

BIBLE STUDY

TITLE: The Bible's Best Love Story

REFERENCE: Ruth 2

FROM THE SERMON: God's Amazing Grace (#2067)

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THE BIBLE'S BEST LOVE STORY

Life had treated the young woman harshly. Born into a pagan culture that was cursed by God, she didn't stand a chance. One day a foreigner moved into her homeland, fleeing famine in his own, and she became the bride of one of his sons. You'd think life would start looking up. It didn't.

That son, her husband, died, and she was left childless. His father and brother also died, and the young widow, Ruth, had no one left in the household but her mother-in-law and a sister-in-law.

Naomi must have been the kind of mother-in-law everyone wants, because Ruth decided to leave everything familiar in her country and accompany Naomi back to the family home. Now that the famine had lifted, maybe Israel held out brighter prospects. Nothing could be worse than being alone here in Moab.

Was there something in Naomi's worship of Israel's God that drew Ruth's heart to her? We don't know, but Ruth chose to leave Moab behind. When the final decision had to be made, however, Ruth's sister-in-law, Orpah, didn't make that choice.

Now Naomi and Ruth, widows with no means of support, arrived back in Bethlehem with nothing to commend them to that day's culture.

Welcome to a Beautiful Love Story. A True Story.

The book of Ruth is a love story, but it's far more than that. In the main characters of Ruth and Boaz, it depicts who we are and how great is the saving grace of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Don't miss it.

Always remember, this is a true story, and the people in it are real people, living during the period of the Judges in Israel, a time when "every man did what was right in his own eyes." That's another way of saying there was no lawful restraining force in place. It was an unstable, even dangerous, time to be alive for people like Ruth and Naomi.

The Players in This Love Story

A hidden figure stands in the shadows of this book. If you look closely, you'll find Jesus on every page. As we'll see, the hero of Ruth's story, Boaz, is a wealthy Bethlehem businessman and landowner. Boaz is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. What he does for Ruth is what Jesus has done willingly for us. As we study Boaz, we're going to see the Lord Jesus in a fresh light.

The parallels between the life of Boaz and the saving life of Christ for every believer cannot be by accident. But the story behind the story will be hard to find without your Bible in front of you and your mind focused,

Turn to Ruth 1:2. It's fascinating to look at the meaning of the names of the main characters:

The father's name, _____, means "My God is King."
His wife's name, _____, means "Pleasantness."

So far, we're off to a good start: "My God is King" is married to "Pleasantness." They have 2 sons,

_____, whose name means "Joyful Song," and
_____, whose name means "Perfection."

They live in _____ (v. 1) which means "House of Bread." Yes, the same Bethlehem-Judah where Jesus was born.

"The land" refers to Israel. The reason Elimelech, "My God is King," a husband and father, left Israel, "the House of Bread," and moved his family to a land that had a curse upon it was _____ (v. 1).

And they came into the country of _____, and continued there. (v. 2)

What a foolish plan! This land of Israel's ancient enemy represents the territory of the devil. Rather than having faith in "the House of Bread," Bethlehem, "My God is King" takes his wife, "Pleasantness," and children to a God-cursed place.

The Hidden Picture in Ruth's Story

Have you seen one of those children's coloring books that come with a paintbrush and instructions to dip the paintbrush in some water and wipe it all over the page? The pages seem colorless, but when water activates the hidden colors, suddenly the picture comes to life. That's what the book of Ruth is like. The Holy Spirit dips His pen in water and washes over the pages to reveal all the great lessons this true story has.

Elimelech represents the nation Israel. But he turns his back on his faith, on the Lord, the land, and the law. In this pagan land, his sons marry girls of Moab, but then he dies. Mahlon and Chilion both die. Naomi represents a remnant returning to her roots in Bethlehem. She's coming back home in bitterness.

But we see also a Gentile bride. She represents the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Bible, the Church is described as "the bride of Christ." We have been grafted in to the commonwealth of Israel and become a part of the family of God. We are Ruth.

Keep looking as these colors emerge on the page, and you'll see how Boaz, whose name means "In him is strength" represents Jesus Christ Himself.

Scroll down in chapter 1 to verses 8-10. What sort of relationship did Naomi have with her daughters-in-law?

In verse 8, how have both young women treated Naomi, Elimelech, and their sons?

This speaks well of the character of both Ruth and Orpah, and it also tells us that Naomi and Elimelech most likely were people who deserved respect and even their affection.

In verse 10, surprisingly, what do both daughters-in-law decide to do?

It makes us wonder what kind of place Moab was if both girls, natives of Moab, decide they'll leave the only homeland they've known and go over to enemy territory. But only one of them sticks with her decision.

Continue to verses 16-17. Fill in some key words in this passage:

Entreat me _____ to _____ thee nor to return from following after thee, for _____ thou goest, I will go and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy _____ shall be _____ people, and [here is the most important part] thy _____ my _____. 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.

Ruth's response to Naomi has become one of the most famous passages of the Bible. A young woman turns her back on family, friends, and pagan gods to say, "I am going with the God of Israel. I am going with you, Naomi. I'm going to Bethlehem."

When they arrived in Bethlehem, what was the reaction of the people who had known Naomi previously? (v. 19) How did she re-introduce herself to them?

The time they arrived happened to be time for the _____
_____ (v. 22).

Continue to chapter 2. Ruth and Naomi were impoverished. In a patriarchal culture where they had no man providing for them, Ruth immediately offered to fill that need by _____ . (See 2:2-3)

A Closer Look At The Concept Of “Gleaning”

When did it start? 1,500 years before the birth of Christ.

Who started it? God Himself. Allowing the poor to gather leftovers after fields were harvested was a principle God established in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy (see Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22, and Deuteronomy 24:19-21).

Why did God command this? It was the Old Testament way of giving the poor a means to provide for themselves.

Who was allowed to glean? The poor, widows, and orphans (those who may have had a living mother, but the father—the breadwinner of the family—had died). Also, the “stranger” in the land—those arriving with no means yet of support, or those who were just passing through on their way to another place.

Were there any other reasons for gleaning? This helped to keep peace in the land and care for those who had no other way to put food on the table.

Was this just an Old Testament thing? No. It extended into more modern times. The Jewish custom of allowing the poor to glean the corners of fields, any leftover produce, sheaves of grain left behind, and fruit remaining on olive trees continued and spread to Europe. As late as 1788, there were laws on the books that preserved gleaning for the poor.

Because she was both caring and responsible, Ruth immediately volunteered for what had to be hot, tiring and demeaning work: gleaning in the fields to provide for herself and Naomi.

See chapter 2, verse 3. In a movie, Ruth would manipulate this encounter with a wealthy bachelor/landowner. In this verse, what tells us she didn't know who owned part of this barley field?

See verse 4. When we first see Boaz, by his actions and those of his employees toward him, what sort of man does he appear to be?

The Theme of Chapter 2 Is God's Amazing Grace

A key word in this chapter:

And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, "Let me now go into the field and glean ears of corn after him [Boaz] in whose sight I shall find _____..." (v. 2)

Skip down to verse 10:

Then she fell on her face and bowed herself to the ground and said unto him, 'Why have I found _____ in thine eyes?'

Ruth, who would become the bride of Boaz, brought no dowry, nothing of material wealth to the table. Boaz chose her by grace.

How are we saved? How do we become the bride of Christ? See Ephesians 2:8-9:

For by _____ are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

Is there anything we can do to earn salvation?

Boaz personifies some wonderful truths about God's amazing grace to us, as embodied in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Boaz Demonstrates God's Saving Grace

And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a _____ man of _____, of the family of Elimelech, and his name was Boaz. (v. 1)

Ruth is about to meet a man who's going to become her physical redeemer and savior. If ever anyone needed a redeemer and savior in the physical realm, it was Ruth.

- She was a pagan.
- She was a Moabite. There is a curse upon her. The Bible says there was a curse on the Moabites.
- She is in a weakened condition, having traveled a distance with little provisions.
- She's a widow. She's crushed because her husband has died.
- She's penniless.

- The law excluded her.

But grace is going to include her.

When you think of Boaz, imagine the opposite.

- Think of strength (“in him is strength”).
- The Bible says he is a mighty man.
- He is a man of wealth and standing in his community.
- He is a kinsman redeemer for Ruth.

The Law of the Kinsman Redeemer

There was a law in Israel called “the law of the kinsman redeemer.” If a man were to die without having children, and perhaps he had gone into bankruptcy and lost his estate, according to the “law of the Kinsman Redeemer,” a relative could come and redeem the lost estate, buy back the land from the man who was holding it, and it would become his.

He could redeem it if he were a near kinsman because God wanted to keep it in the family. But when he bought it back, he had to marry his brother’s wife, now a widow, and raise up children for his brother.

You can find this law in Leviticus 25. It was the principle of redemption. Boaz could redeem the lost estate. Naomi wasn’t wealthy enough to redeem it. Only Boaz could buy it back.

How Boaz Pictures Christ

FIRST: Boaz was from _____. Jesus was born in _____.

SECOND: He was a near kinsman to Ruth. Jesus is our near kinsman. That’s why He came to earth. How is Jesus our near kinsman? Turn in the New Testament to one of the last books in the Bible, Hebrews 2:14-17.

Forasmuch then as the children [talking about us, the children of God] are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself [Jesus] likewise _____ same, [that is, became a flesh and blood human being], that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

Skip down to 16-17a:

For verily He [Jesus] took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the _____ [descendants] of _____. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren.

You see, Jesus had to be a near kinsman in order to redeem us. That's why Jesus stepped out of Heaven and came earth, through the portal of a virgin's womb, taking upon Himself flesh and blood to be made like His brethren. As Jesus was from Bethlehem, so was Boaz. As Jesus is a near kinsman to us, so was Boaz to Ruth.

THIRD: To redeem a lost estate, you had to be wealthy enough, not be bankrupt yourself. Boaz was a wealthy man. All of the riches of Heaven reside in the Lord Jesus Christ. Scripture says:

Philippians 4:19 - But my God shall supply all your need according to His _____ in glory by Christ Jesus.

Psalms 50:10 - For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

Ephesians 1:18 - The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the _____ of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

FOURTH: Boaz had to be willing to redeem. When he learned that he was Ruth's near kinsman, Boaz quickly set about to redeem her. Jesus willingly laid aside His glory and stepped out of Heaven to redeem us.

Turn to Ruth 3:18.

...for the man will not be in _____, until he have finished the thing _____.

Who is speaking to Ruth here? A mature, older woman. Naomi had seen enough of life and human nature to correctly size up the situation. She saw that Boaz wouldn't rest until the matter was finished.

In the same way, Jesus left nothing undone. Turn to John 19:30. His last words on the cross were,

...He said, _____: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.

The Lord Jesus, thank God, was willing to redeem, just as Boaz was willing.

FIFTH: Boaz loved Ruth before she loved him. In the same way, Jesus loved us before we knew Him.

Look at Ruth 2:5. Between Ruth and Boaz, who saw whom first? We learn that Boaz notices Ruth first. He sets his eye upon her. She's unaware of this. She doesn't know who Boaz is. She doesn't know that Boaz is looking her over.

Turn to 1 John 4:19.

We love Him, because He _____.

The Bible says He loved us before we ever loved Him. Back in Ruth 2:8. Who speaks first? Boaz takes the initiative. Ruth could not take the initiative.

- She's a woman and a woman could not approach a man in those days.
- She's bankrupt; he's wealthy.
- She's a pagan; he's an Israelite.
- She's of low caste; he is a mighty man of wealth.
- She in her poverty is gleaning in the fields; he's the owner of the whole thing.

Ruth didn't have a prayer unless he first took notice of her. Friend, that's the way we are: without hope—except that the Lord Jesus has taken notice of us. His is a saving grace, a sovereign grace, a seeking grace.

SIXTH: In his abundance, Boaz had the means to meet Ruth's every need. She needed purpose, protection and provision. He gave her new purpose in life. He brought her under his protection. He made provision for her needs.

This is precisely what the Lord Jesus does for us. Read Ruth 2:8, 9 and 14.

Then said Boaz unto Ruth, "Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but _____ fast by my maidens: (v. 8)

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? and when thou art _____, go unto the vessels, and _____ of that which the young men have drawn." (v. 9)

And Boaz said unto her, "At mealtime, come thou hither and _____ 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 _____, and left.

In each of these verses we see his protection and provision for Ruth. In verses 15 through 18, in what other ways did Boaz make certain Ruth's needs—and through her, Naomi's—were satisfied?

As I was studying this, a thought came in my heart: Soon Ruth is going to own that field. She's gleaning in it now, but when Boaz marries her, she'll become co-owner of all he owns.

Folks, today the Lord provides for us day by day. But there will come a day when "the meek will inherit the earth. Just as all that Boaz owned, Ruth would soon share in, all that Jesus Christ has will one day become ours. God did not make this world for the devil and his crowd. God made it for His people.

If you will put your hand of faith in God's hand of grace, the same God who took a pagan girl from Moab and made her the bride of Boaz will take sinners such as we and make us the bride of Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer.