

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST CONFERENCE, 1996 – MIKE BICKLE

Transcript: 05/14/96

Session 14 Pictures of the Bride: Ruth, Part 2

INTRODUCTION

Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer, is being introduced in chapter 2. Ruth begins to be the focus of the last three chapters. Naomi's being disciplined and returning is the focus because we understand the obstacles that Ruth has to face as a picture of the bride. Naomi's plight is being pictured inasmuch as we understand Ruth's commitment in a far deeper way through Naomi's experience.

THE LAW OF THE KINSMAN-REDEEMER

"There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz" (Ruth 2:1).

There were three laws for the kinsman-redeemer—three conditions, actually, in terms of the law of the kinsman-redeemer. I guess I should tell you what the concept is. We've looked at this already in Deuteronomy 25:5-10, and also in Leviticus in about eight places. If a man died and had no children, and his wife was obviously left a widow with no children, then his brother had the responsibility to marry the widow to raise children for the deceased brother so that the dead man's name would continue to live on in Israel. This was such an absolutely important thing in the nation of Israel. His brother would marry the widow. They would have children. Then the man's inheritance would be given to his child, but it would end up having his brother's name. And the child would be under the name of his deceased brother so that his family line would continue on. It counted as much as though he had the child before he died.

That's the law of the kinsman: they were to be protected, redeemed, and purchased out of their poverty, because again, a widow was in a very impoverished condition in that society. If there was no brother, they would go to the next person in the family line, and that would be the kinsman. "The near-relative" or "the next of kin" is literally where the word comes from. They would just keep going down the line until they got eighth Uncle Jed down there somewhere and said, "Hey, you're the one in line."

Then there were three conditions. The person had to be a relative in order for this law to work. One of the things I didn't mention is that if the man who died owned property, his widow would typically lose the property because she had no other means of living. She would sell it, and she would typically be taken advantage of, and so she would sell it at a very cheap price. She had no other option; she needed money now and had no one to fight for her. When this man, the kinsman-redeemer, even a few steps down, married the woman, then he had the right to buy the property back as well and give it back to the family for the price at which they sold it.

Another thing: if a person was in debt and had any kind of debts whatsoever in terms of land or property or even livestock, they could purchase it back. The kinsman-redeemer could purchase it back at the price at which it was sold, because there are different economic stipulations that could happen to a person who lost their land. God never wanted land to change the family in a permanent way. That was one of the laws of Israel. The land was permanently in the family to whom it was given when the twelve tribes of Israel were all apportioned out through the land, and families were given land at that time. When the Lord created this law, He was thinking not only of the social dynamics, but of the picture of the redeemer that would buy people out of poverty. It was a living picture stamped in their laws and their economy that they were very, very familiar with. It was a picture of the Messiah. Almost everything Israel did was a picture of the Messiah, at least in terms of the laws of God.

THREE CONDITIONS OF THE KINSMAN-REDEEMER

There were three conditions concerning the law of the kinsman-redeemer. They had to be a relative. Some nice man couldn't come along and say, "Hey, I would like to marry you. By the way, could I buy that property for the price at which you sold it?"

The lady says, "No, you have to be in the family line."

The person had to be financially able, and have adequate finances. In other words, they couldn't put a burden on a poor relative who said, "I don't have a chance to pay for this. I can't even pay my own bills. I can't raise another family."

The person had to be willing. He could refuse the right, and then it would go to the next relative. There are all kinds of other issues around these three things that I won't go into. Boaz is being introduced into the narrative here. He's a picture of Jesus, obviously. He's the redeemer. He's the one who comes. The context of this is a time of affliction and need. Naomi and Ruth couldn't have been in any worse need than they are now when Boaz is introduced. That's not an accident. He comes in the very time of great affliction and need.

He's a relative. Philippians 2:7 says, "He took on Himself the form of a man" (Phil. 2:7, paraphrased). He's the uncreated, eternal God, but He was made of the flesh and blood of the human race when He took upon Himself the form of a man. In that sense, He's a relative of the human race.

He's a man of great wealth. There's no question of that. He has adequate resources and he's extremely willing to do it. He fulfills all the laws of the kinsman-redeemer. The name *Boaz* means, "In him is strength."

Incidentally, Boaz hasn't done anything yet. They just wanted to get him into the story. He hasn't actually been part of the story yet. The person who wrote the book of Ruth is interjecting him so that we would know what was going on in a few verses. He hasn't done anything except for being introduced by the author of the book of Ruth.

RUTH WENT AND GLEANED IN THE FIELD AFTER THE REAPERS

The storyline continues in verse 2: "So Ruth said to Naomi, 'Let me go to the field and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor.' And she said to her, 'Go, my daughter.' Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, 'The Lord be with you!' and they answered him, 'The Lord bless you!'" (Ruth 2:2-4).

Ruth goes to glean in the fields. This is the right of every impoverished person in the nation of Israel, whether a widow or someone in poverty or a stranger. You'll find that the law is very clear in Deuteronomy 24:19 and Leviticus 19:9-10.

The laws of Moses, God's laws that cared for the poor, said this; there were two specific laws. Actually, there are quite a few there, but there are two categories here. Let me see if I'm getting ahead of myself. Ruth went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. The reapers were professional harvesters. They were professionals. They were skilled laborers and they had a sickle. They had their tools and equipment, and they went to various

places and were hired out as reapers. The gleaners were poor people. The gleaners were the people who got the freebies after the reapers were finished.

What happens, going back to A here, is that Ruth is going to glean. She's picking up the leftovers. Here's what the law said in the verses I gave you, Leviticus 19:9-10. When the reapers gleaned someone's field, they had to leave the corners of the field without reaping them. They had to leave them alone in terms of the barley grain and the wheat. They couldn't harvest the corners. They had to skip them and leave them for the poor. Lots of the farmers didn't do that. They reaped everything. But the ones who obeyed the law of God kept the corners for the poor people, the strangers, the sojourners, and the widows. Then, whenever the reapers reaped, they were very thorough. If anything was left behind, the law said they couldn't even stop and pick it up; they had to leave it for the poor people. That was the law of God. God said, "If you do that, I'll bless you." He told the farmers that.

This was the welfare system of that day. It's interesting, because it was based on work. The gleaners still had to go there and work and get it. There's a point of that as well. Basically, the gleaners picked up the leftovers. This is the plight of a poor widow. She's a gleaner. That's a horrible position in society. It's the lowest position, except being a person with leprosy. That's actually a step lower in terms of an honest person.

"After him in whose sight I may find favor." What she's saying is, "I will go glean, and my prayer is that the owner of the field will actually allow us to obey the laws of Moses."

Because a lot of the owners wouldn't do it. They would say, "Get out of here!"

They would say, "Wait, what about Deuteronomy 24?"

They would say, "Get out of here!"

She meant, "I hope that the person, whoever owns this field, let us glean," because again, she spoke with an accent. She was from a different heritage, and Naomi was too old and she couldn't provide for herself. All she had was Ruth, and Ruth was in such a vulnerable position. She was going to this new place. She was saying, "Hi everyone. My name is Ruth. I'm from Moab. I like you guys. I voted for you in the last war." She needed the favor of the owner or the overseer of the field or she would be in big trouble. She would just be kicked off the land. She said, "Oh, I hope this works for me." She went and gleaned in the field after the reapers.

RUTH HAPPENED TO COME UPON THE FIELD BELONGING TO BOAZ

"Ruth happened. . ." I like that word. The word *happened* is the key. She happened to come onto the field belonging to Boaz. She had never heard of Boaz. Again, in verse 1, the author of the book was just introducing Boaz. He hasn't showed up yet in Ruth's life. She has never met him. She doesn't even know there's a Boaz. It happens, and that's the key word: she happened to come upon the field belonging to Boaz. There's divine intervention. She's stumbling into Boaz and has no knowledge that Boaz even exists. In other words, she's stumbling into the blessing of salvation, into the blessing of God. She's walking into a situation that will entirely change her life. She's being divinely directed. The sovereignty of God is working in the life of this hopeless and impoverished widow.

The same sovereignty of God is working in your life. You happened to come across the situation where you heard the testimony of Jesus in such a way that your heart was awakened. You happened to meet a person; it happened that a situation took place. Well, it was no more of a coincidence than this with Ruth. It was a divine intervention. The Lord was after you to bring you into His kingdom.

Boaz speaks to the reapers. We're getting a little peek at Boaz's heart. Again, they aren't on his staff year-round. I guess some of them could be, but some of these reapers went from place to place to harvest. He looks at them and says, "The Lord be with you."

The writer is making the point that Boaz is a kind, respectful, God-fearing man, that he's kind to them. He's greeting them. Most wealthy people never even greeted the reapers, let alone the gleaners. They were way beneath them. He spoke blessing on them, and they're showing you Boaz's heart.

They answer back. In other words, this has gone on enough. They said, "We like this man. He's for real." Basically, they're showing you Boaz's heart: that even his workers loved him and honored him and asked that the blessing of God would be upon his life.

"THE YOUNG MOABITE WOMAN WHO CAME BACK WITH NAOMI"

So far, we've been introduced to a kind Boaz. Now we will see his kindness to Ruth. "Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, 'Whose young woman is this?'" (Ruth 2:5). There was one overseer over all the work force of reapers. He looks at her over there and he says, "Whose young woman is this anyway?" He says, "I've never seen her before in Bethlehem." Bethlehem's not that large, and he says, "I've never seen her."

"The servant who was in charge of the reapers"—this man over all the employees—"answered and said, 'It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab'" (Ruth 2:6).

Boaz said, "Oh, well, that makes sense then."

"And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves'" (Ruth 2:7).

In other words, "She came and actually asked me permission. She didn't just presume that we would allow her. She actually came to me and asked me to do this." This shows you her heart. "So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house" (Ruth 2:7b).

The house was the field tent. They erected a tent where they would drink and rest, because the hot sun would begin to break forth. She was working from morning until this time of the conversation. The point of it is that she's a very diligent, hard worker. That's what they want to show you about Ruth.

"DO NOT GO TO GLEAN IN ANOTHER FIELD, NOR GO FROM HERE"

"Then Boaz said to Ruth, 'You will listen, my daughter, will you not?'" (Ruth 2:8). He goes and talks to her. It's already very unprecedented that he's speaking to her. You know the man over the multimillion dollar company doesn't talk to the stock boys very often. He goes down to the person in the welfare line, who is Ruth. That's really who she is. She's a gleaner, the lowest of the low. He says, "Here, come here. How are you doing?" She's a little intimidated, because this is the powerful, wealthy Boaz.

He says, “Listen, here’s what I would like you to do. Don’t glean in any other field or go from here, but stay close by my young women. I would like you to do that. Stay in my field” (Ruth 2:8b, paraphrased). This was a tremendous invitation, because she didn’t have to go to other places to get her food. “And I want you to stay by the young women.”

He says, “Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you” (Ruth 2:9)? He said, “I don’t want any of the Israelite men touching you as a Moabite widow,” because he’s protecting her. They would abuse her and take advantage of her. He says, “I’ve commanded them. None of them will lay a hand on you.”

Now we’re getting a picture of Jesus in all of this. He says, “When you are thirsty”—this is the unthinkable—“go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn” (Ruth 2:9b). The idea that this wealthy man would provide water for this poor sojourner was unthinkable, because water was typically a long way away at the well or the river, and in order to have water in the harvest field, guess who had to carry it? You didn’t turn the faucet on. You had to carry the whole supply of water. That was a real burden. He said, “I’m taking that burden off of you as well. You’ll drink from the water that the other people have labored for, the ones that the men have carried.”

He’s providing for her. He’s being very kind to this woman. One reason, as he’s going to say in a moment, is that he has heard of the story of how kind she was to Naomi by leaving everything to take care of this elderly woman.

He says, “I’m moved by your kindness. You’ve risked all these things to be a worshiper of God and to care for this older lady, this older widow. I’m moved by this and I want to show kindness to you.” That’s what’s going on.

“She fell on her face, bowed to the ground, and said to him, ‘Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?’ And Boaz answered and said to her, ‘It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people you did not even know’” (Ruth 2:10-11).

The point is, there were many risks involved. It’s not just that it’s uncomfortable, because when you channel surf you don’t understand the language. It’s that it was a really vulnerable position to be in a foreign land in that day. It was a very, very risky position.

“‘The Lord repays your work, and a full reward be given you, under whose wings you have come for refuge.’ Then she said, ‘Let me find favor in your sight, my lord; for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to [me], though I am not like one of your maidservants’” (Ruth 2:12-13). In other words, “I’m just a poor person standing in line here.”

It starts off and he says, “Whose woman is this?” In other words, “Who is her father or husband?” That’s where he’s starting. “Why is she standing in the welfare line? Why is she a gleaner?” He wants to know who her father or her husband is, because if she doesn’t have one, then again, as a Moabite woman she’s in danger. She’s a foreigner; she’s an enemy of Israel. The Moabites, again, were the enemies of Israel.

“Well, I’m with Naomi. I’m with the woman of reproach that the whole city is talking about.” She says, “I’ll just be straight with you. I’m standing with her. I’m with the woman of reproach who is bearing the shame.” Naomi was shamed in the city, and came back under the discipline of God.

You say, “Well, that’s not so bad.”

Just stand before all your friends and tell them about the discipline of God that you’re under and how you’ve lost everything.

You think, “Whoa, maybe that’s a little harder than I thought.”

She says, “Let me glean and gather.” She actually asks permission. He was required by the law of Moses to let her. But rather than presuming, she actually went to the overseer and said, “Is there any way that you would let me do this?”

The man noticed her meekness, the meekness of her spirit, and was very impressed with her. Again, she worked hard from morning until that time. She was diligent. She had a servant’s heart. That’s the message that you’re supposed to communicate. He looks at her and calls her “my daughter” (Ruth 3:1, 10). He says, “I want you to stay close by the young women. Therefore, you’ll have provision if you do that.”

He said, “Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you?” Again, there’s protection because of the sexual connotations of being a foreign woman, a widow without protection, who could easily be abused.

“COME, ALL YOU WHO ARE THIRSTY, COME TO THE WATERS”

He said, “When you are thirsty, go to the vessels” (Ruth 2:9). Again, the water was hard to obtain, and this was an act of tremendous kindness. All the other gleaners had to get their own water. By the way, they were being given free food. It was the least they could do, because water was so hard to get up to those fields that no one wanted to carry water for some poor person who was under hardship, because they didn’t feel the compassion for them. He said, “I want you to drink from the water that the young men have drawn.” This is free water. This is a picture of redemption: drinking from the labors of others. In Revelation 22:17, the very last chapter of the book of Revelation, John talks about water that’s free of charge. This is a picture of redemption. She can have free water. Free water was a very, very extraordinary kindness in that culture.

Ruth falls on her face. She bows down to the ground. She says to him, “Why have I found favor, since I am a foreigner?” In other words, “There’s no natural reason for you to give me favor. There’s no reason. There’s no nothing whatsoever that would attract you to me. Why are you doing this out of the kindness of your heart?”

Of course, that’s the picture of the Lord Jesus. There’s no natural reason why He would have favor upon us. That’s the point of that being emphasized.

Boaz responded, “It’s been reported to me. I’ve seen your heart, Ruth. I’ve heard about you: all that you’ve done, how you left everything and came to God. I see your heart for God. You left everything and you came to God helping this desperate, elderly woman.” He said, “You have come under the wings of the Lord God of Israel for refuge” (Ruth 2:12, paraphrased).

This is a picture of faith, to “come under the wings of the Lord God.” This is a very key phrase, because in Ruth 3:9 she says in essence, “I want you to redeem me,” and she uses this very phrase back to him. She uses a phrase that quotes him. This is quoted a number of times in the Old Testament; for example, in Ezekiel 16:8, where being under the wings of God the Almighty speaks of salvation. In other words, God is providing the covering and protection. There’s also Psalm 91:1; there you go. She’s going to use these very words to speak back to him.

Then she said, “Let me find favor in your sight. I’m less than one of your maidservants. There’s no reason; I haven’t done anything for you. I’ve only taken your food free of charge. I haven’t worked or done anything to help you in any way. It’s unnatural, your kindness.”

“LET HER GLEAN EVEN AMONG THE SHEAVES, AND DO NOT REPROACH HER”

“Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, ‘Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.’ So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her; and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back. And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, ‘Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.’ So she gleaned in the field until evening. She beat out that which she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. Then she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. So she brought out and gave to her what she kept back after she”—herself, Ruth—“had been satisfied” (Ruth 2:14-18).

“And her mother-in-law said to her, ‘Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you.’ So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, ‘The man’s name with whom I worked today is Boaz’” (Ruth 2:19).

Now Boaz came to her at mealtime and invited her to come and eat. This is very unusual. This is an invitation against all protocol. Again, a landowner like this wouldn’t even speak to the gleaners. He would hardly talk to the *reapers*, let alone the gleaners who were taking his food for free. He speaks and says, “Come and eat at my table.” Again, it’s the picture of salvation here. He says, “Come and dip your bread into the vinegar.” It’s bread and vinegar. Vinegar actually was a weak wine that was mingled with olive oil. It was a special drink that helped them in the heat of the day to cool down.

Actually, it’s still drunk today in various places in the east. It’s a weak type of wine. It’s a cheap wine, but it had olive oil in it, again, to cool them off. He comes and invites her to partake of the bread and the wine. It’s an obvious picture of redemption here.

He says, “I want you to sit beside the reapers with me.” He has promoted her to a position of honor, because out in the field the reapers were the ones in charge. They were the ones being paid. He’s promoting her. He has taken her from the least seat to the highest seat of sitting with him at his table. He passes her the parched grain as they’re feasting at the table. This was roasted grain. First, he lets her into the field, and now he’s feeding her at the table.

Eventually, he’s going to let her glean amongst the sheaves (Ruth 2:15). He’s going to let her glean amongst the sheaves. The law didn’t say they had to let them do that. The sheaves were the bundles of grain that the reapers put together in these bundles, or sheaves. The law was that when the gleaners got their free food, they couldn’t go by the sheaves. Some of these men would try and go up and say, “Well, I was just gleaning.”

They would say, “No, it’s thievery when you glean amongst the sheaves.”

“LET GRAIN FROM THE BUNDLES FALL PURPOSELY FOR HER”

He looks at her and says, “I’ll tell you what: not only can you be in my field; not only am I going to protect you and give you water. I will invite you to my table and I will actually let you glean amongst the sheaves”—which isn’t permitted—“and there’s no reproach or rebuke to you.”

Then he’s going to take it up another step, another notch further, in verse 16. He tells the men, “Here’s what I want you to do. Let the grain from the bundles fall on purpose. Just let lots of it fall. I want her to have everything.”

You’re getting the picture of redemption. This is the Lord’s provision. This is how He feels towards the people whom He meets in a poverty-stricken state. He loves to provide bread abundantly.

Remember the prayer: “Give us this day our daily bread” (Mt. 6:11). Bread can speak of provision in the natural, but it also speaks of revelation. He wants to abundantly reveal Himself to us, but it also speaks of natural provision as well.

It’s becoming clear to her that he has special attention for her. She’s saying, “Wow! I think this is a good day.” It’s more than general compassion. He likes her, and this is really touching her heart in a powerful way.

This is what the Lord is saying: “I invited you to My field. I provided water for you. You’re sitting at My table. You’re not really working for stuff; you think you’re working for it a little, but I’m telling My angels, ‘Let a little more fall his or her way.’”

Then God just comes out and invites her to partake fully of everything that’s His. She can glean amongst the sheaves, and all these things. This is the Lord’s dealing with our life. The man comes and says, “You won’t believe this tremendous blessing that came out of nowhere!”

The Lord is letting you glean amongst the sheaves. He’s purposely letting the grain fall so you can get it. The idea is for us not to think that we have this great ability. “My company is so great!”

The Lord says, “No, I’m letting it fall on purpose because I like you. That’s why your company is doing so well. That’s why your ministry is going so well. I’ve let you glean not according to nature. I’m allowing you to have blessings beyond that which would be natural.” That’s what’s happening.

“THE MAN’S NAME WITH WHOM I WORKED TODAY IS BOAZ”

Bringing in the sheaves. She gleaned until evening. That’s the servant’s heart. Then she beat out what she gleaned with a stick. That’s the threshing of the wheat and of the barley that she was picking up. An ephah was about two and half gallons of barley. Then she goes home and tells Naomi. Naomi says, “Blessed is the one who took notice of you. Do you know what’s going on here?”

“And her mother-in-law said to her, ‘Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you.’ So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, ‘The man’s name with whom I worked today is Boaz’” (Ruth 2:19).

Naomi's heart must have jumped. She said, "Boaz! Did you know he's the richest man in the whole town? And he's doing all these things for you. Oh my goodness! He's related to my husband. He's in the line. Ruth, do you know where this could go?"

What do they call those gals in *Fiddler on the Roof? Matchmaker*; there she is. It's a divine setup. Naomi saw it instantly. Ruth doesn't know the custom. She says, "Do you know where this is going?"

"Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, 'Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!'" (Ruth 2:20). She sees it instantly. She links it up really clearly. "And Naomi said to her, 'This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives'" (*ibid*)—not the only one, because there were several of them; actually, there was another kinsman-redeemer in line before Boaz.

Ruth says, "That's great."

Naomi says, "Don't you get it? He's in line. He can marry you and buy back my husband's property. By law, the law of Moses says that one of these men needs to do this if they're going to be responsible."

Of course, so often the men of Israel didn't obey that law, just as they didn't obey the law of the jubilee year, where every fifty years they would release everyone. Not once in Israel's history is it ever recorded that they did it. They never, ever did it, not once, in the entire recorded history of Israel. A lot of these laws were actually never obeyed. It wasn't like a guarantee just because it was in the law that one of the men was going to pay their bills and take care of them, but Naomi is very excited.

"IT IS GOOD, MY DAUGHTER, THAT YOU GO OUT WITH HIS YOUNG WOMEN"

"Ruth the Moabite said, 'Well, Naomi, if you're that excited let me tell you the whole story. He said, 'You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all the harvest'" (Ruth 2:21, paraphrased). Except that there's only one problem: Boaz didn't say that. He didn't say, "Stay close to my young men." He said, "Stay close to my young women." She says it wrong.

But Naomi brings it back right: "And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, 'It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field'" (Ruth 2:22).

"So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law" (Ruth 2:23).

Naomi warned her, "Don't go into any other field." There were three reasons. Number one: it was dangerous for a Moabite woman to go into another field. Number two: it would be ingratitude to Boaz if she just wrote off all his kindness and went to another place. Number three: for issues of immorality, as Boaz will mention later. Naomi says, "Don't go somewhere else and meet some man and fall in love and run off into the sunset or go on some wild shenanigan. Stay right here with the women in this field. Don't go anywhere else. Stay here. God is moving."

I'll give you these five steps here under C. Boaz says in Ruth 2:8, "Stay close by my women."

Ruth says, “Hey Naomi, he told me to stay close by his men.”

Naomi says, “That’s good; go with his women.” So Ruth went with the women.

In the next chapter, Boaz comments on that. He says, “You have shown me great kindness because you didn’t go after the other young men. You stayed with the women.”

In other words, “You kept yourself pure the whole time. You kept yourself out of danger. You kept yourself away from other men.” He actually says later, “The kindness you showed me by staying pure was greater than the kindness of anything that you’ve done for me” (Ruth 3:10, paraphrased).

It’s interesting how Ruth misconstrues this, and how Naomi says, “No, no. I think you misunderstood. I think it’s good if you stayed with the young women.”

Ruth says, “OK. I’ll do that. I’ll do that. I’ll keep it straight here.”

RUTH’S OBEDIENCE WILL BE REWARDED WHEN HARVEST TIME COMES

“Until the end of the harvest.” Ruth’s obedience is going to be rewarded when the harvest time comes. Does that sound familiar? At the end of the age, when the harvest comes, we’re supposed to wait patiently, and the fullness is going to come at the harvest. The fullness will come at the end.

The barley harvest starts in mid-April. The wheat harvest ends in early June. Let’s just say, hypothetically, that it runs from about April 15th to about June 10th or June 15th. The whole thing takes about eight weeks. The barley harvest comes first, and then the wheat harvest. They finish the barley harvest on Friday, and then they start the wheat harvest on Monday. One comes right after the others; it’s really that quick. Those aren’t the actual dates, so don’t write them down, but there’s about an eight-week period of time where they come one after the other, so all the workers are there. Remember, back in chapter 1, she arrived at the time of the barley harvest. We find that at the end of the wheat harvest, eight weeks later, she was married to Boaz. The thing just happens at lightning speed.

Ruth now gets the idea that he’s really attracted to her. That’s the idea we’re supposed to get from God. We’re supposed to see. “You can come to My field. You can drink My water. You can sit at My table. You can glean amongst the sheaves. You can pick up stuff I purposely lay down.”

We’re supposed to say, “I think You like me, God.” That’s the conclusion Ruth was supposed to get. That’s the conclusion we’re supposed to get when we interpret God’s dealings in our life: “You really like me.”

She says, “In that case, I’m going after you then. Now that you’ve shown me kindness, I will go after you.” She goes after him now. Come on ladies, let’s go. My wife read this book and she wouldn’t leave me alone when I first met her. She would chase me down everywhere. Phone calls, flowers, candy, telegraphs, fake prayer requests after the meetings—I mean, it was just unbelievable. Sweetheart, is that how you remember that? You don’t remember that? Well, blessed is the one that took notice of you. OK, I’ll just quote the Scripture. I quote the Scripture. Enough corn, a little comic relief here.

She begins to seek Boaz because she's connected with the idea that Boaz likes her, which is what she's supposed to do. It's also key that she seeks Boaz instead of the other redeemer. As we will find out in a few verses, there's another redeemer that's in line that has first shot at redeeming Elimelech's property and family, but he turns it down, as most of you know. Boaz is in the second position.

“MY DAUGHTER, SHALL I NOT SEEK SECURITY?”

“Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, ‘My daughter, shall I not seek security, that it may be well with you?’” (Ruth 3:1). In other words, “I have a plan for you to get more connected with this redeemer.” Security means getting married, in the historical context.

“That it may be well with you”—meaning, “that you'll be provided for.” She speaks of the Church, that from the Word of God in history we understand God plans to bring to a marriage supper. It's through the Church that God has given us the revelation of the Scriptures—through the apostles who are part of the Church. We understand from the very people of God that God has revealed His plan to bring us into security in the marriage relationship with His own Son.

“GO IN, UNCOVER HIS FEET, AND LIE DOWN”

“Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Therefore wash and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies” (Ruth 3:2-4)—because many people were lying on the threshing floor in the harvest time like this.

“‘You'll go in, uncover his feet and lie down; and he'll tell you what you should do.’ And she said to her, ‘All that you say to me I will do. It sounds a little strange, but I'll do that’” (Ruth 3:4-5, paraphrased).

WINNOWING THE WHEAT AND HAY AT HARVEST TIME

“So she went down to the threshing floor and did what her mother-in-law said. And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down” (Ruth 3:6-7).

Naomi seeks security for Ruth; again there's the plan. Boaz is winnowing barley. They would get a threshing floor. A threshing floor was about forty feet in diameter: maybe the size of this room or a little larger. They would beat down this piece of ground. They would have a roller, or stomp on it, and get it wet, and pull all the weeds and move all the rocks. The threshing floor was supposed to be perfectly level; typically it was the top of a hill. I don't mean a hill that has a point at the top. They would go to a high place and then they would bring all the grain from the field, the barley or the wheat. They would lay it down there. Then they would winnow it, which means they would take it with a pitchfork of sorts. They would lift it up in the air and the wind would blow it, and the grain was heavier so it would fall down. So they would throw it up in the air. The wind would blow the chaff away, all the straw and all the added extra stuff. The wheat was heavier; it would fall down. Then they would sweep it into a corner, and then they would get a bunch more from the sheaves. They would take the bundles, the “haystacks,” so to speak, the stacks of grain; they would throw them up again and they would winnow the wheat this way. They would do this night and day. They would do it especially at night because it was cool and there was a breeze, and the heat of the day was difficult.

When they did this for a few weeks, they would all sleep there because they would get these piles of winnowed grain, and the thieves obviously knew it was harvest time, so they would come and steal the grain. Everyone slept there—fifty, sixty, eighty people; whatever the number was, they were all there.

Here's what Naomi said: "When you see him, find out before it gets too dark, before the fire goes out, where he's at."

Because you can't go around picking up everyone's blanket: "Hello, are you over there?" The women might be in one place fellowshipping and the men would be in another place at night as they were talking around the campfire.

Naomi says, "Pay attention, because when you go there, lie down at the end of his feet where a servant would lie, and just take a part of his blanket and put it over you."

She does this and he gets startled. He wakes up and says, "Who are you? What's going on? Who's pulling my blanket here?"

"Go wash yourself first." She's getting prepared; I mean, the relationship is going to come together. The bride's heart is being prepared. She says, "You know he's going to be there tonight." Because he's there every night for this eight-week period of time, when they're harvesting and winnowing the wheat on the threshing floor. "Wash yourself." In our context we're preparing the bride through the washing of the water of the Word (Eph. 5:26). Of course, in the eastern culture they didn't take baths very often. Again, they didn't have running water, and water was hard to get to unless you jumped in the lake or the river. Working in that context, there simply wasn't water to throw away like that. It was a very special occasion.

"Anoint yourself." First, a widow didn't anoint herself. A widow was in mourning. This was an unusual thing. This speaks of being daily filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

"PUT ON YOUR BEST GARMENT AND GO DOWN TO THE THRESHING FLOOR"

"Put on the best garments." "Take off the widow's garments. Put off the garments of mourning. Lay them aside."

This was really strange, because people wore the same clothes for weeks. They were working all day on a farm, and it was dirty. She came up that night dressed in her best clothes. The other ladies might have thought, "This is a strange outfit that you have on."

It doesn't matter, because Naomi said, "Do this."

She said, "I will do it." It must have been strange.

Revelation 19:7 says that the garments we wear are the righteous acts of the saints. She says, "Take off your garments of mourning and throw them away."

She said, "Go down to the threshing floor." In other words, we meet Jesus on the threshing floor. It's where He separates the wheat from the chaff in our life. "Go meet him on the threshing floor." John the Baptist came in

Matthew 3:11 and said, “He has His winnowing fork, His winnowing fan, in His hand” (Mt. 3:11, paraphrased). A winnowing fan was used when there wasn’t a breeze or you couldn’t use a hill for your threshing floor. They actually had a fan and a few people would cause the winnowing fan to blow the chaff away so that the wheat would fall. John the Baptist said, “God has His winnowing fan in His hand. He’s separating the wheat from the chaff.” It’s a place of purity where the bad stuff was separated and the good stuff remained.

“Go meet him on the threshing floor.” This is a picture of the bride being prepared.

She says, “Don’t make yourself known to him,” until three things have happened: he’s finished eating and drinking; his heart is cheerful; it’s time for him to lie down. That just speaks of the fullness of God’s timing. He has accomplished redemption. He has laid his life down. His heart is now glad. He’s drunk the cup that the Father has given Him. You don’t go to Him in terms of the New Testament until redemption is accomplished. Then you go to Him as the bride, because there will be no bride until redemption is accomplished.

He says, “OK, what do you want?” She didn’t have to ask. It was very obvious. “Take me under your wing. I want to be yours. I want to be redeemed by you. That’s what I want.” Again, she’s quoting his own words from Ruth 2:12.

“For you are the close relative. You’re in line to redeem me” (Ruth 3:9, paraphrased). “Take me under your wing” is a metaphorical way of saying, “Put me under your covering and under your protection.” It spoke of redemption, as it does a number of times in the Old Testament.

He says, “Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter. You have shown me kindness in your purity. Don’t fear. I will do everything I said I would do” (Ruth 3:10-11, paraphrased).

The right of the other kinsmen. He says, “There’s one little detail I have to tell you, because you don’t really understand the nature of things here. Now it’s true. I can be a kinsman-redeemer. I can be your redeemer. However, there’s another redeemer, another relative that’s closer in line to you than I am” (Ruth 3:12).

She says, “OK, I didn’t know about him.”

“Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be that if he will perform the duty of a close relative . . . let him do it, but if he does not want to [redeem] you, then I will . . . as the Lord lives. Lie down until morning” (Ruth 3:13). He says, “Just relax and I’ll do the work.”

THE LAW HAS THE FIRST RIGHT OF REDEMPTION

“There’s a closer relative than I.” There are several different options for this, but the most common by far is that it’s a picture of the law. The law is perfect and the law is righteous. The law has the first claim over us, but Jesus satisfied the claims of the law by taking the wrath of God upon Himself. That’s probably the best answer in terms of the allegorical interpretation. In other words, He says, “There’s a difficulty. There’s something else in line before I can receive you.” The justice of the law has to be paid. Of course, He satisfies this, but the law has the first right of redemption. The law always requires judgment and wrath.

THE LAW IS UNABLE TO DELIVER US FROM BONDAGE

“If he will perform the duty of a close relative.” The law came, but it was unable to deliver. That’s the point. The law is unable to redeem her. “If he doesn’t want to perform it, I will.” He says, “The matter is in my hands. It’s out of your hands anyway, Ruth. You can’t do anything about it. Here’s what I want you to do. Lie down and wait for the dawning of a new day. I will look into the whole matter. Just wait until the day and the light comes. I will take matters into my own hands and I will accomplish the whole thing.”

Going back to the natural story, I don’t know how Ruth slept knowing she was going to be married very soon. Her shame and poverty would be removed forever in terms of her life upon the earth. Again, I’m going back between the real story and the allegory. I’m going back and forth.

But she obeyed him. “So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before [anyone] could recognize her” (Ruth 3:14).

“Also he said, ‘Bring the shawl that is on you and hold it.’ And when she held it, he measured six ephahs of barley, and laid it on her. Then she went into the city” (Ruth 3:15).

A shawl was more than a head covering; it was over the shoulders. It was a shawl all the way down. It was a big piece of cloth or something—a big shawl, there you go. Six ephahs of barley is about fifteen gallons, because an ephah was about two and a half gallons. He filled it up. He says, “Here’s what I want you to do. I want you to go home to Naomi, but between now and when I redeem you, I will bless you. Here’s something to take home.” He gives her fifteen gallons.

So she’s marching home with this whole bundle of wheat. Naomi has of course been waiting all night to hear what happened when she slept at this man’s feet. She comes home with fifteen bushels of wheat and says, “I’ve got food for the next month.”

Naomi says, “I guess it went well last night. It went well, right?”

“Yes, it sure did.” That’s basically what’s happening.

“Then Naomi said, ‘Sit still my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day’” (Ruth 3:18).

She says, “Sit still. Wait on the Lord. You can’t produce your own salvation.”

As Moses stood before the Red Sea, in Exodus 14, God said, “Stand still and you will see the salvation of God” (Ex. 14:13, paraphrased). Sit still. This man won’t rest until this thing is taken care of. That’s a picture of the Lord Jesus, right there, coming after His bride.

“Boaz went to the gate and sat down; and behold, the close relative came and spoke up. Boaz said to him, ‘Come aside, friend, sit down’” (Ruth 4:1, paraphrased). So you see Boaz, as Jesus, calls the law. They aren’t adversaries; they’re friends.

“Sit down with me.” In other words, “Be satisfied.” “I will satisfy you. I will satisfy the justice of the law.”

This man is never named. But he comes and he sits down alongside Boaz as a friend.

Basically, I'll just sum the next part up for the sake of time. Boaz asks the man, "Do you want her?"

He says, "Yes, I want her."

He says, "OK. If you want her, you have to take the Moabite woman as well."

In verse 6, the close relative says, "Oh, I don't want her, because I'll ruin my inheritance if I have her. No, no, I don't want it. The righteousness of the law will be violated. I don't want to ruin my inheritance. I don't want the Moabite, the foreigner, the heathen. I know it won't work this way."

That's what it means in the allegorical. In the natural he was saying, "I don't want foreign blood in my heritage. My line is pure. I don't want to mess it up. Besides that, I don't want to pay for her kid"—because Mahlon was her husband. "It will be his son, not mine, and he'll carry his name. All the money I invest he'll keep. No, it would ruin everything, no."

The law isn't very generous, is it? The law is a taskmaster. The law says, "I'll be ruined. I'll be defiled and violated if I take this cause on."

Boaz says, "Hot dog! I want her."

"Therefore the close relative said to Boaz, 'Buy [her] for yourself' (Ruth 4:8).

So he took off his sandal. Taking off sandals was a custom, because they would walk off the property of a land. They would walk it off. That's how they did their business transactions. In Joshua 1:3, God told Joshua, "Every place where your foot treads is yours" (Josh. 1:3, paraphrased). That's how they did business transactions. Later they got a little more sophisticated and they didn't want to walk around the whole property, so they had a custom: they would give a shoe. That was a transfer of ownership.

What that meant was a transfer of ownership. This close relative said, "She's yours," and he took off his shoe and handed it to him in front of the ten elders. All the laws were fulfilled. Justice was satisfied in the way that this takes place. Ruth now belongs to Boaz.

In verse 10, he says, "I will take her as my wife" (Ruth 4:10, paraphrased).

"THE LORD MAKE THE WOMAN . . . LIKE RACHEL AND LIKE LEAH"

There's the witness of the people, which I call the prophetic witness. It's all the people who can witness to this. It takes the Holy Spirit for that to happen in the spiritual sense.

"All the people at the gate said, "Man, we witness this" (Ruth 4:11, paraphrased). There are all these people. There's a crowd that's gathered, because Boaz is coming in and this gal had on these funny clothes and perfume last night. The word got around that he's going to the gate to talk to the kinsmen. The whole town shows up, because it's exciting. It's like, "What's happening? We knew this was going to happen," and that kind of thing.

All the elders and all the people witness to the Lord and say, “The Lord make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and like Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may [this union] prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem” (Ruth 4:11, NKJV).

We know that Jacob had two wives and several concubines. But the whole nation came from Rachel and Leah. They said, “May the Lord make you like Rachel and Leah. All of spiritual redemption, all of God’s purpose is going to flow out of the union of Jesus and His bride.” That’s what they’re really saying in terms of our purpose. They’re the two who built the house of Israel. “May you prosper in Ephrathah.” *Ephrathah* means *fruitful*. “May you be fruitful.”

“May you be famous in Bethlehem.” There was one who was born in Bethlehem. His name was David. There was another who was born in Bethlehem. His name was Jesus, the far greater David. He was the One who was famous in Bethlehem. The famous One came out of Bethlehem where they lived.

“So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son” (Ruth 4:13).

Here it is: full redemption comes around, full restoration. The women that were mocking her on the front end are now saying to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel! May he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him” (Ruth 4:15).

The *him* they’re talking about is the child. They’re saying, “This child will be the restorer, the nourisher of life.” There are so many good things you could say about every one of those. That’s the picture of the Lord Jesus. In the story here, the women come full circle; they were wondering at Naomi some months ago and are now blessed at what’s happening. They’ve been married, the baby has been born, and now they’ve come to bless her.

The Lord will cause blessing to come from the very lips of those who witnessed your time of discipline; if you humble yourself and walk with the Lord, God will cause those very people to rise up and bless you.

The bride’s eternal reign. “Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, ‘There is a son born to Naomi.’ And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David” (Ruth 4:17). By the way, *Obed* means *servant*. The offspring of Ruth and Boaz, of Jesus and the Church, is servanthood. The offspring is called servanthood.

I don’t think it’s an accident that their reign in eternity will be a reign of serving in meekness all of those under them. Then it goes down and tells the family line, and it ends. That was the point of this genealogy. And then a few generations pass. It only goes from Boaz to Obed—one generation; then to Jesse, the second, and then to David, the third. The third generation is King David, the great king of Israel.

It’s interesting that Ruth is called “the Moabitess” seven times in this book. They link her to Moab seven times in the book, because the marvel of the book in this culture was that a Moabite woman is in the line of King David. It’s unbelievable! They make this point again, saying, “We don’t think of this.”

Again, let's go in a really gross way. It's the son of Adolph Hitler. He's now the prince of the Jews. That would be so bizarre. They said, "The Moabite people were in line to King David."

This was a major statement which many, many Jewish people did not appreciate. They didn't like that statement. But many others said, "If God will do that, then all of us have hope," and that's the point. That's the point right there. It ends with a statement of hope. Amen.