

RUTH

TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 2

1. What was the name of Elimelech's near kinsman?
2. What service did Ruth ask Naomi to allow her to perform?
3. In what village did the near-kinsman live?
4. What was the kinsman's greeting to the men in his field?
5. What was the reply of the men in the field?
6. Where did Ruth want to glean?
7. By what title did Ruth describe herself?
8. What delicacy was Ruth given to eat?
9. How much grain did Ruth get from her gleaning?
10. What kind of grain was it?

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 3

- Vv. 1- 5 *Naomi's instructions to Ruth.* When the barley harvest was nearly completed, Naomi instructed Ruth to go to the threshing floor for the feast. Since Boaz was a near kinsman, Naomi thought he should enter into a Levirate marriage with Ruth. With typical mother-love, she helped Ruth to make herself as appealingly feminine as possible. She had also advised her to bide her time and to approach Boaz in modesty.
- Vv. 6-13 *Boaz honors Ruth's request.* Boaz received Ruth's proposal and complimented her on her honorable conduct. He did not go outside the Law, however, and reminded Ruth of the presence in the community of one who was closer of kin than he was himself. He asked Ruth to stay with him for the rest of the night in order to protect her from any harm and prom-

STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

ised her he would inquire of the other man's intentions in this matter.

Vv. 14-18 *Ruth's return to Naomi.* Boaz was careful to protect Ruth's reputation and asked her to leave the threshing floor early in the morning before the light was sufficient for anyone to know who it was leaving the threshing floor. When Naomi heard what happened, she was pleased; and she assured Ruth of Boaz's sincerity by saying he would not rest until he had found out what the other kinsman would do.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *A worthy woman who can find?* (*Proverbs 31:10*). A good woman is to be praised. High in the list of great women of the Bible stand Ruth and Naomi. Naomi challenged Ruth's faith to see if she would be willing to leave all in order to find a home in Israel. When Ruth proved steadfast, Naomi did everything she could to guide her daughter-in-law in finding a happy life among God's chosen people. By Naomi's good grace, Ruth not only found a place to glean, but eventually was enabled to find an honorable husband. Every young woman needs a mother-in-law like Naomi.
2. *A good name is better than riches* (*Proverbs 22:1*). Ruth did not have a rich family who could demand a great dowry for her. She came to Boaz from a foreign country and lived among the people as a widowed stranger. Her conduct won for her a good reputation. On account of this, she found a place to work in the fields of Boaz; and when she reminded Boaz of his responsibility as a near kinsman, he was amazed at her

deep understanding of the Law. He complimented Ruth for being honorable in the matter. He also was anxious to protect her good reputation by sending her away before anyone could recognize her when she left the area.

3. *The king's business requires haste (I Samuel 21:8).* Naomi believed Boaz was an industrious man. She told Ruth to wait patiently for Boaz because she knew he would attend to the matter right away. Boaz was a good man, and he was rich not only in this world's goods but also towards God. He would never hear God say, "thou fool" to him as did the rich man in the parable of Jesus (Luke 12:13-21). He would do what was expected of him without delay.

CHAPTER THREE

Naomi Instructs Ruth 3:1-5

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

2 And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshing floor.

3 Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking.

4 And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.

5 And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do.

1. *What was Naomi's purpose in giving instructions to Ruth?* 3:1, 2

Naomi wanted Ruth to act properly. Furthermore, she wanted Ruth to enjoy a peaceful life in a well secured condition. Such would be her life under the loving care of a considerate husband. Normally it was the responsibility of the father to arrange for a marriage of his daughters. Laban was anxious to see his daughters provided for in this way, and excused himself for deceiving Jacob in giving him Leah instead of Rachel by saying it was not customary for the younger daughter to be given in marriage before the older daughter was married (Genesis 29:26). When the father was dead, the responsibility for arranging these marriages fell to the oldest son who received the father's birthright and blessing. Since both Mahlon and Chilion were dead, no one was left to care for the welfare of the widows except Naomi. She had counseled both Orpah and Ruth to return to their parents' homes, but Ruth's love for Naomi had prompted her to accompany Naomi back to Judah. Consequently, Naomi was still primarily concerned for Ruth's future welfare and instructed her accordingly.

2. *How was the winnowing done?* 3:2

Grain was thrown into the air with winnowing fans. Threshing floors were nothing more than level places in the field which had been trodden smooth. The surface was generally quite hard. A level spot was selected, and the threshing floors were generally close together. They were circular in form, sometimes fifty feet in diameter. Grain was thrown onto the ground. Animals walked over it and crushed out the grains from the head of the stalks. A wooden fork was used to throw this mixture of chaff and grain into the air. As the wind blew away the chaff, the grain settled to the ground. Sometimes a carpet was placed

under the threshers' feet so the grain fell onto it whence it could be easily placed in bags.

3. *Why was the grain still on the ground?* 3:3

The grain was left on the ground until it was put in the granary. As the threshing season continued, the piles of grain mounted higher and higher. These piles might be covered with cloth to protect them from the dew, but the final removal would await the completion of the threshing season. Like the rich farmer in the parable of Jesus described in Luke 12, all landowners took some bit of pride in seeing the large amounts of grain accruing to them as the harvest season continued. Boaz celebrated the conclusion of a plentiful harvest by holding a feast on the threshing floor, and Ruth went to him there.

Ruth Speaks to Boaz 3:6-13

6 And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her.

7 And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.

8 And it came to pass at midnight that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.

9 And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.

10 And he said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter: for thou hast showed more kindness, inasmuch as thou followest not young men, whether poor or rich.

11 And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.

12 And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

13 Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth: lie down until the morning.

4. *What kind of "corn" was on the threshing floor? 3:7*

In the days of the translating of the King James Version, the word "corn" indicated any kind of cereal grain. The average American reader visualizes corn as a grain which grows on a cob, since he has become acquainted with the grain called maize by the Indians when the first settlers came to America. Corn in Bible days was grain in a head. Notice has already been made in the narrative of the book of Ruth with regard to this kind of grain. Boaz and Ruth met in a time of barley harvest and a time of wheat harvest. Both these grains would be described by the word "corn."

5. *What was the meaning of Ruth's request? 3:9*

Ruth was proposing marriage to Boaz. She was primarily interested in reminding him of the duty of a near kinsman. According to the laws of Israel, a man's brother was to marry his widow and raise up children in the name of his brother whenever a deceased brother had no heirs. Such was the case with Mahlon. Ruth was widowed, and there were no children to carry on the name of either Elimelech or Mahlon. Ruth reminded Boaz that he was "a near kinsman," one who had the right and the duty to redeem a deceased kinsman's land and marry his widow.

6. *Was her act improper?* 3:11

Ruth was a "virtuous woman" (verse 11). Boaz would not break the Law. He said, "There is a kinsman nearer than I" (verse 12). Nothing in all the narrative suggests impropriety on the part of either Ruth or Boaz. Nothing transpired between Ruth and Boaz during the night while she was at the threshing floor. Had Boaz been a man of lustful nature, he would have immediately entered into an improper connubial relationship with Ruth; but since he was a man of honor, he reminded her of the presence of another whose right superseded his own. He thus asked her to wait until this man could be approached.

7. *Was a Levirate marriage connected with the redemption?* 3:13

The Levirate marriage was a customary right which had received the sanction of God. It was given certain limitations through the Mosaic law. This was to be the marriage of a widow and her brother-in-law. We meet such marriages as early as Genesis 38:8. If an Israelite was married and died without children, it was the duty of his brother to marry the widow, that is to say, his sister-in-law. He was to do this to establish his brother's name in Israel. This was done by begetting a son through his sister-in-law. The son took the name of the deceased brother. Thus the brother's name did not become extinct in Israel. The son was the legal heir of the landed property of the deceased man (cf. Deuteronomy 25:5 ff.). The two institutions are not connected in the Mosaic law; nevertheless it was a very natural thing to place the Levirate duty in connection with the right of redemption. This had become the traditional custom. The Law merely imposed the obligation of marrying the childless widow upon the brother. It even allowed him to renounce the obligation if he would take upon himself the disgrace connected with such a refusal (see Deuteronomy 25:7-10). Accord-

ing to Ruth 4:5, it had become a traditional custom to require the Levirate marriage of the one who bought the property of the deceased relative. Thus the landed possession was permanently retained in the family, but also the family itself was not suffered to die out.

Ruth Returns to Naomi 3:14-18

14 And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor.

15 Also he said, Bring the veil that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city.

16 And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her.

17 And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother-in-law.

18 Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.

8. *Why did Ruth rise so early? 3:14*

Boaz was anxious to protect Ruth's physical well-being. He did not want to send her out into the night from the threshing floor. She would be at the mercy of such men as those who milled about Lot's house in Sodom (Genesis 19) and the men of Gibeah who tried to misuse the Levite in the days of the judges (Judges 19-21). Boaz also was careful to protect Ruth's reputation. Although he was willing to keep her safe from harm during the middle of the night, he counseled her to leave his

threshing floor early in the morning before the sun was risen. In this way, any who saw her leave would not be able to discern who she was and would not point a finger of scandal in her direction.

9. *What kind of veil did Ruth wear?* 3:15

The veil into which Boaz poured the grain was a large garment, possibly similar to a large shawl. The cloaks worn by ancient people were very full. One part could be thrown over the shoulder and another corner could be gathered up under the arm. By holding a certain part of the pallium, as it is sometimes called, Ruth could receive into her bosom the grain which Boaz gave her. The garment is called a veil since it could easily be drawn up over the face to hide the countenance of a modest woman from the unholy gaze of wicked men.

10. *How much barley did Boaz give to Ruth?* 3:15

The old rabbins said the measure was a seah which is equal to two ephahs. Since an ephah was nearly equal to a bushel, Boaz would have given twelve bushels to Ruth by this calculation. Certainly this is incorrect. Ruth could not have carried such a large quantity of barley. The smallest unit of dry measure was a log and equaled approximately a pint. If Boaz gave six of these measures to Ruth, the amount of grain she received would be approximately the same as one omer which was the amount of daily provision made for the children of Israel during their exodus as God gave them manna (Exodus 16:16). This is the better view.

11. *Why did Naomi say, "Who art thou?"* 3:16

Since Ruth had left the threshing floor of Boaz before anyone could tell who she was, Naomi may have been unable to identify Ruth in the darkness when she arrived home. The question, however, makes a fuller inquiry than the mere matter of identification. Naomi was asking what kind of person it was who stood before her. She was

trying to find out in what circumstances Ruth had returned. She really wanted to know what had been accomplished. She was anxious to find out what Boaz had done. Her question was much the same as asking, "How did it go?"

12. *Why did Ruth call attention to the six measures of barley?* 3:17

Ruth told Naomi all about her interview with Boaz. She must have rehearsed every detail and finally called attention to the six measures of barley as concrete evidence of the favor which Boaz had bestowed upon her. The concern of Boaz reached not only to Ruth's needs, but to the immediate needs of both Ruth and Naomi. Ruth recited how Boaz had told her not to go empty to her mother-in-law. In a sense, the gift of six measures of barley was more for Naomi than for Ruth herself.

13. *Why did Naomi tell Ruth to sit still?* 3:18a

Naomi wanted Ruth to remain quietly at home. Such instructions were also given to Tamar by Judah as he told his daughter-in-law to "remain a widow" (Genesis 38:11). Naomi was instructing Ruth not to look any further for a husband. She had earlier instructed her not to glean in anybody else's field, and she felt sure of Boaz's good intentions. God had blessed Naomi and Ruth as they made their way from Moab to Bethlehem. By His good providence, Ruth had been led to glean in a field which belonged to a near kinsman. Naomi had guided Ruth to remind Boaz of his fraternal duty. Now the time had come for the two women to await the consummation of the matter.

14. *Why was Naomi confident concerning the outcome?* 3:18

Naomi knew Boaz was a man of faith and ability. Everything he had done pointed to his intentions and abilities to consummate his agreement with Ruth. Naomi

RUTH

had told Ruth to stay at home and await the outcome. She instructed her to learn in this way how the matter would fall. It was more needful for Ruth to put her confidence in Boaz than for her to take any other actions on her part. Naomi believed Boaz to be a man of deep faith, and she must have had faith in God's providence for the outcome of Ruth's association with Boaz.

TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 3

1. Where was Boaz winnowing grain?
2. Where did Ruth lie down?
3. What did Ruth ask Boaz to do for her?
4. Did Boaz scold Ruth for coming to his threshing floor?
5. What kind of woman did Boaz say all the people in the city knew Ruth to be?
6. Why did Boaz not marry Ruth immediately?
7. In what did Boaz put grain for Ruth?
8. How much grain did Boaz give Ruth?
9. What kind of grain did Boaz give her?
10. How long did Ruth stay with Boaz?

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER. 4

Vv. 1- 5 *The near kinsman approached.* Boaz went to the gate of the city and waited for the approach of the man who was a kinsman nearer than he. When he came by, Boaz approached him. The kinsman was ready to redeem the land which had belonged to Elimelech; but when he was reminded of Ruth being Mahlon's widow and his responsibility to marry her, he declined to accept his obligations.