

Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing Floor – Part 2

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Ruth goes to the threshing floor to convince Boaz to become her wife and redeemer
2. aim – to cause us to seek the true redeemer, the One who possesses all of what we need
3. passage – Ruth 3:1-18

b. outline

1. The Realization of Naomi (Ruth 3:1-5)
2. The Request of Ruth (Ruth 3:6-9)
3. The Response of Boaz (Ruth 3:10-18)

c. opening

1. (again) the **strangeness** of this chapter (**read vv. 6-9**)
 - a. like the request of Naomi in **vv. 1-5** seeming rather *forward* or *pushy*, the approach to Boaz by Ruth also seems somewhat strange, *specifically in the way that she frames her request*
 - b. **there is a “strangeness” in her request that is often overlooked in reading the story, especially when we read it quickly and make some assumptions**
 - c. so (once again) we will walk through the story and “glean” its details, looking for relevant theological topics and their application to us today

II. The Request of Ruth (Ruth 3:6-9)

Content

a. Ruth goes to the threshing floor (vv. 6-8a)

1. **note:** the author indicates that Ruth is actually following the “command” of her mother-in-law (**v. 6**)
 - a. undoubtedly, this indicates that Naomi is directing this scene “through” Ruth
 1. **IMO (again):** the story is actually about Naomi; Ruth is but the “instrument”
 - b. **remember:** she does not believe that she can find a *levir* for herself, so she “pushes” Ruth to do this in order for the land to be redeemed *and her support in the family line to be restored*
 2. Ruth follows her instructions exactly (**see v. 5**; “all that you say I will do”)
 - a. (implied) she bathes herself and dresses appropriately, she goes to the threshing floor, she waits for Boaz to finish his meal (so that he will be “merry”), and then she slips in and lays at his feet
 1. **note:** Boaz would be in a festive mood: his crop has come in and there is security in that
 2. **note:** it is *highly unlikely* that Ruth slept – she probably laid there wondering what would happen
 - b. **question:** why is Boaz sleeping on the threshing floor?
 1. **answer:** because once the grain is threshed, it becomes very valuable (and easy to steal) – thus Boaz is sleeping next to his pile of grain *in order to protect it from thieves*
 - a. **IOW:** it’s much harder to steal a *significant* amount of grain pre-harvest
 2. this would make Ruth’s presence **dangerous to her** – his “natural” reaction when being disturbed from sleep would be to assume a thief (*i.e.* his command “who are you?” upon awakening would be much more of a *warning* than a simple *demand for identification*)
 3. thus, when she replies “I am Ruth, your servant,” it is designed to do all of the following:
 - a. to identify herself as a friend, not a foe or thief – to calm his immediate reaction to danger
 - b. to remind him of who she was – that she was the one he had been kind to earlier
 - c. to submit herself – to place herself in a posture that would favor his kindness again

b. Ruth makes her request of Boaz (vv. 8b-9)

1. her statement “spread your wings” is her request, and it is **pregnant with meaning**
 - a. “wings” = a difficult phrase to *contextualize*; a wide semantic domain in the O.T. (**x108**)
 1. the wings of a bird or insect or supernatural being (angel); *extensions* of the body for flying
 - a. certainly not intended by Ruth here in the *literal sense* (*i.e.* Boaz is not an angel!)
 2. the hem or corner of a garment; the end of a garment where a hem would normally be found
 - a. again, not intended by Ruth to simply mean “cover me with the end of your robe” (literally)
 3. a section or part of a building extending away from the core (**e.g.** a hospital wing)
 4. the ends of a land; the extreme limits of a nation; a border with another country
 5. a very distant place; distant lands or peoples, both physically and culturally

- b. however, all of these definitions have something in common:
 - 1. they are all about things that are “distant” or “separated” from the center or the core
 - a. i.e. lit. wings being *out* from the center of the bird, the hem at the *end* of a garment, a building wing being *away* from the center of the structure, the border being *far away* from the center of the country, distant places and peoples being *remote* from life and culture *here*
 - b. **the picture in the request is for Boaz to bring something distant close to himself**
 - 1. Boaz and Ruth are *very different* (in many ways): man vs. woman, prosperous vs. poor, Israelite vs. Moabite, (even in this situation) merry vs. desperate, etc.
 - 2. **Ruth is seeking for Boaz to embrace someone very different from himself**
 - a. Ruth is from a distant land, knows a different culture; she is not at the center of Israelite life (being a widow); she has *little* claim on anything remotely connected to Boaz
 - b. true, a levirate marriage would restore her husband’s (Mahlon) claim to the land, but she *herself* (as a foreigner) has little legal standing in Israel to make any such claim
 - c. thus, her request is for Boaz to bring something “far off” (her!!) close to himself
- 2. her statement “spread your wings” has **no mention of marriage**
 - a. here’s the part that *strange* to our ears – she never asks him to *marry her specifically*
 - b. but, the statement is actually *much broader* than just a simple proposal of marriage
 - c. by telling (informing?) Boaz “*you are a redeemer*,” Ruth clearly implies her intentions:
 - 1. yes, she *implies* for Boaz to marry her – that would be the **way**
 - 2. but, the connection to Boaz is for *far more* than just her marital security ...
 - 3. **IOW:** we miss something important if all we are looking for is a marriage proposal here ...
- 3. her statement “spread your wings” **mirrors** the statement of Boaz to her (**2:12**)
 - a. the same word “wings” is used by him *when he is first introduced to her in his field*
 - 1. Boaz tells her that he has heard about all of the kindness that Ruth has extended to Naomi
 - a. including the fact that she left *everything behind* in Moab to come to Israel (passively)
 - b. including the fact that she has followed the God of Israel through Naomi (actively)
 - 2. Boaz asks a “blessing” from God upon her
 - a. that the Lord would “*repay*” her for what she has done; that he would “*reward*” her in kind
 - b. “*under whose wings you have come to take refuge*” = that the reward would come from the God that Ruth has *sought refuge under* in coming to Israel; the God of Naomi (and himself!)
 - 3. **IOW:** Boaz has already seen God *bring* this “distant” woman to Israel; he “*prays*” for the Lord (then) to bless her accordingly *in this nearness to both himself and to Boaz*
 - b. **question:** is it possible that Ruth is reflecting Boaz’s words **in order to accept his invitation?**
 - 1. **IOW:** what if Boaz’s “*prayer*” is *actually* a way of him saying, “the Lord has drawn you close in order to reward you for your kindness; I can be the **means** by which God brings that reward?”
 - a. i.e. consciously or subconsciously, Boaz *could* be inviting this young woman to accept his kindness and generosity *far beyond* the simple gleaning of his field
 - 2. so, Ruth “parrots” his language by saying, “will you (Boaz) draw me close to *yourself* in order to be the instrument by which *God* will bring his blessing upon me” – **i.e.** you asked!
 - 2. so, Ruth “parrots” his language by saying, “will you (Boaz) draw me close to *yourself* in order to be the instrument by which *God* will bring his blessing upon me” – **i.e.** you asked!
 - c. **the reward for Boaz planting a crop is the pile of grain next to him** – Ruth coming to that place is an **analogy** = you have received *your reward*; will you now reward me as a *response to what God has given to you?*
- 4. her statement “spread your wings” implies something else on her part (**re: a thief above**)
 - a. **note:** we have the advantage of reading this *biblical* story through the lens of 4,000 years of *redemptive history* and the full revelation of the decree of God to *redeem a people*
 - 1. i.e. since Ruth used the term “*redeemer*” in making her request, we are allowed to view this scenario through *how* that term is used in the rest of the biblical revelation
 - b. **question:** where did Ruth get the **courage** to come to this man in this way and make this request?
 - 1. **answer:** from the Spirit of God, who called her to trust the God of Israel, to loyalty to her mother-in-law, and to the threshing floor to seek a bold request from a man she barely knows
 - 2. biblical fact: it is *God* who initiates the relationship of himself to the sinner; in our fallen state, we possess *no ability* to repent of our sin and trust in a redeemer (**Romans 3:10ff**)
 - a. in this scenario, it is *Boaz* who first initiates the kindness between them – Ruth *responds* to that kindness with *faith* – faith that he could and would redeem her
 - b. in our scenario, it is *God* to initiates the kindness between himself and us – we *respond* to that kindness with *faith* – faith that he can and does redeem us *in Christ*
 - 1. **it takes courage to come before God with nothing but an empty hand of faith**

c. it is the same kind of courage that we need from the Spirit as we live out our faith in a world that despises our redeemer and his message of hope

1. **question:** when was the last time that you actually had the courage to ask God to do something “great” – to do something that you think is “impossible?”
 - a. **e.g.** to give you the power to overcome a nagging temptation, or to defend the truth before someone that seems impossible to reach, or to simply be able to trust God in whatever difficult situation you are facing today without losing your footing?