



Lowly Midianite to Redeemed

WHAT DID IT MEAN TO THEM

1) Ruth starts with three strikes against her

Ruth started her life as about as low in status as you could get, at least according to the people of Israel. You see Ruth was a Moabitess, which means she was a woman from the nation of Moab. This people started when Lot and his family were fleeing Sodom and after his wife was turned into a pillar of salt Lot and his daughters fled to a cave to hide. Lot's oldest daughter thought that their family would end there in the cave so she talked to her younger sister and they hatched a plan to get their father drunk and take advantage of him. Both daughters became pregnant by their father and the older daughter gave birth to a son that she named Moab. (Genesis 19:30–38)

From that line was born Ruth. We can see where she started out with a tough road ahead. The people of Israel looked down on the people of Moab and while God didn't say specifically not to marry in the Moabites, He did say not to marry into the other ungodly nations.

Not only was Ruth a Moabitess, once she left her family and followed Naomi into Bethlehem she was a widow without any children. These women of that day had no one to take care of them and they had to rely on the generosity of others just to survive. It seems as though Ruth had three strikes against her when she entered Bethlehem.

But God loves an underdog and as we saw earlier, God had a plan in place long before you and I can even imagine how we are going to get through what we are dealing with. We can wrestle with our difficult situations and do our best to overcome those things that we think we have control over, or we can look for what God has already planned and wait on Him, in His timing, to redeem us from the mess we're in at the time.

2) Ruth is unselfish

Naomi told Ruth and her sister-in-law Orpah several times that they should stay back in Moab with their families.

⁷ So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. ⁸ But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. ⁹ May the LORD grant that you may find a place of rest, each one in the house of her husband." (Ruth 1:7-8)

Orpah said "no", but eventually went back to her family. However, Ruth remained loyal to Naomi, her mother-in-law. Even after three efforts on Naomi's part to turn her back to her family, Ruth refused to leave and made a wonderful statement on her dedication to Naomi.



¹⁵ Then she said, “Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law.” ¹⁶ But Ruth said, “Do not plead with me to leave you or to turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you sleep, I will sleep. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. ¹⁷ Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD do so to me, and worse, if anything but death separates me from you.” (Ruth 1:15-27)

Ruth was set on going with Naomi and carrying for her, even after Naomi begged her to go back to her country and her own people. It wasn't long until the people of Bethlehem learned of the love that Ruth had for Naomi and the care she showed to her.

3) God's plan already in place

I find it strange how we all get amazed when we see God moving in our lives. Somehow we are surprised with things working out. We forget about Romans 8:28, “And we know that all things work together for good to those that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

All that being said, I find it amazing that before Ruth and Naomi got to Bethlehem God had already ripened the Barley for harvest. This started a series of events that shows us God's provision, His timing and His love.

4) Be bold and do a good job

Ruth could have waited around with Naomi when they got to Bethlehem. The two of them could have begged for enough money or food to get by, but instead Ruth went out and gleaned grain from the fields that were being harvested. It was instructed to God's people that they should leave the edges and the stalks that fell in the field for those that were in need (Leviticus 23:22). Ruth was out gathering some of what was left over.

Ruth stayed there at the field until Boaz came and Boaz noticed her there and asked about her. The supervisor that worked for Boaz had taken note of Ruth and noticed that she had been doing a good job at gleaning and that there was something special about her. This was important because when Boaz asked about this “young woman” the supervisor gave a good report which must have impressed Boaz. He reported that Ruth had asked to stay and glean.

⁷ And she said, ‘Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.’

Her boldness in a godly fashion had paid off.

5) Our Redeemer

When Ruth arrived home with grain Naomi asked her where she had gleaned that day. When Ruth answered that she had been in the field owned by Boaz Ruth responded with this.

²⁰ Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn His kindness from the living and from the dead.” Again Naomi said to her, “The man is our relative; he is one of our redeemers.” (Ruth 2:20)

This is the first we see of the term for Boaz as a “redeemer”. He was a close relative and as such he had a responsibility to take care of one of the family that was without someone to take care of them. He was a man of great wealth and greater character and a kinsman redeemer.

The kinsman redeemer had a specifically defined role in Israel’s family life. He was responsible to buy a fellow Israelite out of slavery (Leviticus 25:28). He was responsible to be the “avenger of blood” to make sure the murderer of a family member answered to the crime (Numbers 35:19). He was responsible to buy back family land that had been forfeited (Leviticus 25:25). He was responsible to carry on the family name by marrying a childless widow (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

So in all this we see Boaz as the kinsman redeemer who was responsible to safeguard the Ruth and Naomi, their property, and the future security of the family.

6) Ruth is submissive

When Naomi tells Ruth to go to the threshing floor and how to act there when she sees Boaz, Ruth answers with; “All that you say I will do.” (Ruth 3:5)

Once she gets to the threshing floor she shows her submission to Boaz. At the appropriate time, Naomi instructs Ruth to go in, uncover his feet, and lie down. Today we might think that this was a provocative gesture, as if Ruth was told to provocatively offer herself sexually to Boaz. This was not how this gesture was understood in that day. In the culture of that day, this was understood as an act of total submission.

At that time, this was understood to be the role of a servant, to lay at their master’s feet and be ready for any command he might give. So, when Naomi told Ruth to “lie down” at Boaz’s feet, she told her to come to him in a totally humble, submissive way.

This sincerely submission on the part of Ruth paid off, just as God had planned. Boaz told Ruth,

“Blessed *are* you of the LORD, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you *are* a virtuous woman.” (Ruth 3:10-11).

7) Blessed for her faithfulness

When God wants things to happen, they often happen in a hurry. We have seen so many times that God's timing is not man's timing. Through many of these situations in the Bible or in our own lives that we want immediate gratification and God was us wait.

We see this in the life of Abraham when God told him he was have a son. When it didn't happen quickly Abraham and Sarah took matters into their own hands and the results are still affecting us today. When we move ahead of God we run the danger of creating a mess for ourselves. This wasn't the case with Ruth.

In Chapter four of the book of Ruth we see where Boaz goes before the elders of the village of Bethlehem and the one other kinsman redeemer that was ahead of him in responsibility to Ruth and Naomi. Boaz explains the situation and the other potential redeemer forfeits his right and gives it over to Boaz. With this Boaz vows to marry Ruth.

Ruth and Naomi both were blessed in amazing ways because of Ruth's loyalty, faithfulness, submission and love. Not only did God provide a husband and children for Ruth, He put Ruth right in the direct lineage of Jesus Himself. God's timing and His plans are amazing.