

## Ruth Chapter 3 – John Karmelich

1. Let me start by reminding everyone where we left off. The book of Ruth, as we know it a short four-chapter book about a Jewish woman and her daughter in law who return to live in the land of Israel after the men in that family died. Ruth herself is a foreigner, who'll marry an Israelite in the next chapter. Ruth will eventually become the great grandmother of the most famous king in Israel's history, King David. The chapter breaks were added about two thousand years after this story was first written down, as each chapter is a pretty much separate scene in a "four act play".
  - a) Chapter 3 mostly takes place out in a field where the main plot point is essentially: Ruth proposes marriage to her future husband Boaz, an older Israelite. If he'll agree to marry Ruth, he not only has to provide for her, but also support her mother in law Naomi.
  - b) It's a cute short story about the redemption of a desolate Israelite widow and a foreign girl as they depend upon the guidance of God of Israel for their redemption.
2. The big question of course is why should we care about this story? Yes, it is part of the bible and therefore, it's a God ordained story for us to study and apply to our lives. What I ponder is what does God wants us to learn from this story?
  - a) First and foremost, the book of Ruth in a strange way, is a wonderful model of God's plan of redemption for all of mankind. Consider how each character fit's in God's big plans:
    - i) Ruth, a foreign born woman will marry the story's hero. She'll become part of the line of people that bring Jesus into the world through King David. She becomes a model of how non-Jewish Christians get saved by serving a Jewish God.
    - ii) Boaz is considered a model of Jesus, as he not only saves a non-Jewish girl who's also converted in a typological sense to serve the God of the Israelites. After Ruth humbly submits herself to Boaz in this chapter, he effectively agrees to marry her. It' a model of the salvation of a "gentile" by adopting the God of the Jewish people.
    - iii) Naomi, the Jewish woman who lost her husband and two sons is in effect, a model of the Nation of Israel who eventually gets redeemed, as her non-Jewish daughter in law agrees to accept the God of the Israelites and marries the Jewish story hero.
      - a) It's interesting to me that Naomi never meets Boaz. In this story, Boaz is a relative of her late husband. By Jewish law, Boaz is part of the family that's obligated to raise up children in the name of Naomi's late husband.
      - b) I like the fact that Boaz is a model of a "redeemer" of the Israelites even as we don't read of him meeting Naomi. In effect, it's by a non-Jewish woman agreeing to be Boaz's wife that Naomi herself "gets saved".
  - b) Most of us who are evangelical Christians believe in a future unknown day, when Jesus returns to bring salvation to the nation of Israel. This story is a model of God's game plan of bringing many people from all over the world to trust in Jesus for their salvation before Jesus comes back to work directly through Israel once again as a nation. My point is that the book of Ruth is a wonderful model of God's "big plan" for salvation.
    - i) At this point, I'd like to quote something a famous Jewish radio personality said as he was speaking to a Christian audience, "Many religious Jewish people will argue that the only reason Christians care about the nation of Israel is that they expect to see Jesus rule over that nation one day. My (Dennis Prager's) reaction to that idea is so what? Either way we the Jewish people win! If Jesus never comes, then we Jewish people get multitudes of Christians caring about Israel as a nation. If Jesus does return, as the Promised Messiah, that means He'll rule the world from Israel. Therefore, even though I (Dennis) don't believe in Jesus, I root for those Christians who do believe this event will occur."
  - c) My point is Chapter 3 is a great model of that whole scene playing out of what Jesus does.

3. OK John, that's a wonderful story and although I've may have never thought of the book of Ruth that way, what does it have to do with my life today? As you love to preach, "We believe in Jesus now what"? What's the "now what" of this chapter you want us to learn? Thanks for asking my favorite question, and here comes my lesson title that explains my "now what":
  - a) Understanding God's game plan for mankind as modeled in the book of Ruth. My "now what" for this lesson is the importance of seeing the big picture of how God's working in the world at the present moment to draw people from all over the world close to Him as He works in the world before one day returning to work through the nation of Israel.
  - b) It's God's model of human redemption in a short four-chapter book. Have you ever heard the expression, "Two steps forward and one step back?" It refers to the idea of when we're not sure where to go next in life, we take a step back, think about the big picture and then we make a logical decision based on that big picture. That essentially is what I'm doing as I take on the third chapter of the book of Ruth.
  - c) While the story is pretty straightforward, the interesting part to me is to step back, see the big picture of this book as a model of how God's working out plan to call out people who are willing to be with Him for eternity, effectively, first through the Jewish nation, then by believing in the resurrected Jesus and finally a future day when God the father will once again primarily focus on the nation of Israel again.
4. With that big picture understood, I can describe Chapter 3 in one paragraph: Most of this scene takes place while Boaz is asleep. Ruth, by the urging of her mother, gets "fixed up" and goes to sleep at Boaz's feet. When he wakes up and finds her there, there's no sexual attack of any sort. It's effectively a marriage proposal by Ruth to Boaz without her saying those words. He agrees to marry her out based on a Jewish law that we Christians call the "kinsman redeemer". What that means is the closest male relative of Naomi is required to raise up children on her behalf. Since Naomi considers herself too old to have children, she's to have children "via Ruth". In the story, Boaz said there's one relative closer than him who's first obligated to marry her, but if he won't do it, Boaz will. Bottom line is we're setting up the scene for the big marriage that will occur in the next chapter.
  - a) One final point in this model of human redemption and then we'll start the text. If Boaz represents Jesus in His role of our "redemption" to God, (that is, we're purchased back by God based on Jesus' sacrifice), then who does that unnamed closer relative to Naomi and Ruth represent in this story? In other words, if there's an unnamed "villain" who refuses to marry Ruth, why is that fact part of this story? Most bible commentators believe that this person represents God's laws in the sense that we can't be saved by perfectly obeying God's laws, as none of us are perfect. It represents a "close relative" in the sense that most people believe they can go to heaven because their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds. It's only when we get past "the law" we understand that God wants to "redeem" us to be with us forever, not because we deserve it, but just because He wants too.
  - b) Shorter version? From the human perspective of not knowing all things, we ask God if we can choose to be with Him forever, not because we deserve it, but just because we ask. From God's all knowing perspective, He knew we were going to choose to ask to be with Him forever, so He picked us to be with Him. Not because we're perfect or special, but just because God loves us: faults and all. That's the point of Ruth Chapter 3 in a nutshell.
  - c) OK, then if you get all that, you're ready for the details of this chapter.
5. Verse 1: One day Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for?
  - a) Keep in mind that Naomi and Ruth are unaware of any of this "big picture stuff". All they know is that they're living in her home town, and have no long term means of survival, so they need to plan how they're going to live. With that thought in mind, Naomi's advice to her daughter in law is essentially, I know you (Ruth) want to care for me, but I want to do what's best for you, and in this case, try to find you a husband who'll provide for you.

- b) Realize by doing this, Naomi is also providing for herself. What Naomi is saying, is if you go find a husband to take care of you, who's "obligated to do so", he'll also arrange to take care of me as I'm then "family".
  - c) To roughly translate this verse another way, "Hey Ruth, you're good looking and you're young enough to still attract a husband. No one's going to hold it against you that you're a widow. Yes you can marry a cute young man who'd probably provide for you the rest of your life. However, there's a Jewish law that effectively says if a husband dies in Israel, the nearest relative of that husband has the duty to raise up children on behalf of the one who died. (As I said in the last lesson, this is from Deuteronomy 25). Boaz happens to be a close relative who fits that role and he can financially provide for us. Therefore I'd like you to propose marriage to him by submitting to him and see if he accepts.
  - d) It may help to realize that this marriage custom is considered an obligation that a relative should perform, but isn't required to. Realize Boaz wouldn't be killed to go to prison if he didn't accept her proposal. The punishment for refusing to perform this duty was to be shamed publicly for a while, but that's about it. Therefore since Naomi knew all of these customs as she was raised understanding Jewish law, she arranged for Ruth to propose to Boaz given the fact he has an obligation as the "redeemer" of that family.
  - e) Let's discuss this marriage proposal one more way, and then I'll move on: Remember that Naomi left Israel at least ten years earlier as there was a famine and she thought God's not providing for His people at that time. She comes back to discover she was wrong. He not only provided for the nation of Israel, but her home town was still going strong and there is a man who got wealthy based on working the land that Naomi had abandoned. All I'm saying here is that Naomi's willingness to once again trust in the God of Israel will bring a type of redemption to her despite the fact she herself in a typological sense abandoned the God of the Israelites.
    - i) As I stated in the introduction, Naomi never meets Boaz in this story. That fact is the basis of how Naomi is a model of the Nation of Israel. Just as that nation will still be blessed by God after He gathers a large group of people willing to commit their lives to Him, (that is, Christians), then once again, God will once again focus on the Nation of Israel as taught in Romans Chapter 11. My point is this story is a great model of how Jesus will return to save the Jewish nation once God's through collecting Christians from around the world.
    - ii) Like my Dennis Prager quote in my introduction, "If Christians only care about the nation of Israel due to the possible return of Jesus, who cares if their right? Either way, the Jewish people are blessed about Christians caring about that nation!"
6. Verse 2: Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. <sup>3</sup> Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. <sup>4</sup> When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do."
- a) Now that I've explained in detail what is Naomi's plan for how Ruth is to propose to Boaz in this story, Verses 2-4 give some details to how that scene takes place. Naomi gives us a few details of where Boaz will be and how Naomi is to approach her.
  - b) To explain, first I need to give a few details for us non-farmers. Once farmers finished the process of picking their crops, it has to be "prepared" for market. In this case, what can be sold, "the wheat" has to be separated from a now useless part of the wheat called chaff. In the growing of wheat or barley, "chaff" is a part of that plant that helps it grow. Once the wheat is fully-grown the chaff has no purpose. The process to separate the sellable wheat from the chaff requires the wheat to be thrown in the air. The heavier wheat will just fall to the ground while the "useless chaff" will be carried by the wind. In the springtime in Israel, there would be an evening wind that would blow and it's perfect for this process.

- c) Well, now that we're all ready to be farmers, realize that the hero of our story, Boaz is the one who owns this farm. Therefore as the time to pick the crop is done, Naomi knows the next step in the process is that Boaz will be "winnowing barley on the threshing floor" as stated in Verse 2. All that means is there will be a flat place where one can throw wheat in the air and the useless chaff will fly into the breeze and the wheat will fall to the ground.
- i) A danger of course, is predator animals and thieves. Therefore, it was customary for the workers to sleep next to the crop after they've worked all day separating it from what has no value.
  - ii) The point of this agricultural education is that Naomi knew where Boaz will spend the night tonight. Therefore, she tells Ruth effectively, "Get washed and look your best as tonight you're going to propose marriage to Boaz". Remember that by this point in the story, Boaz knew who Ruth was as she's worked in his field for what's speculated to be a month or two of "harvesting season".
  - iii) Remember that Ruth loves her mother in law and goes along with this plan. I don't think Ruth was necessarily attracted to Boaz as a future husband. He was probably a whole lot older. This is a case of Ruth humbly obeying her mother in law even if it affected her own happiness for the rest of her life.
    - a) If you get nothing else out of this story, realize that the secret to living a life full of joy is to put the needs of others ahead of our own needs. Remember that's what Jesus commanded us to do to live out the Christian life.
    - b) By Ruth agreeing to effectively propose marriage to Boaz so he could carry out the role of a "kinsman redeemer", Ruth's giving up her own happiness for the sake of putting Naomi's needs ahead of hers.
    - c) Whether we Christians realize it or not, when we commit our lives to serve God, we too are helping the Jewish nation as our salvation makes us "one person closer" to Jesus return to rule over the Jewish nation, just as Ruth's agreement to marry Boaz will help Naomi to survive and thrive despite the fact she came back to Israel "empty and bitter".
  - iv) So are you saying we girls have to marry whom our parents choose? As the father of two girls, I like the idea, but I know it won't happen that way. A point here is to realize that who we marry carries implications beyond "us a couple". It will affect the lives of others around us. Just as Ruth agreeing to propose marriage to Boaz is going to bring happiness to Naomi, so us effectively agreeing to marry Jesus as we give our lives to Him, it will not only bring us eternal joy, but also bless others as we now use our lives to serve Him. Ok, enough of that, back to the story.
- d) At this point, I need to get back to the verses themselves. Naomi's advice to Ruth is after she gets herself all "fixed up", she's to sneak into the camp where Boaz is, and assumedly the other men working with Boaz are sleeping and she's to go to sleep at his feet. Naomi then explains to Ruth who again is not an Israelite, that Boaz will do the right thing here.
- i) Stop and consider how dangerous this was for Ruth. She had no idea whether or not Boaz will sexually attack her if she lies there. Ruth understood Naomi enough to realize she's to propose marriage to Boaz based on that kinsmen-redeemer law. Even though Ruth was all "gussied up" to use a very outdated expression, she had no desire to attack him sexually and was probably nervous that no one would see her doing this let alone be attacked by someone or something as she's sneaking out to see Boaz in the middle of the night.
  - ii) Notice the trust that Naomi had in Boaz. She trusted that he wouldn't attack her in any sexual way. She trusted that Boaz would "do the right thing" which means he would agree to play the role of the kinsmen redeemer. That meant he'd agree to take Ruth as a wife and raise children with her in order for Naomi's "family line" to continue. My point is this was no small favor to ask Boaz.

7. Verse 5: "I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered. <sup>6</sup> So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.
- a) These two lines are here so we know that Ruth agreed to Naomi's plan. Notice Ruth does not say, "Hey I'm not Jewish, and the fact that Boaz is related to your late husband is your problem not mine. Me, I'm just living off the welfare system and accepting it". My point is we read of Ruth agreeing to humble herself just as her mother in law Naomi asks her to do. My guess is Ruth is thinking, "I've got nothing to lose her but my dignity as well as a danger of being attacked, but it's better choice than the way I'm living right now."
  - b) The point for you and me is if we're willing to humble ourselves and take a risk based on the name of God the Father, He can and does work in our lives when we take that risk in His name. In my adult lifetime, I've watched God do amazing things through ordinary people willing to take risks simply based on their trust that God can and will do things for those of us who do put our trust in Him. Ruth is one of multitudes of examples of people succeeding in life when they're willing to take that risk.
8. Verse 7: When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. <sup>8</sup> In the middle of the night something startled the man, and he turned and discovered a woman lying at his feet.
- a) Meanwhile, it's time to discuss all of this from Boaz's perspective. The process of taking wheat and sifting out the usable from the unusable part is both hard work and a party. I say that as in effect this is payday as the work is to separate what they harvested so they can take that food to the market to sell. My point is I picture Boaz and his workers having a hard day's work at sifting, celebrating afterwards and then literally crashing where all of this work is taking place. Again, they sleep there to protect their crop from both animals as well as potential thieves. I also picture Boaz taking a sack of wheat and using that as a pillow to sleep on.
  - b) Anyway, after a hard day's work and a night of celebration, I picture Boaz "out cold" until he wakes up in the middle of the night to find Ruth asleep at his feet. Notice that we don't read of Boaz attacking Ruth or vice versa. This isn't a sexual scene but an innocent as well as unusual move, as Ruth boldly and effectively proposes marriage to Boaz.
  - c) OK John, it's a cute scene and we can all see where it's going. Stop and think about when you or I first gave our lives to Jesus. We asked Him to be in charge. No we didn't sneak up on God like Ruth is doing here, but I'd argue that in most of our cases, we were scared of what our friends might think if we did this. My point is just as we each quietly asked God to be in charge of our lives, so Ruth is asking this older stranger to be in charge of her life as well as her mother in law.
9. Verse 9: "Who are you?" he asked. "I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer."
- a) Notice a couple of things. Remember that Boaz was waking up in the middle of the night after a hard days week and possibly a little party that night. There are no streetlights or even oil lights as everyone is asleep. There's only the natural light of the moon and stars as Boaz realize someone's cuddled up as his feet.
  - b) Also catch the fact that Ruth knows about the Jewish law of a "kinsman-redeemer". That is a translation of the Hebrew word "goel". My point is that Naomi must have explained to Ruth all about the principals behind that law. This is effectively a marriage proposal.
  - c) Again, think about how our relationship with Jesus first began. We asked Him effectively to be in charge of our lives. Just as Jesus "redeemed" us from going to hell for our sins, so we see Boaz being asked to redeem Ruth and Naomi from a life of poverty.
    - i) I have to admit as a man, it's a little strange to think of myself as the "Jesus' bride". Remember it's not a sexual thing. It's meant as a word picture of having a close and personal relationship with God. It's meant to be like a healthy marriage.

- d) There's another cute little bit of trivia that's fun to bring up here. In that Jewish culture, the way we know someone's "rank" in life is that it is embroidered on the bottom edge of one's robe. The closest description I can think of is in the military. The way we know the rank of a soldier is by the stripes on their shoulder or their arm sleeve or maybe on their hat. My point is the military a soldier can recognize who's who by their uniform. In the same way, it was custom for Jewish men to have sown on the bottom of their robes, some type of string to indicate who they are.
- i) I bring all that up here, so when the text says that Ruth asked Boaz to take his robe and cover her, it's not that she's cold. It's to take his symbol of authority as shown on his robe and cover her with that authority.
  - ii) Shorter version: It's a marriage proposal by her.
  - iii) Yes it's a bold move by Ruth. She understood the Jewish law of being a kinsmen redeemer. She's asking Boaz to fulfill that duty by marrying Ruth. She's asking if he would agree to not only marry Ruth, but financially support her and Naomi.
  - iv) So does that mean if we ask Jesus to be in charge of our lives, we can stop working as He'll financially support us? Not that I've seen. It does mean God wants to take over our lives and be in charge of it. He'll lead us down a path He'll want us to go as he makes away for us to survive as well as make a difference for Him.
- e) With all of that in mind, let's move on to Boaz's reaction to this incident:
10. Verse 10: "The LORD bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. <sup>11</sup> And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character.
- a) Stop and realize that Boaz himself could have forced himself on Ruth. He could have said "I am your kinsmen redeemer, so deal with it and we're going to get it on, here and now". The fact that Boaz treated Ruth with respect is a sign of His character.
  - b) Boaz in effect said to Ruth, "Hey, you didn't run off after a man your own age, whether he be rich or poor is a sign of your character. The fact that you're willing to spend the rest of your life with me based on a Jewish tradition shows not only your loyalty to your mother in law, but also your willingness to do the right thing, even if it costs you're your life."
  - c) That little speech leads us back to you and me. I'm not asking us to divorce our spouses so to go marry some older person. I'm just saying that just as Ruth was willing to submit to Boaz, that's a wonderful model of how God desires a relationship with you and me.
    - i) Realize to be a Christian is effectively a desire to be a slave to God's desire for our lives. I admit, it seems strange to ask a stranger, "You want to be a Christian? If that's the case, you have to be willing to give up the desires you have for your life so you can now live as a slave for Jesus?" If we don't know much about Jesus we have to admit, it's not a choice we'd desire to make. Unless we accept the idea of Jesus being God and being in charge of our lives, the "then what" is to desire to be a slave to His desire for our lives for the rest of our lives.
    - ii) I give that little evangelical speech, because notice the similarity between that idea and what Ruth is doing in this story. By laying at Boaz's feet and asking him to be in charge of her life for the rest of her life, is all about Boaz being in charge of her as long as she'll live.
    - iii) So what about our current marriage? Do we divorce our spouses in order to be the "bride of Jesus"? In most cases, not in this lifetime. The New Testament makes it clear that the only possible (not you have to, but possible) grounds for divorce is if our spouse cheats on us. I'd also add that if abuse is involved, separate yourself as we ask God what to do next in that situation. I've seen the conduct of a spouse be a witness to a spouse so both over time eventually end up being a slave to Jesus. See Paul's first letter to the Corinthians Chapter 7 on that topic.

- iv) Even Jesus Himself commented on that topic. He said in effect that when we get to heaven, we may truly love the spouse we've had here on earth. In heaven there is no marriage other than those who love Jesus spending eternity with Him. What that means is our current desire to please our spouses ends in the sense that we'll spend eternity serving Jesus just as it should be our desire now to be pleasing to our spouse in this lifetime. (See Matthew 22:30 or Luke 20:34 on that topic.)
- d) I can just hear you married people reading this and thinking, "Well, if my wife was more like a Ruth, I'd be happy to take care of her." Or saying, "If my husband was as kind to me as Boaz is here, I'd be happy to submit to him". It's like thinking, "You don't know the type of person I have to live with, he or she is not this submissive wife or wonderful man like we read of in this story". He or she has horrible faults and is hard to live with. What you're saying is in effect, "My spouse is imperfect". Welcome to the club.
  - i) What I've come to realize is that my spouse's behavior in effect is God's problem as well as her problem. My job is to be a good witness for Jesus as I submit to Him as well as submit to my spouse. Am I perfect at this? Hardly. Do I mess up? All the time. When I realize that Jesus is in charge of my life and I'm willing to use it as a witness for Him, that's when I'm at my best no matter what the situation.
  - ii) You may think, "But you don't know how messed up my situation is". As I love to say, "Welcome to the club". All I know about your situation is that there's a God in heaven who loves you, cares about you and desires that you and I use our lives for His glory. One of my favorite prayers which absolutely positive God can't resist to answer is effectively, "God I'm in a tough situation right now. I have no idea what to do next. All I know for sure is that You're in charge of my life. So help me to go do whatever is Your will and lead me as I submit my life to that will." Once we do submit ourselves that way, I've seen God do some amazing things in the lives of a believer when we're willing to submit that way.
  - iii) OK John, that's a good point. What does it have to do with Ruth? Everything. We read of Ruth willing to submit in effect as a slave to potentially her future husband Boaz so that her mother in law will be taken care of the rest of her life. A question for you and me is are we willing to submit our lives in effect as a slave to God no matter what that means for our future? Every now and then I love to quote Chuck Missler as he regularly contemplates God saying to him, "OK, Chuck, do you love Me now, even through this?" That's what God does to us. He's saying do you still trust Me now, even though I'm allowing you to go through this in your life?
- e) Time to return to the verses. We left off with Boaz telling Ruth in effect, "I'm grateful that you've made this choice to submit yourself to me. Not because I have the "hots" for you at this moment. You, Ruth are doing this as you're willing to submit yourself to God as you live under his rules and give up your life in order to preserve the life of Naomi. Realize in Verse 11 that Boaz is complimenting Ruth's character that way. He says in effect, you're the type of woman who'd any man would be attracted to because you're willing to submit yourself to a man in order to help out someone you truly love. To quote a famous saying, "You're willing to put your money and time where your mouth is".
- f) Boaz compliments her in Verse 11 by saying, "You already have a reputation in town as a woman of great character whether you realize it or not". The way God responds to us if we are willing to submit to Him, is in effect with a similar type of comment. God doesn't say, "I know you've submitted to Me as you don't have a choice" or "It's about time you do realize I'm in charge". Instead He tells us I'm grateful to have an eternal relationship with us as that's what I desire with all people willing to submit their lives to Me. Yes I'm God so therefore, I know all things, but I want you (us) to know how much I, God love you as you are and are willing to submit your lives to Me. Now let Me guide you so that you can use your (our) lives for My glory. That's the greatest purpose we can have with our lives.

11. Verse 12: Although it is true that I am near of kin, there is a kinsman-redeemer nearer than I. <sup>13</sup> Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to redeem, good; let him redeem. But if he is not willing, as surely as the LORD lives I will do it. Lie here until morning."
- a) Let me paraphrase Boaz here: OK Ruth, I know you desire a kinsman redeemer to do that duty so you and Naomi can live "happily ever after". However there's a man who's closer to Naomi than me. In the morning, I'll ask him to perform that duty. If he won't do it, I'll agree to do it at that point. What commentator's suspect is that Boaz was probably either a brother or a cousin of Naomi's late husband. Boaz may have had an older brother who's first in line to do that duty as a kinsmen redeemer. That's why Boaz makes the statement that I have to ask him to due that duty first.
  - b) Keep in mind that the duty of a "kinsman redeemer" is not considered a requirement, but an obligation that one should perform. My point is if one turns down that duty, one may have to face shame for not doing that duty, but it's not a death sentence.
    - i) In Chapter 4 of this four-act play, we'll read of that closer relative agreeing to turn down that duty as Boaz remains the hero of this story. My point is we won't read of that closer relative being killed or thrown in jail for turning it down.
  - c) I keep thinking about this story from Ruth's perspective. In Verse 13, Boaz tells Ruth just to go back to sleep and he'll work out the details in the morning. If I was Ruth, there'd be no way I'd go back to sleep at that point. Ruth had to be thinking, "Tomorrow I'm going to be married either to this guy or someone I've never met for the rest of my life. What is my life going to be like at this point? Who will I be married to? I picture Ruth eventually falling back to sleep pondering what will happen to her. I wonder if she had bad or good dreams thinking about the possibilities. She submitted herself into Boaz's hands and she has to be wondering what that means for her future just as we ponder what's will happen to our lives tomorrow as we continue to trust God to guide our lives.
    - i) Speaking of thinking about life from Ruth's perspective, I pondered how did this story get written down to be part of the bible? Again, Jewish tradition is that it's written by Samuel the prophet who for a while worked tightly with King David.
    - ii) I wonder if Ruth wrote down part of this story and it was kept for David. If Ruth did get married at a young age, I wondered if she was still alive by the time David came around. Either way, I suspect the story was written down by either Ruth or maybe Boaz and that story eventually became part of the bible.
  - d) OK, let's get back to the story itself. The bottom line of these verses is Ruth is told to stay the night at Boaz's feet and in the morning she'll be wed to someone. The issue of course is who?
    - i) With only four more verses left in the chapter, let me talk a little about my opening comment of "Two steps forward and one step back". You have to admit, Ruth took the "two steps forward" as she agreed to submit her life to Boaz at this point. Now we get the "one step back" as we stop to contemplate the possibilities at this point.
    - ii) Why would this story include a "villain" who is the closer relative to Naomi than Boaz is here? Is it just to create some drama? I hold the view that the bible doesn't have any accidents and the text is there for a reason.
    - iii) That leads to my next question, what does that "villain" of this story represent? In this story, we never get the name of that closer relative. So why is it here? In my introduction, I stated that this closer relative represents God's law. I don't mean to say that God's law is a bad thing. I'm saying we can't be saved in obedience to it. My point is simply that none of us are perfect. If we're going to spend eternity in the presence of a perfect God we need to be perfect as well. That's why we submit to Him, as we can never be perfect. That's why God Himself has to pay the price for our sins as we can never be good enough for Him. The reason we then should obey the law is not to earn His love, but because it's the best way to live our lives.



- iv) To finish that analogy, the law is a "closer relative" in that God's requirements for us to live comes before our redemption through Jesus' blood. In other words, we have to realize we're a sinner before we realize we need a savior to help us because of our sinful state of being. We need to understand His laws about how he desires we live in order to come to Jesus in the first place. Yes I know I'm preaching to the choir on this point, but I want all of us realize how His law represents there being a "closer relative" than Boaz to Naomi and Ruth.
  - v) Anyway, that's my "one step back" look at why that's part of the story.
12. Verse 14: So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, "Don't let it be known that a woman came to the threshing floor."
- a) What we're reading here is Boaz being concerned about preserving Ruth's reputation. By asking her to leave before morning's light is about not only doing the right things, but also to avoid the appearance of anything wrong happening.
    - i) I'm reminded of a story back when I first worked for my father many years ago. We had a situation where neither one of us we're doing anything wrong. But he had to fire me, in order to avoid the appearance of doing anything wrong. In our case, both my father and I worked for a bank and we both "signed off" on loans. Again, there's nothing illegal about working that way, but the issue was avoiding the appearance of doing the wrong thing, so that ended that working relationship in order to avoid the appearance of doing the wrong thing. I bring that up here as that's what I see Boaz doing by asking Ruth to leave before anyone sees her.
  - b) Remember that Boaz along with other men worked hard the previous day by sifting the wheat in the air. What was the custom of that time was to fear thieves from stealing what they worked hard all day to produce. I've been told that the way men slept at that place where the wheat was stored, is that they all slept with their heads resting on wheat piles while their feet stood out. Sort of like seeing a pinwheel from above. I don't know if it is true, but given that big pile of wheat maybe now in bags, I'd sleep that way, as I'd use the soft wheat as a pillow. That's how people picture Ruth sleeping at Boaz's feet without the danger of waking up others there.
  - c) Bottom line is just as Ruth snuck into that place in the middle of the night as to not wake up anyone, so Boaz is asking her to avoid the appearance of doing the wrong thing by her sneaking out the way she snuck in. I pictured Ruth being very nervous about this whole evening. After all, wouldn't you be scared if you had to go sneak up to who you thought would be your future spouse and have to submit to him or her for the rest of your life?
    - i) That's why I picture Ruth falling asleep after considering all the possibilities and being worn out with worry over what could possibly happen. That's why Boaz took the lead here early in the morning and woke up before her. That's when he told her to get out of there as to avoid the appearance of anything sexual occurring between the two of them. He wanted to avoid them being the "big talk" that night. After all the next day they'd be the big talk anyway as in the next chapter we'll see of Boaz publicly agreeing to marry Ruth as her kinsmen redeemer. However, I'll save that fact for the next lesson. For now I need to finish this chapter.
  - d) OK John, this is a cute story, and I can see now how Boaz and Ruth is a model of how we submit to Jesus and let Him be in charge of our lives. However, I still don't see how all of this is a model of Naomi's salvation, that is Israel's salvation as well. An interesting way to read the book of Romans is to consider how Paul describes God's promise to Christians as being irrevocable. In that book, Chapters 1-8 build a case how Christians are saved by our trust in Jesus and we can't lose that salvation if we trust in that fact. Then Paul spends the next three chapters in Romans describing how His promises to Israel as a nation aren't revocable either. Romans Chapter 11 describes Israel's future as a nation as He promised them salvation as a nation that way. Which believe it or not leads to Verse 15:

13. Verse 15: He also said, "Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out." When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and put it on her. Then he went back to town.
- a) I gave that little speech about Israel, as now the final scene of this story is in effect about what will happen to Naomi after this wedding takes place. In other words, before Ruth is to sneak out early in the morning, both Boaz and Ruth are now standing next to all of the wheat before the rest of the men wake up.
  - b) To set the scene, what we have here is Ruth is holding some sort of garment that she used as a blanket when she first laid there at Boaz's feet. As she held that blanket, Boaz poured into it "six measures of barley". If you read this story in the King James Version, the text says "he measured six ephahs of barley". The King James Version has the word "ephah" in italics. That just means that word is not in the original text, but was added to that bible as it was translated. I make a big deal about this, as six "ephah's" was 30-40 pounds of grain. Most likely what Boaz actually put there was six "handfuls". I state that to support the fact that the story is realistic as it happened and eventually became part of the bible.
  - c) The point is this early morning scene between Boaz and Ruth ends with her going home to Naomi and Boaz going home as well. I suspect that Boaz was too excited to stay there at that place any longer and the rest of the men sleeping there was enough of a guard for any possible thieves or other dangers. After all, for Boaz this might be his wedding day as well, so that's why Boaz wanted to leave that scene as well as Ruth.
  - d) OK, one final question before we move on. Why six measures of wheat? What does that mean? Think of it as a code that only Boaz and Naomi understood and Ruth at this point in her life didn't have the education to get. What I mean is that someone with a biblical background would realize the number six is associated with being incomplete. Think of the fact the bible says the world was created in six days and the seventh day God rested. My point is Boaz is giving a "code" to Naomi by giving Ruth six measures of wheat that he's not done yet as for Boaz it's only "day six of seven".
    - i) Shorter version: Boaz was saying in code that he wants to marry Ruth. By giving Ruth six measures of flour, that's the code to tell that fact to Naomi.
    - ii) So does that mean when we want to propose to someone, we send him or her back with say, "six flowers or six chocolates" to give to the parents? No. The point here for you and me is about picking a spouse that cares about God more than even our love for our spouse. A person who fears God's wrath is the kind of person who'd treat their spouse well. By Boaz giving Ruth this parting gift, it's a sign to Naomi as a guardian of Ruth that this is a man who'll treat Ruth well as Boaz cares about pleasing God and is a man worthy of being a good husband.
14. Verse 16: When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, "How did it go, my daughter?" Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her <sup>17</sup>and added, "He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, 'Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.' "
- a) Now the scene moves back to the home of Naomi and Ruth. Remember that Naomi is the one who came up with the idea of Ruth sleeping at Boaz's feet. I doubt Naomi slept well that night as she was curious what would happen to her future or Ruth's future.
  - b) When Ruth came home, Naomi was already up and asked, "OK then, what happened?"
    - i) Ruth then told the story of everything that happened the night before. Ruth told her how Boaz treated her and the fact he specifically gave her "six measures" of barely as a gift to Naomi.
    - ii) You have to admit, even without all the implications about God's role of working to bring Jewish and non-Jewish people into His eternal kingdom, the book of Ruth is a cute story worth sharing and repeating. It makes me wonder if King David, a great grandson of Ruth heard this story over and over again as a boy, and then he told it to Samuel who's credited as the author. Another possibility is Ruth or Boaz wrote down this story and that's the way it was given to David.

- iii) When I get to the next lesson, I'll talk a little more about genealogies and why this story is significant in that aspect. In the meantime, I picture a very excited Ruth as she tells this story to her mother in law.
    - c) This brings me back to the topic of joy. There is little that brings me more joy in my life as to see someone I love being happy at the moment. Remember when Naomi first returned to the land of Israel, she nicknamed herself "bitter" as stated back in Chapter 1. My point is here's the same Naomi, now realizing she'll be blessed she's realizing how God's going to take care of her through Ruth's loyalty. My point is simply that when we put our trust in God, He works in ways to bring us joy even during the times when we are most bitter. I've seen God do His best work when we run out of all other options and we put our trust in Him effectively because we have no other options left. That way, He and He alone gets the glory for the positive things that happen.
      - i) My point for you and me is when our lives look desperate and we don't see a way how we'll get out of our mess, that's when God's effectively saying, "Trust Me, you may not like how I lead you out of this situation, but I (God), promise to lead you to make a difference for Me if you're willing to trust Me to guide your life."
      - ii) Just as Naomi and Ruth get blessed because they once again putting their trust in the God who created the world, so we too can be blessed when we put our trust in Him to guide our lives.
      - iii) On that happy note, I have one more verse to go:
15. Verse 18: Then Naomi said, "Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today."
- a) Remember the great mystery for both Ruth and Naomi at this point in the story, is what'll happen to them. They still don't know if Ruth will marry Boaz or go marry some stranger who's a "closer redeemer" than Boaz.
  - b) In other words, Naomi is telling Ruth, "You've taken two steps forward in faith, now you need to take one step back, look at the big picture and watch God work it out." As most of us know, God's three answers to all our prayers, is either yes, no, or not now." Naomi is telling Ruth effectively, "Hang tough my dear, God's going to work this out His way and on His timing. You've done the footwork of approaching Boaz as a slave, now it's time for us to wait on Boaz's timing, so he can settle the matter." Remember by Ruth approaching Boaz as a willingness to be his servant, she's putting her trust in Boaz to resolve the matter on his timing. That's why Naomi is telling Ruth, "hang in there girl, you've put your trust in him, so now let him work."
  - c) Most of you can see where I'm going with this. God never does for us what we can do for ourselves. He expects us to do the "footwork" to change our situation so we can use our lives for His glory. After we've done the footwork, that's when we take the one step back to watch the results. Whether we realize it or not, to live the Christian life, is all about our willingness to be a slave to God's desire for our lives. Just as Ruth submitted her life to be in effect a slave to Boaz, so God expects us to be a slave to Him. That doesn't mean we sit at home waiting for God to give us orders. It means we do the footwork to make the best decisions possible that don't violate God's laws for our lives and let Him lead us based on what we desire since we're living to please Him with our lives.
  - d) With that said, let me close in prayer, and hopefully explain that concept a little better.
16. Heavenly Father, we thank You that You've given us this wonderful little story of Ruth. Yes it's a model of how you've called both Jewish people and non-Jewish people like Ruth to draw close to You so that You can guide their lives and our lives. At the same time, it's a wonderful model of how You desire we submit our lives over to You to do Your will. Our prayer is that You guide our lives as You desire, so that we may use the most valuable thing we own, our time, to make a difference for You in the world around us. Guide as we do the footwork to make that difference. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.