is she “independent?”)
 1. **IOW:** how Boaz will respond to her is *entirely* based on the answer to this question
 - b. the “young man” answers with several pieces of information:
 1. she is the *young Moabite girl* that came back with Naomi – the implication being that Boaz had *heard* of Naomi returning with such a girl; this *is* that girl
 2. she had asked *permission* to glean in the field – she was *submissive*; she recognized that she did not automatically have the right to pick what belonged to someone else
 - a. **note:** only the *owner* of the field could give such permission; the implication is that the supervisor had granted it, but was now *justifying* his decision, hoping Boaz would agree
 - b. **note:** or, another interpretation is that she has been “standing” (lit. ‘*amad*) waiting for permission since early morning (which Boaz grants in **v. 8**)
 3. she had *worked tirelessly* (or stood waiting) in the field with only a “*short rest*” (**note:** an unknown phrase, lit. “a little house”; translated as rest in the LXX based on the context) – she was *persistent*
 - c. **question:** *why* does Boaz take note of *this particular girl*? – the text doesn’t give any *formal* reason
 1. did he see her as a *widow*, in need? could it be that he saw her as attractive (**note 3:10**)? was he drawn to her because he sensed a hardworking, persistent, and devoted nature in her? or, was he inspired to notice her *by the directing hand of the God that he worshiped*?

2. Ruth coming to the field of Boaz (and being seen by him there) is a great example of the **providence of God** – it is not a “coincidence” that he comes to his field when she is there
 - a. providence = the specific work of God in time and space to order the events of people and things such that his sovereign will is accomplished; the *practical* outworking of God (either by his own hand or through *secondary means*) such that events lead to his desired outcome
 - b. it is *obvious* (to us) that the *goal* is to get Ruth to the place where she becomes the wife of Boaz and (by him) has a child that becomes the grandfather of king David
 1. thus, in his *providence*, God causes Ruth to “find her way” to the fields of Boaz
 2. and, in his *providence*, God causes Boaz to “notice” her while she is there
 - c. **principle: the providence of God surrounds every aspect of life on earth, particularly the lives of his elect – for those who are united to Christ, God works through every circumstance to bring about his desired ends for that person**
 1. **e.g.** “God has a wonderful plan for your life” – not: everything will be wonderful when you come to Jesus; rather: God intends, in his love for you (and your love for him), to mold every circumstance in your life to accomplish his desired ends = your glorification!
 - d. **application: have you given God thanks today for taking care of you, providing everything you need and protecting you from danger (i.e. “and deliver us from evil”)?**