

• God moves swiftly

1. A redeemer is at hand for Ruth but she is unaware of his graciousness

• Provision for protection for the people of God

• God the redeemer of Israel provided through earthly kinsmen-redeemers

2. Ruth finds the graciousness she is looking for in a kinsman-redeemer.

• She discovers Boaz' concern

• She discovers Boaz' knowledge

• She discovers his continuing compassion

When God begins to work He makes up for lost time. Things move fairly speedily once Ruth comes to the land of Israel.

1. A redeemer is at hand for Ruth but she is unaware of his graciousness. Boaz is nearby ^{☐1}; the reader is told of him. But Ruth herself knows nothing of him at this stage.

However Ruth knows that she is permitted to 'glean' (that is, 'pick up the scraps') after the harvesters have done their work of reaping in the barley fields.

Naomi had a 'kinsman', a relative by marriage. He had the ability and wealth to 'redeem' her, to take her as wife, to relieve her anxieties as a poor woman, to be a husband and protector for her. Because she had come to faith in Yahweh, and had joined the people of God as a believer in the God of Israel, there was provision for her protection. She was entitled to care and safekeeping within the people of Israel. Boaz was nearby and he was 'a mighty man of substance' ^{☐1}.

She was looking for grace. '*Let me go . . . following the one in whose sight I may find grace...*' ^{☐1}. She was looking for favour from the owner of the land. But she did not know much about Boaz at this point. Boaz was an earthly redeemer. The God of Israel is a Redeemer. 'Their Redeemer is strong; Yahweh the Almighty is his name' ^{☐2}. The kinsmen-redeemers of the Israelite legal system was simply a way in which Israel's divine Redeemer provided for the needy among His people.

2. Ruth finds the graciousness she is looking for in a kinsman-redeemer. She starts 'gleaning' in a nearby field of barley.

She 'happens' to meet Boaz. Verse 3 says '*Her chance was to come to part of a field belonging to Boaz...*'. The Book of Ruth is drawing our attention to the hidden providence of God. Ruth herself was not manipulating or arranging anything for herself. She came to Boaz's field by 'chance' (that is, it was an unintentional happening on her part; of course it was not 'chance' to God!)

She discovers his concern. Boaz is a gracious man, friendly to his workers ^{☐1}. He notices the girl ^{☐2} and the workers tell him who she is ^{☐3}. Verse 7 (which is difficult in Hebrew) could be taken as follows. '*She said [earlier in the day] "Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves."*' She came and has kept waiting from morning till now. She has not been at home at all today! This makes sense of the Hebrew without amending the text. It means that Ruth has asked permission to do some extra gleaning for the sake of Naomi. Ruth has some of the energy and initiative which will reappear in her great-grandson!

Boaz responds warmly. Ruth is welcomed and urged to make good use of Boaz's field ^{☐1}. He is concerned about her safety, and that she should not get too thirsty ^{☐2}. She is amazed at his kindness to a foreigner who has only just arrived in Judah ^{☐3}.

She discovers his knowledge. Boaz in fact knows all about her. He knows about her sufferings; he knows she has come to faith in the God of Israel ^{☐1}. He knows she is seeking refuge under the wings of the God of Israel ^{☐2}. His kindness and his knowledge take all of her fears and anxieties away ^{☐3}.

She discovers his continuing practical compassion towards her. He takes further steps to see that she is provided for. His servants will keep her company ^{☐1}. He himself will attend to the needs of this newly arrived

☐1 2:1

☐1 2:1

☐1 2:2

☐2

Jeremiah 50:34

☐1 2:4

☐2 2:5

☐3 2:6

☐1 2:8

☐2 2:9

☐3 2:10

☐1 2:11

☐2 2:12

☐3 2:13

☐1 2:14-15

Moabites ². He ensures that no one will ill-treat her ³ and makes sure that she has some extra provision ⁴. At the end of the day she has done well because of Boaz's generosity ⁵.

² 2:14b
³ 2:15
⁴ 2:16
⁵ 2:17

3. She has found that her kinsman-redeemer rewards the humble

• Ruth's faith expressed in humility opened the way for her to experience Boaz' graciousness

3. **She has found that her kinsman-redeemer rewards the humble.** What led to Ruth's experiencing so much of the graciousness of Boaz? Initially it was her faith in the God of Israel. If she had never said to Naomi 'Your God will be my God', these things could not even have started to happen!

But it was not only Ruth's faith; it was Ruth's 'good works' as well. Her faith in being 'under the wings of Yahweh' have led her into ways of humility. She is content to be a gleaner. She humbly trusts in the graciousness of Boaz. She admits her need.

Ruth is generous towards Naomi, in sharing what she has gleaned ¹. Naomi on her part gives her some encouraging information. She tells Ruth that the one she has met is in fact a 'kinsman', someone who is entitled, and perhaps even obliged, to take on Ruth as a husband and a redeemer ². Boaz's advice has been good. 'Stay close to my servants' he had said ³. Ruth took Naomi's advice and kept away from anywhere where she might face abuse or insult ⁴. In this way she continued throughout the barley harvest and through to the end of the wheat harvest ⁵.

¹ 2:18
² 2:19-20
³ 2:21
⁴ 2:22
⁵ 2:23

• A story with lessons of loyalty, kindness, diligence and compassion

The story has been a sweet tale of a woman finding a kinsman-redeemer. Her faith brought her within reach of his graciousness. Her humility attracted his attention. The redeemer and the widow are both behaving in a way that is likely to bring them together.

In all of this the Christian learns lessons about loyalty and kindness, diligence and compassion. The three characters, Naomi, Boaz and Ruth, are all attractive people.

• Also a portrayal of what it means to be a redeemer like Jesus

But there is more than good example in all of this. God's word is giving us a portrayal of what it means for someone to be a redeemer. Every aspect of Boaz is wonderful in itself, and reminds us of Jesus before Jesus came to this world. Faithful believers get to be like Jesus – even before Jesus was born.

• And the pathway to experiencing the blessings of His redemption

Our Redeemer, Jesus, is at hand. His graciousness is greater than we ever realised. He too is full of concern, and knows all about us. He too will continue in faithfulness and compassion towards us. Faith opens up the way for all of the blessings of His redemption. Humble dependence – and even staying close to His servants – will bring to us an abundant 'reaping' from His fields, which we may share with others. We too hide under the wings of Yahweh.

 <p>slices.org.uk</p>	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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