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Ruth 3

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Ruth 3.

Topics.

- Naomi tells Ruth to lie at Boaz feet, and he will tell her what to do.
 - Ruth lays at Boaz feet saying, "Spread your wings over your servant."
 - Boaz is Ruth's redeemer, but there is a redeemer nearer than him.
 - Ruth lays at Boaz feet until the morning and then returns to the city.
 - Ruth returns to her mother-in-law and tells her all that Boaz had done.
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INTRODUCTION: the book of Ruth (an ancestor of Christ) tells the story of a young Moabite widow who, out of love for Naomi, her widowed Israelite mother-in-law, abandons her own culture, declaring, "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (1:16). In the days of the judges, Elimelech and Naomi with their sons Mahlon and Chilion left Bethlehem Judah because of famine and went to Moab. Mahlon and Chilion marry Moabite woman, Orpah and Ruth. After ten years Naomi's husband and her two sons died. Naomi leaves the land of Moab with Ruth and returned to Bethlehem Judah. On arriving, she refers to herself as Mara because she felt the LORD had dealt bitterly with her. The good character of Ruth captures the attention of Boaz, a close relative of her deceased husband. Boaz fulfils the role of kinsman-redeemer and takes Ruth as his wife. Ruth serves as a wonderful example of God's providential care of His people, and of His willingness to accept Gentiles who seek him. The author is unknown though traditionally ascribed to Samuel the genealogy at the end suggests that it was written during or after the time of David.

1

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

The previous chapter: firstly focused on Ruth gleaning amongst the sheaves in the field of Boaz of the clan of Elimelech, secondly, Boaz charges his young men not to touch Ruth and invites her to eat with him and his reapers and finally, Ruth taking barley to her mother-in-law in the city of Bethlehem, and gleaning in Boaz field until the end of the barley and wheat harvests.

RUTH 3:1-4

Naomi tells Ruth, Lie at Boaz feet, and He will tell Her what to Do.

- **Ruth 3:1-4:** Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you? ² Is not Boaz our relative (kindred in KJV), with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. ³ Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do."

It was usual to have threshing floors in an open place outside the city, usually in the fields they harvested. The winnowing process was performed after it had been trodden down, by throwing the grain up against the wind with a shovel. It was performed in the evening to catch the breezes which blow after the close of a hot day, and continue through much of the night. The owner of the field usually joined in the winnowing

process and remained all night sleeping on the threshing-floor, either because he was extremely tired or to protect his grain from being plundered by reapers from other fields, probably both. Accordingly, Boaz, a noble man of considerable wealth slept on the barn floor, at the end of the heap of barley that he had winnowed. The words, "Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, implies that when the work of winnowing the corn was finished it was followed with a festival feast (v7), with the reapers of the harvest, it appears that after this festival feast Boaz returned to the threshing-floor to sleep next to the corn he had winnowed.

Is not Boaz our relative (kindred in KJV): (v2) Naomi's ask this question so that Ruth would take notice and be encouraged from it, Naomi concludes that he was her near relative, and was obliged by the law to marry Ruth for she was the widowed wife of his near relative.

- **Deuteronomy 25:5:** "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.

He is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor: (v2) Naomi knowing that Boaz would be away from his house and out of the city and on his own after the feast for his reapers and winnowers of corn, sees an opportunity for Ruth to meet with him alone at night. Before the invention and use of fans, winnowing was only done by the wind carrying off the chaff. It was easier to separate the chaff from the corn in the evening because in hot countries that was when the strongest breezes of wind blew and carried the chaff away.

Observe the place where he lies: (v4) Naomi advise appears strange to us today, but it was according to the laws of Israel at that time. To preserve the inheritance of land the law gave Ruth, who was now a proselyte of Israel legal claim upon Boaz, for it was customary for widows to assert their claim of redemption.

- **Deuteronomy 25:5-10:** "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. ⁶ And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. ⁷ And if the man does not wish to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.' ⁸ Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he persists, saying, 'I do not wish to take her,' ⁹ then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' ¹⁰ And the name of his house shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal pulled off.'

Go and uncover his feet and lie down: (v4) meaning, lift up his robe or a skin used as a blanket that covered his feet to awake him. She was not to lie down by his side, for that would have been immodest, but at his feet, in the posture of a humble suitor. Had Ruth acted in those days in any way that could be judged indecent or immodest, it is most likely she would have highly displeased such a noble man as Boaz appears to have been.

Though what she did seems to us to be indecent, and would certainly be considered an improper behaviour should any woman in our days act in such a manner; the godly character of Naomi and Ruth prevents us from supposing that they had sinful intentions. However, though their plan was successful it may be likely that they were not completely free from manipulating circumstances to bring about the desired end that they hoped for. It should also be kept in mind that the story of Ruth was not recorded for present day society to follow, but suited only to fulfil the laws and customs of ancient Israel which were given to perpetuate the husband's inheritance.

Uncover his feet: (v4) when those in Oriental countries stayed working late in the night and remained at the work site rather than go home, it was common for them to sleep in the same clothes that they wore during the day. The picture here is of Boaz sleeping with a skin over his entire body to keep warm and Ruth lifting up the surplus covering at his feet and putting it over herself and sleeping as a humble and submissive servant. It means remove the covering upon his feet, whether it was a blanket, or rug, or his own long robes, with which his feet were wrapped, and then lay herself down at his feet. This seems to be advised to give him a hint that there was somebody at his feet, which appears to us to be strange advice, and not consistent with the character of a godly, virtuous and modest women, which they both were. However, it is most likely that Naomi thought in her mind that Boaz was the next kinsman, and therefore would be in the right according to the following law:

- **Deuteronomy 25:5:** “If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her.

Naomi, clearly understood this law and thinking Boaz was the nearest kinsman took the initiative to bring about the marriage of Ruth and Boaz. In ordinary circumstances these would have seemed inappropriate to the world; but in the case of Ruth, it was a method of reminding Boaz of his duty as the kinsman of her deceased husband. Considering the age and nobility of Boaz, and the well-known virtue of Ruth to Naomi, and Naomi to her, Ruth would have thought herself quite safe in heeding the advice that Naomi gave. Some find it difficult to account for Ruth following Naomi’s advice, since they feel that she could not be sure that sin would not be committed, considering the infirmity of human nature, or that Ruth’s bold behaviour would not cause Boaz to consider her as a light and loose woman and unfit to be his wife. However, it is hardly likely that Boaz being the noble man he was and knowing Naomi and Ruth’s character, would think of Ruth in this light, especially since he commends her for not chasing after young men.

- **Ruth 3:10:** And he (Boaz) said, “May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich.

Added to this, Naomi did tell Ruth that Boaz would tell her what she was to do, and had Boaz been the nearest kinsman as Naomi thought he was, it would not have been a sin for him to take her as his wife that night, for during these ancient times, when a man went into a woman with the intention of having children she was from then onward considered to be his wife. There were no marriage rites or ceremonies at this time for marriage rites and ceremonies that the Jews use today, were not yet established. We see in the following chapter, that even when the nearer kinsman declined the offer to purchase the land and take Ruth as his wife, and Boaz afterward, did take Ruth as his wife there was no marriage rites or ceremonies other than the transaction being sealed by the removal and receiving of the sandal.

NOTE: though Ruth was a Moabitess (a heathenish and idolatrous nation) Boaz would not be doing any wrong in marrying her for she had become a proselyte, forsaking the idols and gods of Moab and had loyally, devotedly and faithfully embraced the law of Moses and the God of Israel. Though Naomi and Ruth seem to be virtuous and modest women, and their intent was lawful the following four facts show that there may have been some indiscretions involved:

1. Though Naomi would of had thoughtfulness of Boaz and of Ruth good character, she could not know what path such an encounter would take and therefore there was something ominous in her counsel for it could have led to disgrace and dishonour for everyone involved, especially since verse fourteen, says, Ruth arose before she could be recognized and Boaz says, “Let it not be known that the woman came to the

threshing floor,” which implies that great shame would be brought upon them should it be known that Ruth an unmarried woman spent the night with Boaz (v14).

2. It was unnecessary because Ruth could have gone with witnesses directly to Boaz and the next kinsman and spoken to them concerning their responsibility before God’s law to perform the duty of a near kinsman as Boaz did in the following chapter.
3. Naomi should have enquired amongst her people to find out if there was another kinsman redeemer before Boaz, before giving Ruth the advice she did, for this is what he instructed Ruth, that he would do.
4. Naomi’s stealthy plan appears to stem from a distrust of God’s wisdom and foresight to bring about what she desired through the normal circumstances of life.

He will tell you what you shall do: (v4) being a judge of Israel, and expert in the law, Boaz would inform Ruth whether he was the next kinsman, and had the right of redemption or not, and what steps must be taken in order for her to marry him, or another man.

RUTH 3:5-9

Ruth says to Boaz, “Spread Your Wings Over Your Servant.”

- **Ruth 3:5-9:** And she replied, “All that you say I will do.” ⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her. ⁷ And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁸ At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! ⁹ He said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.”

4

The way of living in these ancient times, was such that the wealthy looked after their own business, both in the field and at home. After many hours of winnowing into the late hours of the night, Boaz did not go to his house and comfortable bed as he normally would, but laid down in his working clothes next to the heap of corn, probably on the straw that would have been covering the floor where the corn had been winnowed, to protect it from thieves until it could be gathered into his barns. It was the common custom to hold a festival feast of celebration and drink at the end of such occasions. Having drunk and eaten freely which was the custom at the end of the time of harvest and of the vintage, and of gathering the fruits of the earth. The words, “when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry,” (v7) carries the idea that he was in a good frame of mind.

She came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down: (v7) when Boaz was asleep she went in quietly so that no one perceived she was there and lay down at his feet, fully dressed, for there is no reason to think that she would undress, since her intention was only to put Boaz in remembrance of what the law required of him. It should be noted here that what in one age or nation would be improper, is not always so in another age or another nation. Being a judge of Israel Naomi would have known that Boaz would tell Ruth what she should do, and whether he had the right of redemption, and what steps must be taken in order for her to marry him or another man. This story highlight the good character and integrity of Boaz for he did not attempt to take advantage of Ruth nor suspect her of any ill intentions, but instead spoke honourably of her as a virtuous woman, promising her that as the morning arrived, he would send her away with much corn to give to her mother-in-law and that he would see if the other kinsman nearer than him who had the right of redemption was willing to marry her. (v12-13).

A near kinsman: had the right of redemption of a widow’s deceased husband's estate, it was his duty to marry her, and raise up seed to her former husband (his kinsman).

Spread your wings (your skirt in KJV) over your servant, for you are a redeemer: (v9) the word skirt literally means wing, the metaphor in this context may be illustrated by the LORD covering Israel with His garment:

- **Ezekiel 16:8:** “When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord GOD, and you became mine.

Or as a hen gathers her young under her wings:

- **Matthew 23:37:** “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

Or to the wings of the cherubim overshadowing the mercy seat and between which God dwelt:

- **Exodus 25:20:** The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be.
- **Psalms 36:7:** How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

The expression, “spread your skirt,” means: “take me to be your wife,” it carries the idea of receiving and acknowledging a woman as a wife. It refers to Ruth uncovering Boaz feet, by turning up the skirt (i.e., hem) of his garment, robe or skin that he may have thrown over himself, not as any act of immodesty, but to direct him, when opportunity offered, to spread his robe over her as a token of his taking her in marriage, and of her being subject to him and under his care and protection. Ruth was to draw a part of Boaz’s mantle over her, which signified she would become his own, and then ask him to do the same, which meant he would accept her invitation and take her as his wife. In the East, to spread a skirt over one is a symbolical action denoting protection. Had Boaz done this it would have signified that he was willing to take her for his wife at the proper or appointed time. Even today day in many parts of the East, to say of anyone that he put his skirt over a woman, is synonymous with saying that he married her. At all modern marriages of the Jews and Hindus, one part of the ceremony is for the bridegroom to put a silken or cotton cloak around his bride signifying that he is taking her for his wife.

RUTH 3:10-12

Boaz is Ruth’s Redeemer, there is a Redeemer nearer than Him.

- **Ruth 3:10-12:** And he said, “May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich.¹¹ And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman.¹² And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I.

Boaz’s words, “may you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter,” shows that he considered Ruth’s conduct and integrity to be honourable.

You have made this last kindness greater than the first: (10), Ruth’s first kindness refers to the following three things:

1. The love kindness and affectionate caring she showed to her mother-in-law in the land of Moab.
2. Her determination to leave her native land, her family, friends and gods to remain with Naomi and embrace the faith of Israel and their God.
3. The love, loyalty, faithfulness and devotion she showed to her husband while he was alive.

Ruth's last kindness embraces the following three things:

1. Her willingness and kindness to her deceased husband, in that she sought after the continuance of his name and memory and did not chase after young men.
2. Her willingness to follow Naomi's advice and the love and care she continued to show to her.
3. Her willingness to labour in the fields of Israel amongst a foreign people to support her mother in law.
4. Her willingness to accept Boaz for her husband, who was advanced in years, in order to raise up seed to her departed husband.

You have not gone after young men: (10), the fact Ruth did not follow after young men among the Israelites and in her own country, but instead followed the law of God to seek after a man whose right it was to raise up seed to her departed husband, and her willingness to marry Boaz, who was advanced in years in order to achieve this, was the greatest manifestation of her love for her departed husband, for Naomi, for Boaz and for the God of Israel. Boaz's commendation that Ruth had not gone after young men is not to be understood of committing fornication with them, but of marriage to them, it means that she did not choose to seek after a young man to take as her husband. Boaz mentions this to highlight her virtue, and the great respect she had toward her husband's family. A young, beautiful and virtuous woman as Ruth was, could have found many young men in her own country or in Israel, willing to marry her had she sought after them, but she chose instead to marry the nearest of kin in her husband's family, to perpetuate his name and memory.

RUTH 3:13-15

6

Ruth lays at Boaz Feet until the Morning, then Returns to the City.

- **Ruth 3:13-15:** Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, as the LORD lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning.”¹⁴ So she lay at his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another. And he said, “Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.”¹⁵ And he said, “Bring the garment you are wearing and hold it out.” So, she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her. Then she went into the city.

Boaz is basically saying to Ruth, “You have made clear the purpose of your visit, and I fully agree with it, but do not run the risk of going back to your home now in the darkness of the night, but remain here. Boaz did not say this for any advantage to himself, but so that she would not be exposed to danger and to protect her own honour and rumours being spread amongst the reapers had she been seen returning home at such an unseasonable time of night. He promises Ruth that if a nearer kinsman does not take her in marriage, he would be her lawful redeemer by marrying her, and redeeming her deceased husband's inheritance according to the law of God. These words of Boaz show that he was a very respectable and honourable man. He tells her to lie down and sleep until the morning and rest and let her mind be at peace trusting in what he had promised her and that he will do everything according to God's law spoken of in the following verse.

- **Deuteronomy 25:5:** “If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.

Bring the garment (veil in KJV) that you are wearing and hold it: (v15) hold it with both her hands, while he filled it from the heap of corn that had been winnowed.

The veil was most likely one of the following:

- A large sheet made of red silk or white and blue striped linen or cotton wrapped round the head, concealing the whole face except one eye.
- An apron that working women in these ancient times commonly wore.
- A kind of loose cloak worn over the top of an ordinary dress.
- The veil that she had taken with her to cover herself when she laid down.
- An apron she tied about her as working women in these ancient times commonly did.

He measured out six measures of barley and put it on her (laid it on her in KJV): (v15) when Ruth held out her garment, Boaz measured six measures of barley into it. Some say this refers to six seahs, or six bushels, or two ephahs which would be a heavy load to carry or six omers, a single omer being the tenth part of an ephah, which would be an easier weight to carry, but these are all speculations, for all that we are told is that he gave Ruth six measures, it does not tell us what these measures are.

Boaz put it on her and then she went into the city: (v15) this could mean that he put the six measure of barley in her garment or that after putting it in her garment, they poured it into a basket which woman commonly carry on their head, and Boaz helped her lift it up and place it on her shoulder or head, for it is well known that women during these ancient times and even in some African countries today can carry great weights when balanced on their heads. Some say that researchers have found that women who have been trained from a young age commonly carry up to 20% of their body weight with no extra exertion of energy, and in East Africa, Luo women have been known to carry loads of up to 70% of their own body weight balanced on top of their heads. Showing such kindness to Ruth would have outwardly evidenced to her his kindness and that she was acceptable to him.

She went into the city: (v15) of Bethlehem, it is possible that:

1. She and Boaz went on their own into the city of Bethlehem.
2. Boaz went with Ruth into the city of Bethlehem to protect her should she meet with any that might attempt to take advantage of her or plunder her barley, and upon arriving in the city, they separated, with Ruth going to her mother in law while Boaz went to seek out the nearer kinsman redeemer who had the rightful claim before him.

The beginning of the following chapter begins with Boaz being in the city of Bethlehem:

- **Ruth 4:1:** Now Boaz had gone up to the gate (of Bethlehem) and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, "Turn aside, friend; sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down.

RUTH 3:16-18

Ruth returns to Her Mother-in-Law and tells all Boaz had Done.

- **Ruth 3:16-18:** And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did you fare, my daughter?" Then she told her all that the man had done for her, ¹⁷ saying, "These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said to me, 'You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law.'" ¹⁸ She replied, "Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today."

Ruth had done all that was in her power to do, she must now patiently wait for Boaz to find the nearer kinsman redeemer and trust he would do all that he had promised. Naomi hears someone at her door, and asks,

"who is there?" It seems in the dim twilight (v14) Ruth's mother in law was at first not sure who the young woman was who stood at her door, once she knew it was Ruth, she asks, no doubt with great excitement, her to tell her all that had taken place with Boaz during the previous night. Ruth, no-doubt with the same great excitement and joy tells Namoi that Boaz gave her six measures of barley, because he did not want her return to her mother in law empty handed, which also manifested the great regard and compassion he had for Naomi. The story of Ruth should encourage us to humbly lay ourselves by the faith at the feet of our heavenly Kinsman Redeemer the Lord Jesus Christ, for only he has the power to redeem us from sin and death and save us to eternal life and everlasting happiness.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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