**Ruth Follows Naomi’s Plan**

Last week, our discussion was focused on the sterling character of both Ruth and Boaz. Some regard chapter 3 which we will study this week as revealing scandalous behavior by both of them. Matthew Henry addressed this by writing the following: “*We find it very easy, in the former chapter, to applaud the decency of Ruth’s behavior, and to show what good use we may make of the account given us of it; but in this chapter we shall have much ado to vindicate it from the imputation of indecency and to save it from having an ill use made of it; but the goodness of those times was such as saved what is recorded here from being ill done; and yet the badness of these times is such as that it will not justify any now in doing the like.*” If Henry lamented the badness of his time, one wonders how he would regard society today. About Boaz, I will only say that prior to his marriage, he was a ruthless man.

The chapter begins with Naomi telling Ruth that she should try to find her a husband. She then said that Boaz was their kinsman and suggested to Ruth that she go to the threshing floor where Boaz would be that evening. A threshing floor was actually an outside area where grain would be winnowed. It would typically have been on a hill where the wind would blow the chaff away to separate it from the good kernels. Boaz was at the threshing floor working which was consistent with his diligence in tending to his crops. Naomi told Ruth to wash and perfume herself and put on her best clothes then lie down beside him when he went to sleep. She did as Naomi instructed and when Boaz awoke during the night he saw her next to him and asked her who she was. She answered “I am your servant Ruth. Spread the corner of your garment over me since you are a kinsman-redeemer.” The New King James Version is slightly different “I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative.” She was asking Boaz to take her as his wife because she was a widow of his clan.

Boaz’s response was gratitude that she would want to marry an older man like him instead of pursuing a younger man and he agreed to do as she asked. He made his commitment subject to the priority claim of another man who was a closer relative. He told her to leave before daylight to avoid any hint of impropriety on their part. The chapter closes with Boaz giving Ruth some barley to take back to Naomi who said that she knew that Boaz would not rest until the matter was settled.

Some observations about this chapter:

It is not known if Boaz was a bachelor, had another wife or was a widower. As an older, wealthy man he may have had another wife either living or deceased or he may have held out for a woman of noble character like Ruth.

Naomi waited for some length of time after Ruth met Boaz before suggesting that Ruth propose to Boaz. David Guzik noted that in modern society dating before marriage is common, however it often does not reveal the true character of either party. Ruth and Boaz observed each other’s behavior over a period of time and had an opportunity to see how they treated other people.

Ruth went to Boaz humbly and privately, requesting that he fulfill his responsibility as kinsman redeemer rather than demanding her rights (see Deut. 25:5-10). Under Mosaic law, Ruth’s brother in law would have been responsible for taking her as his wife after her husband died, however he died as well leaving more distant relatives to take responsibility. Any children of such a marriage would be considered children of the widow’s first husband thus preserving his family line.

Boaz surprised reaction at her proposal reveals more about his fine character. Since she was younger and probably attractive, Boaz thought she may have been attracted to a younger man. Guzik pointed out that Boaz himself had a right to demand the marriage but he would not force himself on Ruth.

Boaz is a picture of Jesus providing His protection to His people just as Boaz provided protection to Rut (see Ez. 16:8).