

Ruth Chapter 2

Review – Can someone give a summary of what happened in Ruth Chapter 1?

Read Chapter 2 – look especially for signs that might show God is at work in the situation

Now there was a wealthy and influential man in Bethlehem named Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi's husband, Elimelech.

² One day Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go out into the harvest fields to pick up the stalks of grain left behind by anyone who is kind enough to let me do it." Naomi replied, "All right, my daughter, go ahead."³ So Ruth went out to gather grain behind the harvesters. And as it happened, she found herself working in a field that belonged to Boaz, the relative of her father-in-law, Elimelech.

⁴ While she was there, Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters. "The LORD be with you!" he said. "The LORD bless you!" the harvesters replied. ⁵ Then Boaz asked his foreman, "Who is that young woman over there? Who does she belong to?"⁶ And the foreman replied, "She is the young woman from Moab who came back with Naomi. ⁷ She asked me this morning if she could gather grain behind the harvesters. She has been hard at work ever since, except for a few minutes' rest in the shelter."

⁸ Boaz went over and said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Stay right here with us when you gather grain; don't go to any other fields. Stay right behind the young women working in my field. ⁹ See which part of the field they are harvesting, and then follow them. I have warned the young men not to treat you roughly. And when you are thirsty, help yourself to the water they have drawn from the well."

¹⁰ Ruth fell at his feet and thanked him warmly. "What have I done to deserve such kindness?" she asked. "I am only a foreigner."¹¹ "Yes, I know," Boaz replied. "But I also know about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother and your own land to live here among complete strangers. ¹² May the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have done." ¹³ "I hope I continue to please you, sir," she replied. "You have comforted me by speaking so kindly to me, even though I am not one of your workers."

¹⁴ At mealtime Boaz called to her, "Come over here, and help yourself to some food. You can dip your bread in the sour wine." So she sat with his harvesters, and Boaz gave her some roasted grain to eat. She ate all she wanted and still had some left over.

¹⁵ When Ruth went back to work again, Boaz ordered his young men, "Let her gather grain right among the sheaves without stopping her. ¹⁶ And pull out some heads of barley from the bundles and drop them on purpose for her. Let her pick them up, and don't give her a hard time!"

¹⁷ So Ruth gathered barley there all day, and when she beat out the grain that evening, it filled an entire basket. ¹⁸ She carried it back into town and showed it to her mother-in-law. Ruth also gave her the roasted grain that was left over from her meal.

¹⁹ “Where did you gather all this grain today?” Naomi asked. “Where did you work? May the LORD bless the one who helped you!” So Ruth told her mother-in-law about the man in whose field she had worked. She said, “The man I worked with today is named Boaz.”

²⁰ “May the LORD bless him!” Naomi told her daughter-in-law. “He is showing his kindness to us as well as to your dead husband. That man is one of our closest relatives, one of our family redeemers.”²¹ Then Ruth said, “What’s more, Boaz even told me to come back and stay with his harvesters until the entire harvest is completed.”²² “Good!” Naomi exclaimed. “Do as he said, my daughter. Stay with his young women right through the whole harvest. You might be harassed in other fields, but you’ll be safe with him.”

²³ So Ruth worked alongside the women in Boaz’s fields and gathered grain with them until the end of the barley harvest. Then she continued working with them through the wheat harvest in early summer. And all the while she lived with her mother-in-law.

Key Terms and Historical Background Notes

- **Pick up leftover grain** (2:2): When the wheat and barley were ready to be harvested, harvesters were hired to cut down the stalks and tie them into bundles. Israelite law demanded that the corners of the fields not be harvested. In addition, any grain that was dropped was to be left for poor people, who picked it up (this was called *gleaning*) and used it for food (Leviticus 19:9; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19): This law served as a type of welfare program in Israel.
- **I have warned the young men not to treat you roughly** (2:9): The best place for a gleaner was right behind the harvesters, where one would be the first to pick up whatever grain fell from the bundles; however, a gleaner who followed too closely could be treated roughly by the workmen.
- **Basket** (2:17): An “ephah” which was between 14 and 23 kg of grain (30 – 50 lbs); the amount of grain usually given to male workers for one month.
- **Family Redeemer** (2:20): A man responsible for protecting the interests of needy members of the extended family.

Questions:

1. What do Naomi and Ruth do when they arrive back in Naomi’s hometown?
2. Whose field did Ruth glean in and do you think it was a coincidence?
How does Boaz treat Ruth? How do you see Boaz providing for Ruth as she gleans in the fields? **NOTE:** *The law of gleaning did not require the landowner to provide food/water or protection from the men.*
3. A single woman had few ways to support herself in those days. She could beg, sell herself into slavery, become a prostitute, look for a husband among the eligible men of the village, or seek support from her nearest male relative. Or, during the months of

harvest, she could glean. Consider the risks of gleaning and the alternatives facing Ruth and Naomi. What do you learn about Ruth from her work in gleaning to support both herself and her mother-in-law?

4. In Chapter 1, Naomi thought God was against her. How did her attitude change and why?
5. How convinced are you that God wants to be involved in your life to accomplish His purposes and plans? What evidence (or lack of evidence) can you point to in supporting your conclusions?

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