

Lessons from the Book of Ruth

Rick Railston

Recorded on November 3, 2018

The book of Ruth is the story of an older, more experienced man and a younger woman from an alien country; we know it's a love story that ends very happily because they get married, and as a result of that marriage the lineage leads to Jesus Christ. So the question is, since this book is in God's word, is this just an account of Christ's lineage or is it just a feel-good story in the Bible? Is there a deeper meaning or meanings behind this story that apply to us today?

The fact is, the book of Ruth has many, many parallels with what we are going through today and what the Church is going through today—many parallels. So it's something we would probably be well advised to closely look into and that's what we're going to do today. By way of introduction, let's examine the context of this story. You'll want to turn to Ruth chapter 1, verse 1, and if you have a marker, you'll probably want to place it there because we'll be working our way through the account and then going to other scriptures. So, in Ruth 1:1, we get an idea of the timeframe, and we're told:

Ruth 1:1 *Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. (KJV)*

Now this could be the famine that occurred during the Midianite oppression, mentioned in Judges 6:3-6. If that's the case—we don't know for sure—that would date Ruth to the middle of the twelfth century B.C. The book is likely authored by Samuel. So there is a famine in the land,

1 continued) And a certain man of Bethlehem Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab,

Moab was southeast of Jerusalem on the east side of the Dead Sea. It was south of any area occupied by Israel. Going on,

1 continued) ... he, and his wife, and his two sons. [They sojourned probably because of the famine.]

2) And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem Judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. (KJV)

3) *And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.*

4) *And they took them wives of the women of Moab [they probably wouldn't have done that had the father lived]; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. (KJV)*

So both of his sons married women of Moab. It's interesting, Orpah's name; the root means "neck" and that will be appropriate as we'll find out in a little while—it's fitting. The other was named Ruth and her name means "friendship" or "companion" and that is also fitting. The point is that Ruth, the subject of the book, is a foreigner. In a way she was like Rahab during the conquest of Jericho. Ruth, like Rahab, would have been immersed in idolatry from the the day she was born.

5) *And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband. (KJV)*

This means that Naomi is in a bad, bad situation. She has no husband, she has no sons, she has no one to provide for her, plus there is a famine in the land—what is this woman going to do? Verse 6:

6) *Then she [Naomi] arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab [meaning return to Israel]: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread. (KJV)*

The famine in Israel was now over so things were looking maybe a little more optimistic. Verse 7:

7) *Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.*

8) *And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. (KJV)*

Apparently both women were good wives and good daughters-in-law to Naomi, and, it says, dealt well with her—verse 9:

9) *The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. (KJV)*

Naomi tells Orpah and Ruth to stay behind in Moab, to stay with their families in the land where they grew up. She knew that their lives were going to be hard enough as widows, and it would be even harder in Israel where they would be foreigners and pagans, which would add an additional burden onto these two widows.

10) *And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.*

That speaks highly of their opinion of Naomi.

11) *And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? (KJV)*

Because in Deuteronomy 25, we're told a brother was to marry the widow of his dead brother, and take care of her and any children involved.

12) *Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also tonight, and should also bear sons;*

13) *Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; [she's saying this isn't a good idea] for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me. (KJV)*

Now when bad things happen, it's human nature to think this way: God is out to get me, God doesn't like me; all these bad things are happening because somehow God has a grudge against me—that's just human nature.

14) *And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. (KJV)*

She grabbed her, hugged her and wouldn't let her go. Because of Ruth's love and loyalty and devotion, now the story goes on and we can begin to talk about what there is to learn about this. So the title of the sermon is Lessons From the Book of Ruth. The first point we want to look at, which is a parallel, is:

1. Ruth was from a country that was an enemy of Israel.

And here she's going back with Naomi to a country that was against her own country—where she was born. Let's go to Genesis 19:30 and see how this happened. We're breaking into the context of the story of Lot; this is after Sodom

and Gomorrah were destroyed and the land was devastated—a wasteland. Remember Lot's wife had died because she looked back.

Genesis 19:30 *And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, [the valley was devastated] and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.*
31) *And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: (KJV)*

Meaning everywhere they looked it was destroyed—the people were destroyed, there weren't any other human beings around.

32) *Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.*
33) *And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; (KJV)*

Now remember that Lot's daughters were a product of their previous environment, the environment of Sodom. So it's easy to see where this thought even came from, because that was the environment they had grown up in.

33 continued) *... and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose.*
34) *And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. (KJV)*

They did the same thing in verse 35. Then in verse 36:

36) *Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father.*
37) *And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day. (KJV)*

Now what became of the Moabites? They became the enemy of Israel. Let's go to 1 Samuel 14:47 and let's read the first half of verse 47. Saul had just become king and notice who was the first group mentioned that he fought against.

1 Samuel 14:47 *So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, [and first one mentioned] against Moab, (KJV)*

They were historic enemies of Israel; the relationship between Moab and Israel was not a happy one and not a good one. Ruth is now going into the land that is the traditional hated enemy of the Moabites. The parallel for us—before our calling—is we were part of a society that is the enemy of God and Christ, more so today than ever before. Why did that happen before our calling? How can we say that we were enemies of God? Let's go to Romans 8:7—it's very simple. The nature we were born with, human nature, and our environment, are not compatible with God. Romans 8:7, a very familiar scripture:

Romans 8:7 *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: [that means is the enemy of God] for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (KJV)*

Human beings, as we know, left to their own devices, left to themselves, go away from God, as the account in the garden first shows us. In our country today, it is amazing that we have obliterated all references to God in our courthouses, in our state houses, our governments, our schools. "In God We Trust", even though it's still on our coins today, I'm sure somewhere down the line that's going to be removed. The fact is, "In God We Trust", for most people today, is a joke—it is irrelevant. As a nation, in the name of inclusion and tolerance, we teach and encourage ungodly behavior. We welcome it, sometimes even encourage it. It reminds me of the high school football coach who was fired because he dared, after a game, to kneel down and pray to God with the players, thanking God that nobody was hurt. He lost his job because he brought God into the picture—it just turns your stomach.

Today our leaders, publicly, openly, break the Ten Commandments. It used to be in secret—the press would keep it under the radar if one of the presidents committed adultery or one of the presidents maybe got drunk or something like that. But today it is just out in the open. Our leaders, including Congress, routinely break the Ten Commandments and set an example of doing so, and we are fast becoming a totally secular nation. So, as with Ruth, the parallel is, we come out of a country that does not know God. Moab didn't know God and it's sad to say that the world in general and our country, as well as Canada and the Western Nations, do not know God any longer. That's one big parallel.

2. Ruth followed Naomi wherever she went and obeyed her.

That doesn't happen very often where a daughter-in-law would follow and obey her mother-in-law. But that is the second point that is unique about this story. Let's go to Ruth 1:14.

Ruth 1:14 *And they [the two daughters-in-law, we're told] lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.*

15) *And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. (KJV)*

I mentioned earlier that Orpah's name means "neck". It's fitting because she turned her neck to look back at her previous country, her previous society, back to paganism, just as Lot's wife did—she turned around and looked backward, turned the neck. Going on in verse 16:

16) *And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, [notice this last phrase] and thy God my God ...*

She was determined to do that. She was not going to turn back.

17) *Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. (KJV)*

Ruth is mentioning Jehovah here, so obviously she learned well from Naomi and from her husband, who is now dead. The point is, Ruth's association with the family of Elimelech, particularly Naomi, led her to want to follow the true God and to be with people who followed the true God. It's apparent that God is calling Ruth, calling her out of this country to go back to a nation that at least said they followed God—we know the history of Israel—the point here is that she was very obedient to her mother-in-law and she wanted to be obedient to God. When we get to chapter three we'll see more of that. The fact is, someday all humanity will have Ruth's attitude—you tell me where to go and I'll go; I want to follow your God, I want to learn more about your God.

The lesson for us today is we should follow God wherever He leads us. Ruth followed—here she's going into a foreign country, she's leaving her people, leaving her pagan religion, but she feels God is calling her, she feels she wants to worship the true God. So she struck out—journeyed into who-knows-what ahead of her, but she was following the true God. For us, the lesson is we should follow God wherever He leads us. We don't know where it's going to be. All we know is that if we walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, it will all work out.

Remember when Peter and Andrew were fishing and Christ came by, and He called out to them and said, follow Me and I will make you fishers of men? We have to follow God and Christ. That's in Matthew 4:18. Let's go to John 10:27.

We were in John 10 last time, parable of the sheepfold, but notice this—who should we follow? Whose example should we try to emulate?

John 10:27 *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, [what do the sheep do?] and they follow me ... (KJV)*

Follow in His footsteps, follow His example. Let's go to chapter 12:26; Christ says it again. This is very important stuff.

John 12:26 *If any man serve me, [if we say we want to serve God and serve Christ] let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. (KJV)*

Christ is in heaven on the right hand of God the Father, so we can't go and be with Him or be by His side physically as the apostles did, but we want to be where He was in the sense of following His example here on earth, and behave like He did. So let's understand that we must be willing to follow God wherever He leads us, walking after the example of Christ. It could be walking into difficulty, it could be walking into death, but the promise is, if we are willing to follow God, He will be with us as He was with Ruth.

As we go through this, it is just amazing that God was with Ruth and Boaz (as we know, Boaz hasn't yet been introduced), but God was with both of them and Naomi, every single step of the way. They didn't see it at the time, they didn't understand it at the time. But if we are willing to follow God, He will be with us every step of the way as He was with Ruth.

The third point and this is most important for us today.

3. God moved behind the scenes to bless Ruth and Naomi although they didn't realize it at the time.

Naomi, after the death of her husband and the death of her two sons, felt abandoned, and that is understandable. Notice Ruth 1:19. Notice her feelings about the situation.

Ruth 1:19 *So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? (KJV)*

Apparently, Naomi's husband Elimelech was very well known and the family was highly regarded.

20) *And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: [the Hebrew word means bitter—why is she bitter?] for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. (KJV)*

Here the word *bitterly* is a different Hebrew word and it means *to vex*. *God has vexed me*. Again, this is human nature—we blame God sometimes when we get into difficult situations or get into trials.

21) *I went out full [full family, moved to Moab], and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: [no husband, no sons] why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? (KJV)*

She knew who God was, but she's saying, God Almighty has afflicted me. So the point is, we can learn a lesson here, a sub-lesson: We can blame God when God is doing something great for us, but we don't see it at the time. When we come to a trial that God is allowing or causing in our lives, God has a plan down the road to get us where He wants us to be in His Kingdom, but what do we do? We blame God. Why are you doing this to me? How can you love me if you allow this to happen to me? Naomi was in that mode, and yet while she was saying this, God was already setting things in motion that would bless both her and Ruth—but they didn't see it, they didn't know it.

With that in mind, let's look at what God was doing behind the scenes. Still under the third point but we're going to march through the steps that God was taking without their knowledge. Yet Naomi and Ruth obviously have knots in their stomach, they're worried—how are they going to put food on the table, what's going to happen to them? This should be of great comfort to all of us, because we get into trials and we can't see a way out. The horizon is a bit murky and yet look at what God is going to do for these two women.

A. God brings Ruth into contact with Boaz, a near kinsman of great wealth.

Let's go to chapter 2, verse 1. God maneuvers the situation so that Ruth comes into contact with this man of Elimelech's family.

Ruth 2:1 *And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech [Naomi's dead husband]; and his name was Boaz. (KJV)*

Clarke's Commentary on the Bible speculates that Boaz could have been one of the judges of Israel—a very prominent man.

2) *And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him [the word “him” is added] in whose sight I shall find grace. (KJV)*

She said, I’m going to go out and do what I can do to get us something to eat, and hopefully I will find grace—somebody will allow me to glean in the field.

2 continued) ... *And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.*

3) *And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap [chance—God maneuvered this] was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech. (KJV)*

There’s a field today in Israel, near modern-day Bethlehem, called the field of Boaz, and in Jewish tradition this is where Ruth actually gleaned the remnants of the harvest. It’s interesting also that adjacent to that field is a field called the shepherds’ field, where the angels announced the birth of Christ. These are all local traditions, they actually are there, and someday we’ll find out if they’re true. So we see here that God brings Ruth into contact with a man who is a kinsman, and this is important as we go forward.

B. God gives Ruth favor in the eyes of Boaz.

She could have been gleaning in the field and Boaz may never have known; he might have been somewhere else.

Ruth 2:4 *And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem [he wasn’t out in the field but just at the time Ruth went to glean, he came from Bethlehem], and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee. (KJV)*

Apparently Boaz cared about his workers and the workers cared about him; he was a man of high character. Verse 5:

5) *Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?*

God caused Boaz to notice Ruth.

6) *And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab:*

7) *And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the*

morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house [probably to get a drink of water]. (KJV)

The point is, Ruth wasn't asking for a handout, she was willing to work. She worked from morning to that point, during the heat of the day, with barely any rest. The whole time, Boaz is coming from Bethlehem, Ruth is going out into a field, doesn't know whose field it is, and God is working behind the scenes to bring these two together. God inspired Boaz to notice her and Boaz responds by showing compassion on her.

8) Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence,

Okay, it's obvious Boaz has some interest in her—he wants to keep her near;

8 continued) ... but abide here fast by my maidens:

9) Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? [He is looking after her welfare, knowing, full well, the hormonal influences that work in young men] and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. (KJV)

So again, Boaz's actions show his character and he's obviously looking after her and protecting her.

10) Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? (KJV)

The answer is, because God gave her favor in the eyes of Boaz. God intervenes to do the same thing with us. When we need something as a Church, or individually we need something to happen, or have some requirement, God intervenes in the minds and hearts of people to work His will and He's doing it right here.

11) And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. (KJV)

You see, we don't know how Boaz learned all this but God made sure that he understood Ruth's character and what she had done.

12) *The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. (KJV)*

Boaz is saying, I admire you because you are trusting our God. You left your country, you left your family, to come and live in the nation of our God.

13) *Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens. (KJV)*

Meaning, I'm a foreigner, I came out of a pagan country.

14) *And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. (KJV)*

He made sure she had a full meal before she went home. So Ruth now goes home to Naomi after working hard all day long and shows her the grain that she gleaned. And my guess is, it was far greater in abundance than Naomi thought. In part it was greater because of the favor that Boaz showed her. Naomi, seeing this, realized something is going on here, this isn't normal; first day out in the fields and she comes back with this big bag of gleanings. Naomi might be thinking, what's God doing here? There's no way she could normally glean that much. Verse 19; I'll read this out of the New King James,

19) *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."*

20) *Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, [she knew, she knew] "Blessed be he of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!" (NKJV)*

Finally Naomi realized, God is doing something for us, He is performing a miracle for us. She was overjoyed, realizing that Boaz, as a near relative, a close relative to her dead husband, could redeem the family name and could redeem the land. You see, God, behind the scenes, was working a plan, and now Naomi is starting to realize that plan. I'm sure at this point Ruth is still in the dark. She may not be aware of the laws that were in place at that time. Now to another intervention of God.

C. God inspires Naomi with a plan.

This came into her mind and I'm sure God had a hand in it.

Ruth 3:1 *Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? (KJV)*

The Hebrew word for "rest" means *quiet, a settled spot*, or figuratively, *a home*. She is saying, shall I not seek a home for you? Therefore what Naomi is saying to Ruth is, I'm going to seek a husband for you. She comes up with a plan, and God is working behind the scenes to inspire this plan—all of it.

2) *And now [Naomi is saying] is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshing floor.*

3) *Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking.*

4) *And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, [this is odd to us today, but she says] and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.*

5) *And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do. (KJV)*

Ruth obeyed Naomi fully (point number 2). I'm sure Ruth didn't have a clue what was going to happen—why should I go, find this man, find out where he's lying down, and wait until he falls asleep, then uncover his feet—what on earth is that? Being from a foreign land, my guess is she did not understand this custom. In a similar way, God puts thoughts in our mind—when we get into a situation, when we get into a problem, when we don't know the way out, God will put thoughts in our mind about what we should do. Our job is to yield to the lead of His spirit.

We won't turn there but in Romans 8:14, we're told that those that are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God, so our job is to yield to God's inspiration. God will put thoughts in our head and we have to evaluate them to see whether they are coming from God or coming from our adversary, as we heard earlier in the sermonette. If it's a godly solution, we would do well to pay attention to it.

With that in mind, let's notice this next intervention from God:

D. God inspires Boaz to seek Ruth as his wife.

Let's turn to Ruth, chapter 3, verse 6.

Ruth 3:6 *And [obeying her mother-in-law] she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade 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 corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, (KJV)*

The tradition is, when she did that, what she was saying to him is, I want to be part of you. That is what the tradition implied.

8) *And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid ... (KJV)*

You can imagine—you're in a deep sleep, you're tired from working all day, and all of a sudden you wake up because something's going on at your feet. This reminds me of something Dorothy and I experienced thirty years ago. We went up to Winthrop, which is a little town up in the mountains; we wanted to get away for a couple days, and there was a lodge up there that's been around for a long time. That night we had a nice meal, went to bed in this motel, and I was sound asleep when Dorothy whispered at me, something is moving at my feet! I was half asleep, and said, no, just go back to sleep. It wasn't a few seconds later, I felt something moving at my feet and I jumped out of bed, turned the light on and was startled just like Boaz was, and it was a cat. The room had floor-to-ceiling windows and we had opened the bottom one, and the cat just pushed through the screen and jumped up on the bed—it was chilly at night in the mountains and the cat just wanted to get some warmth.

All of a sudden you have company in bed with you and Boaz was the same way. Let me read from the [Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary](#):

Boaz probably slept upon a mat or a skin; Ruth lay crosswise at his feet—a position in which Eastern servants frequently sleep in the same chamber or tent with their master, and if they want a covering, custom allows them that benefit from part of the covering on their master's bed. Resting as the [Middle Easterners] do at night, in the same clothes they wear during the day, there was no indelicacy in a stranger, or even a woman, putting the extremity of this cover over her.

So this was apparently a common practice back then. Going on in the middle of verse 8, after he was startled,

8 continued) *... and turned himself: and, there, a woman was lying at his feet.*

9) *And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: [notice what she says] take your maidservant under your wing; for you are a close relative. (NKJV)*

Again from the Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, “She had already drawn part of the mantle over her and she asked him now to do it, that the act might become his own.” In other words, if Boaz followed through on that, he’s saying to Ruth, I want to be part of you. When she lifted that covering she was saying the same to him. Going on, Jamieson-Fausset-Brown says,

To spread a skirt over one is, in the East, a symbolic action denoting protection. To this 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; and at all the marriages of the modern Jews ... one part of the ceremony is for the bridegroom to put a silken or cotton cloak around his bride.

Again, going back to this very tradition. Now in verse 10, out of the King James, Boaz says to her, after she asks him, a close relative of Naomi, to take her under his wing,

10) *... Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, (KJV)*

Meaning first she showed kindness to her mother-in-law, Naomi, and now she is showing kindness to him, which was totally unexpected.

10 continued) *... inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich. (KJV)*

This is an indication that Boaz was an older man. He’s saying, you could have followed young men but you chose not to, and you are now asking me to take care of you.

Ruth 3:11 *And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.*

12) *And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman ... (KJV)*

A near kinsman had two duties according to God’s law. The first was redeeming property that was lost or was about to be lost. The near kinsman was obligated to buy that property to keep it in the family. Secondly, the near kinsman was obligated to marry a widow of a deceased near relative so that the children could

be raised up in the family. They would not be scattered like today. Those instructions for marrying a widow are found in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. Going on in verse 12, now there's a problem. Boaz says:

12 continued) ... *howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.* [He has the right of first refusal, so to speak]

13) *Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the LORD liveth: [he says, I'm going to do that] lie down until the morning.*

So my guess is they both lie there wide awake the rest of the night, thinking about all the possibilities, pro and con, good and bad, that might occur the next day. Ruth could be marrying somebody about whom she has no clue, whether he is good or bad. She knows Boaz and obviously he would be her preference, but it's out of her control. I'm sure both of them were asking God to do His will—if it's possible, bring us together, and He does:

E. God prevents the near kinsman from claiming Ruth.

Let's go to chapter 4, verse 1.

Ruth 4:1 *Then went Boaz up to the gate ... (KJV)*

In those days the city gate was where public affairs were carried out, business transactions were made, administration of justice occurred; any kind of legal controversy was talked over at the city gate. So Boaz went up to the gate,

1 continued) ... *and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down.*

2) *And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.*

So they had a kind of council of the elders of the city there.

3) *And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: (KJV)*

Now Elimelech, when they moved to Moab, didn't sell this property, he kept it. Upon Naomi's return she still owns the property, but she needs money to support

herself so she is selling it, and it's up to one of these two men to redeem that property, to buy it.

4) And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it.

I'm sure Boaz's heart sank right then. Boaz had a plan, though, probably inspired by God.

5) Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. (KJV)

In other words, you are required to have children with Ruth so that she can be supported in her old age by her children. So not only is he to buy the field, but he is also to have a marriage and to pay for the marriage, and to pay for Ruth and support any children that come along, so this adds a whole new dimension to this fellow's future financial forecast, so to speak.

6) And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it. (KJV)

It's clear when he heard of the field only, Ruth wasn't in the equation. He wanted the field—he didn't have a problem with that—but he probably didn't want any additional expense with another wife and all that that entails in providing for her; maybe he was selfish, we don't know. Some scholars speculate that by having to marry Ruth, it would have diluted the inheritance of his preexisting children because any children coming from Ruth would be part of that inheritance package. We don't know, some day we'll find out. Verse 7:

7) Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. (KJV)

Let me read from the [Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament](#): “This custom itself ... arose from the fact that fixed property was taken possession of by treading upon the soil,”—the new owner would go walk the land—“and hence, taking off the shoe and handing it to another was a symbol of the transfer of a possession or right of ownership.” Again, because the new owner is going to walk that land.

8) *Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe [and handed it to Boaz because Boaz now was the owner of the land and he was going to walk the land].*

9) *And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi.*

10) *Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. (KJV)*

You see, God moves behind the scenes to make this happen, and He does the same thing with all of His children today. What He did for Boaz and Ruth, He does for all of us on a daily basis. All of us have seen God's intervention in our lives, especially recently in the Church. We wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for God's intervention. A series of things had to happen and they happened in ways beyond our wildest expectations—you can see that. So many people have said, this happened and then that followed; this miracle occurred and they just lined up like dominoes. It was very clear that God was working behind the scenes with us as He did with Ruth back in that day.

Let me give you a personal example—I learned this my first year while I was being called; I was an officer in the air force and it took me a few months to prove that being a member of the armed services wasn't compatible with being a Christian. I proved it in the Bible, so I applied to get out as a conscientious objector, and this was in the mid-'60s. I had a hundred percent faith that it would be approved, because, you know, God doesn't want us in the military, so there's an avenue to get out—you apply—therefore since God doesn't want us there and I've done my part in applying, hey, God's going to make it happen, He's going to have it approved. If we had had an alert on any given Sabbath, I wouldn't have gone, resulting in direct disobedience of an order; a court martial would have followed, and military jail would have followed after that.

In those days in military jails (they're probably the same today) you don't have big screen TVs and ping pong tables to entertain the troops, so to speak—these are hard, hard conditions. And so facing that was the reality every Sabbath. I put in my application and typically the military moves kind of slowly; it took a couple months and they refused it. I was just devastated. Like Naomi, I asked, God, why are you doing this to me? How can you do this? I mean, I'm doing the right thing, I'm following your law, I applied to get out! Why on earth didn't you approve it? So I was kind of grumbling like Naomi. I had to wait six months to reapply; those are just the rules.

So the base commander, looking after his own skin, wanted to make me somebody else's problem. He knew I was going to reapply in another six months, so he didn't want it to happen again under his watch. He cut orders to have me transferred to Okinawa. This took a couple of months, for the orders to come through, and you have to depart on this day—you pack and you do all this stuff—I went to visit my parents, said goodbye to them not knowing what was going to happen, and then the week before I left, the order was cancelled. Out of the clear blue, just cancelled.

Then the base commander said, well, if that's not going to work, what else is available? Again, it takes weeks for this to happen, it doesn't happen right away. So he wanted me transferred and this time there was an availability in Germany. The orders were cut, I was supposed to go to Germany. I went through the same rigamarole again, and it was about ten days or two weeks before I was supposed to go, and the order was cancelled. No explanation—it just goes through that the order was cancelled.

Okay, we go through this drill again, and now the third time, I think the base commander finally says, look, we're going to stick this guy where the sun doesn't shine, literally, because they transferred me to Greenland—Sondrestrom Air Base in Greenland. I thought to myself, if I get in a military jail in Greenland, they will never see me again. I was pretty worried at this point, because I even asked the Church, when do you keep the Sabbath up there? It's dark most of the time in the winter and it's light all the time in the summer, so when do you keep the Sabbath? We were going 'round about that because I didn't know what I was getting into. Three or four days before I was to leave, it was cancelled.

Three times in a row. There was a master sergeant in the personnel section—I got to know him because we were going through all this rigamarole together. He was a good Catholic, and he was a nice guy, and he said, this just doesn't happen. He said, I've been at this for over thirty years and this just doesn't happen. By that time the six months had run its course, I applied, and it was quickly approved.

So now my attitude was totally different toward God. You know, thank you God! But the point is, looking at it in hindsight, there were lessons I needed to learn. Yes, it was hard, and yes, there were knots in my stomach, but God wanted me to learn to trust Him no matter the circumstances—no matter what it looked like on the surface, the same way with Naomi and Ruth—no matter how bad it looked, God wanted them to learn the lesson: just trust Me. We've all seen God's intervention—God working behind the scenes to rescue us, to take care of us, to lead us towards His Kingdom as He did with Ruth. That's the end of the third point. The fourth point is:

4. The story ends in a marriage.

Obviously there's a huge parallel with us today. Let's go to verse 13 of Ruth 4.

Ruth 4:13 *So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, [you think God had a plan for this, you think God had this in mind all along?] and she bare a son. (KJV)*

So we see here, an older, more experienced man, who was an Israelite, married a woman from an alien country—a Gentile who had come out of paganism, but who was of high character.

14) *And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.*

15) *And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him. (KJV)*

In the end, you see, for Naomi, Ruth was better than seven sons. She produces what Naomi's son failed to do and that's an heir. The fruit of God calling Boaz and Ruth together resulted in Jesus Christ. Verse 20.

20) *And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon ... (KJV)*

It's interesting, Jewish tradition is that Salmon was one of the two men hidden by Rahab who let him down on wall and he later married her. That's a Jewish tradition and we'll find out some day if it's true.

21) *And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David. (KJV)*

We know Christ is descended from David. This was all part of God's long-range plan. God sees from the beginning to the end, and we, little participants, are like little ants running around on an anthill, we only have very limited vision, we don't get the big picture. So the fact is, similarly, our story is going to end in a marriage just like Ruth's did. The same is going to happen, this marriage, between us and Christ. Christ is an eternal being with infinitely more experience and He's going to marry each one of us who are from an alien country—a country that does not know God. The fruit of that marriage will result in us being eternal beings, with God and Christ, in the Kingdom of God, and we will be in the image of God and Christ. Now the fifth and last point:

5. Ruth was a Gentile, grafted into physical Israel.

I think you already know the parallel here. We know point number one: Moab was Israel's enemy and Ruth became an Israelite through marriage, she became a relative of Christ. In the New Testament you see that Gentiles were grafted into spiritual Israel. Let's go to Romans 11:13—this is what blew the minds of the Jews and many of them rebelled and couldn't accept it. They thought God's Kingdom was just designed for Jews and Jews only. They just could not get their heads around that, that a Gentile, an uncircumcised Gentile, could come into the Church of God and be in God's Kingdom.

Romans 11:13 [Notice Paul says] *For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:*

Now in verse 16, Paul establishes a principle.

16) *For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.*

17) *And if some of the branches be broken off [referring to the Jews], and thou [talking to the Gentiles], being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; (KJV)*

That's salvation—they are grafted in after certain of the Jews rejected Christ and those branches were broken off; now this wild olive tree, this branch, is grafted into the Church with the object of being in God's Kingdom. Now all of us, regardless of our background, have been grafted into the body of Christ. Through Christ's sacrifice, through our repentance, through baptism, through laying on of hands, we have been grafted into the body of Christ, which is spiritual Israel. Let's go to 1 Corinthians 12:27, a very familiar scripture. Paul is talking to the church in Corinth and he's taking to us today.

1 Corinthians 12:27 *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. (KJV)*

We have been grafted in. Then go back to Romans 12:5, we have been grafted into the body of Christ which is spiritual Israel.

Romans 12:5 *So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. (KJV)*

You see, in this fifth point, Ruth was grafted into physical Israel even though she was of Moab, even though she came out of paganism. She became an Israelite,

so much so that she is a relative of Jesus Christ. When God called us, as God called Ruth, we've been grafted into a spiritual body, a spiritual nation—the Church, headed by Jesus Christ.

When we look at this whole picture and at what happened to Naomi and Ruth and Boaz—how God brought them out of a disaster into how it ended, where Boaz and Ruth were married and had offspring that led to Jesus Christ, and Naomi was taken care of until the day of her death—look at the good that happened in the end, even though in the middle of it and the beginning of it, it looked quite grim, as if these two women had no hope. Yet Ruth, because she was righteous, because she was obedient, she made herself ready to be the bride of Boaz. We, through the Holy Spirit, must make ourselves ready to be the bride of Christ.

Let's go to a final scripture; Revelation 19:7, a very familiar scripture. Let's make an emphasis here: This doesn't happen automatically, Ruth had to expend effort. Ruth went to the field and she worked and she worked. She impressed people by her righteousness and her character and her work ethic. With that in mind, we have a job to do.

Revelation 19:7 *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife [Is made ready? Somebody else makes her ready? No.] hath made herself ready. (KJV)*

His wife put in the work and put in the effort to be like Jesus Christ. Christ is not going to marry somebody He can't recognize. The potential bride of Christ has to work through the power of the Holy Spirit to be like the One he or she is going to marry and that is Jesus Christ, following in His footsteps.

So let's learn the lessons, the parallels from the book of Ruth. The big lesson, for us today, I think, is that despite the outward appearances, God works behind the scenes to rescue us, literally rescue us; He takes care of us, protects us, with the ultimate goal of bringing us into His Kingdom.