

RUTH: A Virtuous Woman

“All the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.”
Ruth 3:11

- I. The **INTRODUCTION OF RUTH** Informs Us Regarding Family and National Background (1:1-5).
 - A. The story begins during the 450 years of judges over Israel (Judges 2:6-16 cp Acts 13:19-20).
 - B. As God did often, He used famine to chastise Israel (Deut 28:38-40; Judges 2:14 cp 6:1-6).
 - 1. Elimelech took his wife Naomi and two sons and moved to Moab to find food for them.
 - a. Elimelech was of the Bethlehem of Judah, not the Bethlehem of Zebulun (Josh 19:15).
 - b. Moab was a frequent enemy of Israel, even under the judges (Num 25; Judges 3:12-14).
 - c. God often favors the wicked more in this world (Jer 48:11 cp Job 21:7-15; Ps 17:14).
 - d. Abraham (Gen 12:10), Isaac (Gen 26:1), and Jacob (Gen 45:9-11) show the pattern.
 - 2. An Ephrathite is an inhabitant of Bethlehem or Ephrah (Ge 35:19; Ruth 4:11; Mic 5:2).
 - C. While in the land of Moab, Elimelech died. Did he continue too long away from Israel?
 - D. The two sons took themselves wives of the Moabites - two women named Orpah and Ruth.
 - 1. As Lot destroyed his/family morals by worldly association, so Elimelech (Gen 19:14,36).
 - 2. Mahlon married Ruth and Chilion married Orpah sometime after Elimelech's death (4:10).
 - 3. God had condemned marriage with foreigners (Deut 7:2-4; I Kings 11:1-2; Neh 13:23-27).
 - 4. There is no basis to say they were proselytes. Why the deaths and Moabite gods (1:15)?
 - 5. Both of the two sons died also in fulfillment of the promise of God for evil marriages.
 - E. Though Naomi's situation goes from bad to worse, she is yet to be used by God (Ps 34:19).
 - F. One of the Moabitish women was named Ruth. It is she that provides the basis for the book.
 - 1. Scripture asks rhetorically, "Who can find a virtuous woman?" Ruth was one (Ruth 3:11).
 - 2. Solomon denied a good woman among a thousand (Eccl 7:25-28). But he never met Ruth.
 - 3. Ruth was chosen from Moab to be noted in the lineage of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5).
 - 4. While the Lord is looking for a few good men, He is also looking for a few good women.
 - 5. Virtuous daughters are more valuable than rubies (Job 42:13-15; Ps 144:12; Acts 21:9).
 - 6. Our generation of frivolous, forward women need to hear the story of Ruth (Is 3:16-24).
 - 7. The scriptures were given for our learning - even Ruth (Romans 15:4; II Timothy 3:16).
 - 8. In this book we shall learn (1) God's providence, (2) womanly virtue, and (3) Christ's line.
- II. The **CONVICTION OF RUTH** Reveals Her Serious Nature and Dedication to Israel's God (1:6-22).
 - A. When Naomi heard that the Lord had visited Israel, she prepared to return from Moab.
 - 1. If the famine was during the days of Gideon, then the relief was by him (Judges 8:28).
 - 2. Note the character of Naomi in not staying any longer in Moab than necessary (Ma 6:33).
 - 3. She took her two daughters-in-law with her, and they went on their way to Judah (1:6-7).
 - 4. Naomi gives a good example to all women to cultivate healthy relationships with in-laws.
 - 5. When she considers the women leaving their families and nation, she urges them to stay.
 - a. Wise dissuasion is often an excellent means to promote true conviction and resolution.
 - (1) Dissuasion, by contrasting two alternatives, is often effective persuasion (Jn 6:67).
 - (2) Dissuasion, by identifying the cost, often exposes weak resolutions (Luke 14:25-33).
 - (3) Dissuasion was used by our Lord Christ to blunt vain commitments (Matt 8:19-20).
 - (4) Note the effective use of dissuasion by Joshua before his death (Josh 24:19-21,31).
 - (5) Naomi did not want them in Israel for what she could offer them. She was wise.
 - b. She blesses them in the Lord for their kindness to find husbands for their rest (1:8-9).
 - (1) She shows practical wisdom by encouraging them to marry again (I Tim 5:14).
 - (2) The married state is the state of rest by God's grace in this world (Eccl 9:9).
 - c. Their first response is a unanimous agreement to continue with Naomi to Judah (1:10).

- d. She reminds them she cannot provide them husbands in any practical way (1:11-13).
 - e. Considering her carnal blight, Orpah leaves Naomi for her own people and gods (1:14).
 - f. The wise and persistent dissuasion shows Orpah's vow to be emotional vanity (1:10,14).
 - g. Ruth does not leave with Orpah, so Naomi encourages her further to go back (1:15).
 - h. The heresy of some and their prosperity are trials for the gold (I Cor 11:19; Pr 1:32).
- B. Ruth shows her dedication to follow the true God and be found with His people (1:16-18).
- 1. She begs Naomi to stop encouraging her return. A strong woman will resist persuasion.
 - 2. She forsakes (1) her known place, (2) her house, (3) her people, and (4) her former gods.
 - 3. Willing to be buried in a strange land, she calls God to witness her conviction (1:17).
 - 4. Leaving all the things dear to women, Ruth is an example to women today (Ma 10:37-39).
 - 5. When Naomi witnesses her strong resolution, she stops trying to dissuade her (Heb 6:16).
- C. Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem where Naomi had left years earlier with Elimelech.
- 1. The whole city is moved by the story of her bitter experience (Job 2:12; Lam 2:15).
 - 2. We should not be surprised by evil circumstances that cause others to wonder at us.
 - 3. Naomi - pleasant - wanted to meaningfully change her name to Mara - bitter (Ex 15:23).
 - 4. Though the Lord had brought her many afflictions, yet He would deliver her soon enough.
 - 5. Note Ruth identified as the Moabitess and the time being that of barley harvest (1:22).

III. The **CHARACTER OF RUTH** Reveals Several Aspects of Ruth's Behavior to Be Noted (2:1-23).

- A. The Holy Spirit interjects some important information about the wealthy kinsman Boaz (2:1).
- 1. Though no indication is given that she knew, Naomi and Ruth had a saviour in Boaz.
 - 2. Boaz was the son of Salmon and Rahab (Matt 1:5) and the grandson of Nahshon (Num 2:3).
- B. Ruth showed **PIETY** by asking leave of Naomi and not requiring her to glean with her (2:2).
- C. Ruth showed **INITIATIVE** by volunteering to help Naomi and herself by gleaning the fields.
- 1. She did not seek to meet the daughters of the land and leave Naomi to work (Ge 34:1-2).
 - 2. She could have taken the easier route by "carefully considering her choices" (Pr 14:23).
 - 3. Though she was a stranger in Israel, obstacles did not frighten her (Prov 20:4; 22:13).
- D. Ruth showed **PATIENCE** by choosing the boring way to provision (Proverbs 13:11; 28: 19).
- 1. Gleaning was God's welfare program (Lev 19:9-10). Work was required (II Thess 3:10).
 - 2. She knew that her success would depend on another's grace. She does not claim rights.
- E. It was her hap - chance or fortune - to glean the field of Boaz, the kinsman of Elimelech.
- 1. There are no coincidences with God: He has ordered all circumstances (Proverbs 16:9,33).
 - 2. Do you thank God for the "haps" of health, wife, job, country, gospel, church, sons, etc.?
 - 3. A wise man will glory in the "haps" of scripture (Gen 24:15; I Kings 22:34; Jonah 1:7)!
- F. Ruth showed **HUMILITY** by not presuming to glean, but by asking kindly (2:7 cp Prov 18:23).
- 1. She had stated earlier in her request to Naomi that success would be by grace (2:2).
 - 2. Men should consider their responsibilities and privileges rather than so-called rights.
- G. Ruth showed **DILIGENCE** by continuing to glean from morning for some time (2:7; Pr 31:27).
- H. Ruth showed **WISDOM** by tarrying a little in the reapers' house to be seen of Boaz (2:7).
- 1. She had continued all morning until this point in time without a break in the canteen.
 - 2. Instead of saying she rested in the house, it says she "tarried a little." Be observant!
- I. Boaz, based on her reputation that preceded her, offers his blessing to her efforts (2:8-9).
- 1. Observe the religious character of Boaz - greetings his employees in the Lord's name.
 - 2. Boaz, as well as the servant over the reapers, was already aware of her identity (2:6).
 - 3. He offers her (1) free gleaning, (2) safety from young men, and (3) the reapers' water.
- J. Ruth showed **SUBMISSION** by falling down before Boaz and blessing his grace in her favour.
- 1. She did not speak of rights, but of grace. She understood the nature of privileges.
 - 2. She humbly pointed out her lowly status and did not try to embellish her situation.

- K. Boaz admits complete knowledge regarding her character and religious resolution (2:11-12).
 - 1. He commends her faithfulness in caring for her mother-in-law after Mahlon's death.
 - 2. He commends her seriousness in leaving parents, lands, and people for the true God.
 - 3. He blesses her in the name of the Lord for her obedience (He 11:6; Ps 34:22; 37:4; 84:11).
- L. Ruth showed HUMILITY by calling Boaz "Lord" and stating her unworthiness for his favour.
 - 1. She does not ask for favour directly, since she had already received it from him.
 - 2. She was not like his other handmaids in nationality, marital status, nor other features.
- M. Boaz offered her the same menu used by the reapers, and he gave her corn to eat (2:14).
- N. Boaz told the reapers to let her glean among their cut sheaves and to drop extra for her.
 - 1. His behavior here is a very obvious approval of her that is missed only by a fool.
 - 2. With his blessing, Ruth was able to glean and beat almost a whole bushel of barley.
 - 3. Observe that Boaz did not give her a handout - even relatives should work for food.
 - 4. Ruth showed PERSEVERANCE by (1) working all day and (2) finishing her work (Pr 12:27).
- O. Ruth showed THOUGHTFULNESS by saving a "doggy bag" of parched corn for Naomi (2:18).
- P. Ruth showed HONESTY by telling her mother-in-law fully of her encounter with Boaz.
- Q. Naomi acknowledges the blessing of the Lord in directing them to a benevolent kinsman.
 - 1. Naomi knew that someone had helped her by the amount she had gleaned that day (2:19).
 - 2. An ephah of beaten barley in American measurements is just short of a whole bushel.
 - 3. Boaz, by showing kindness to Ruth, showed kindness to the living women and dead men.
 - 4. Naomi gives the first indication of bigger things to come by remembering who Boaz was.
- R. Ruth showed OBEDIENCE by staying with the reapers of Boaz throughout the harvests.
 - 1. Boaz had made a commitment to Ruth to enjoy his benefits for the rest of the harvest.
 - 2. Naomi instructs Ruth to stay with his reapers to avoid any appearance of ungratefulness.

IV. The **INITIATIVE OF RUTH** to Secure a Husband Is a Great Account of Other Times (3:1-18).

- A. Practical Naomi again speaks of finding rest for Ruth as she had earlier (3:1 cp 1:9).
 - 1. Rest for men and women is in marriage, especially for widows (Eccl 9:9; I Timothy 5:14).
 - a. Without a special gift from the Lord, it is not good to be single (Ge 2:18; Pr 18:22).
 - b. In general, the woman is to have a man and the man is to have a woman (I Cor 11:11).
 - c. Marriage provides a rest for young people from wandering affections and uncertainty.
 - d. Being single does not bode well for a person, but a good marriage will bode well.
 - 2. One of the greatest kindnesses you can show another is to help find a mate like Naomi.
 - a. Though Naomi was content to remain a widow, she did not wish such on Ruth (1:12).
 - b. With Ruth's need and Naomi's memory of Boaz, what further deliberation was needed?
 - c. Naomi had done her research to know where Boaz would be the night of her plan.
 - d. Paul also taught the role of parents in marital decisions by children (I Cor 7:36-38).
 - 3. Naomi was no fatalist when it came to marriage - she believed in going after a man.
 - a. Would to God we were as non-fatalistic with marriage partners as houses and jobs.
 - b. God gives partners (Pr 18:22) the same way he gives safety and children (Ps 127:1-3).
 - c. Is promotion by diligence and wisdom (Pr 17:2; 27:18)? or by God's favour (Ps 75:6-7)?
 - 4. Naomi instructs Ruth to prepare herself and show her serious intentions to Boaz (3:3-4).
 - a. Ruth was to wash herself, dress herself, and anoint herself to maximize attraction.
 - b. To avoid any undue public embarrassment, Ruth was to wait until Boaz was alone.
 - c. After he had lain down for the night, Ruth was to go lie down at his uncovered feet.
 - d. She was to use this clandestine method of informing Boaz of her desire to be wife.
 - 5. Were Naomi and Ruth foolish in their scheme to do something so apparently immodest?
 - a. Naomi knew that Boaz was either the nearest kinsman or very close to it (2:1,20; 3:2).
 - b. Naomi knew the leverage a widow had in dealing with kinsmen (De 25:5-10; Ge 38:26).
 - c. Naomi knew the character and sobriety of Boaz to be above reproach (2:4,11,12,20).

- d. Naomi knew that Boaz was an older man - not as susceptible to temptation (3:10).
 - e. Naomi knew that Boaz had shown considerable kindness to Ruth in gleaning (2:18-22).
 - f. Naomi knew that Boaz had now been exposed to Ruth's presence for some time (2:23).
 - g. Naomi knew well the virtuousness of Ruth and her fine reputation (1:16; 2:11; 3:11).
 - h. Naomi would not have run the risk of losing Boaz if the action was obviously evil.
6. Ruth again shows her obedient submission to authority and wisdom by agreeing (3:5).
- B. Boaz received Ruth's marital initiative and agreed to pursue the issue immediately (3:6-18).
- 1. Ruth confirms her obedient submission by doing everything that Naomi had specified (3:6).
 - 2. When Boaz had merry heart from eating and drinking, he found a place to sleep (3:7).
 - a. It was common to have feasts related to farming climaxes (I Sam 25:36; II Sam 13:38).
 - b. God gave wine to cheer the heart of man (De 14:26; Jdgs 9:13; Ps 104:15; John 2:1-3).
 - 3. When Boaz awakes in the night at the presence of Ruth at his feet, she proposes (3:8-9).
 - a. Note that he did not discover until midnight: she had not done more to awaken him.
 - b. Who would not be afraid to wake up and find another person lying at your feet?
 - c. Ruth identifies herself by name and admits herself a servant (2:13 cp I Sam 25:24,41).
 - d. She proposes by asking Boaz to put his skirt over her (Ezek 16:8 cp De 22:30; 27:20).
 - e. She reminds him that he has the right to take her according to the Law of Moses (3:9).
 - 4. Boaz responds to her proposal by blessing her and agreeing to seek her hand (3:10-13).
 - a. Observe that instead of criticizing her forwardness, he commends it with a blessing.
 - b. He commends the kindness she continues to show her family by seeking their interests.
 - c. He is particularly appreciative that she pursued him and not the younger bachelors.
 - d. He agrees to pursue the matter due to her wide reputation as a virtuous woman.
 - 5. However, Boaz tells Ruth he is not first in line. He must deter another kinsman (3:12-13).
 - a. Whether he was Elimelech's brother or nephew, we know not; but there was another.
 - b. The law apparently was quite precise in determining the order of family rights.
 - c. He swore by the name of the Lord to marry her if the other kinsman would not do it.
 - 6. To keep their reputations honest, Boaz takes several precautionary measures (3:14-18).
 - a. He did not send her home at midnight, for that would not become a virtuous woman.
 - b. They did not sleep with each other per se - she lay at his feet until the morning.
 - c. She arose before she would be recognized, and he commanded silence for their names.
 - d. He gave her six measures of barley to give the appearance of an innocent visit.
 - 7. Ruth again acknowledges all before her mother-in-law that Boaz had done to her.
 - 8. Naomi, knowing Boaz's character, encourages Ruth that he will not rest until finished.

V. The **REWARD OF RUTH** Shows the Lord's Blessing Upon She Who Sought Him Dearly (4:1-22).

- A. Boaz soon pursues the matter of Ruth's request according to the law and custom (4:1-12).
- 1. Why did Boaz pursue so zealously a poor Moabite widow? Because she was virtuous!
 - 2. He finds the nearer kinsman and requests his presence at the city gate - the court (4:1).
 - 3. Not settling for two or three witnesses, he chooses ten elders of the city to join them.
 - 4. He apprises the kinsman of Naomi's situation and availability of Elimelech's land (4:3-4).
 - a. The law carefully governed the sale of land to keep tribes and families (Le 25:23-28).
 - b. Naomi, as a poor widow, could sell the land; but the closest relatives had first rights.
 - c. Boaz informs the kinsman that he is first in line, but he must make his choice now.
 - d. He acknowledges freely that he is next in line: he does not play games in the deal.
 - e. The closer kinsman affirms before the witnesses that he will indeed redeem the land.
 - 5. Since Ruth married Mahlon after Elimelech's death, the land had transferred to her (4:5).
 - a. Boaz did not bring Ruth into the matter until necessary to deter the greedy kinsman.
 - b. Since Mahlon the firstborn died without an heir, close relatives were responsible.

6. The kinsman changed his word, since he realized that Ruth will dilute his estate (4:6-8).
 - a. He shows greed by caring more for his own inheritance than the family of the dead.
 - b. He foresaw (1) expenses for Ruth, (2) no personal land benefit, and (3) extra worries.
 - c. He forfeits his right to this fantastic woman and an estate and gives it to Boaz.
 - d. The kinsman followed the custom by giving his shoe to Boaz as proof of the transfer.
7. Boaz then called upon the witnesses to seal the real estate and marital deal (4:9-10).
 - a. All the property of Elimelech and his sons reverted to him and his own estate.
 - b. The purchase of Ruth need not sound strange. All men purchased brides with a dowry.
 - c. Ruth was to become his wife that heirs might be raised up for the dead brethren.
8. The witnesses invoked a blessing upon the transaction and upon Boaz and Ruth (4:11-12).
 - a. They acknowledge the fact that they were witnesses to this important transfer.
 - b. They pray Ruth will be blessed to be as fruitful as Rachel and Leah in building Israel.
 - c. They prayed for the future prosperity and success of Boaz in Bethlehem - Ephratah.
 - d. They prayed that Boaz's seed would be as fruitful as the seed of Pharez by Judah.
- B. Boaz consummates his marriage with Ruth, and she immediately conceives a son (4:13-22).
 1. As with all other blessings in the world, the Lord gave her conception (4:13 cp Ps 127:3).
 2. The friends of Naomi bless the Lord for the conception and comfort her for her grandson.
 - a. They value the virtuous daughter-in-law as more valuable than seven sons (4:15).
 - b. Considering the child the son of Naomi, they call him Obed - grandfather of David.
- C. The genealogy of David includes God's providence with Tamar and Ruth. Bless the Lord!

VI. The **APPLICATION OF RUTH** Summarizes the Lessons We Should Learn from This Scripture.

- A. The providence of God is a lesson that we should learn and remember for our comfort.
 1. Naomi appeared to have lost everything, but the Lord blessed her in the end with much.
 2. It was Ruth's "hap" to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz the rich man.
 3. The kinsman Boaz had to see came to the gate where Boaz was without much delay.
 4. The Lord gave conception to Boaz and Ruth immediately after their marriage.
- B. The virtues of Ruth provide a lesson as to what the Holy Spirit considers a virtuous woman.
 1. She showed great zeal for the Lord by forsaking all to follow Him with Naomi (1:16-17).
 2. She showed great respect for her mother-in-law by obedience, diligence, and honesty.
 3. She showed great submission and humility before Boaz and the other reapers.
 4. She showed great initiative, diligence, and patience in gleaning to provide for her family.
 5. She showed great thoughtfulness with the parched corn and honesty in telling Naomi.
 6. She showed wisdom by tarrying in the house and carefully following Naomi's instruction.
- C. The godly man - Boaz - who gets the virtuous woman is shown clearly with his own virtues.
 1. He was a mighty man of wealth by liberal giving (2:8-9,14-16) and knowing labor (3:7).
 2. He was religious in his daily life (2:4) and called God's mercy on the righteous (2:11-12).
 3. He showed moderation by not rejecting Ruth (2:10) and initiative in getting her (3:18).
 4. He fully obeyed the law of God and did not try to take Ruth without due process (3:12).
- D. The reward for seeking first God and His kingdom is seen clearly in these two women.
 1. Naomi did not stay any longer in Moab than necessary, and she was blessed for it.
 2. Ruth applied the basics of Christian wisdom, and she became mother to David and Christ.
 3. Orpah returned to Moab where the advantage seemed to be, but Ruth was successful.
- E. The glory of Christ is seen by the circumstances God worked to bring forth His only Son.
 1. The genealogy from Judah to David includes three foreign wives with strange providence.
 2. Boaz, as a type of Jesus Christ, shows us the kind Redeemer we have in our Saviour.