

## 2:1–7 *Ruth Gleans in Boaz's Field*

**WORTHY BOAZ.** EDWARD TOPSELL: In this verse is contained the description of Boaz, upon whom the entire history that follows depends. This Boaz was the son of Salmon, who was son to Nahshon, the prince of the host of Judah; the mother of Boaz was Rahab the harlot (who received the spies of Israel into her house at Jericho), as we read in Matthew, and is commended for her faith by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews. So that in every way we see this dignity commended to us: if we look for birth, his grandfather was the chief of the princely tribe of Judah; if for authority, he was (the Scripture says) of great power; if for wealth, his inheritance must necessarily be great, for one who was descended of such noble ancestors; and the reaping of his corn lasted to the end of all harvest; and the chief of all, his religion is excellently commended unto us in the text and history that follows. Thus we have not to deal here with mean and base personages, being all of a kindred, however some are sooner come to decay than others, but out of this we may learn many profitable lessons. LECTURES ON RUTH 2:1.<sup>1</sup>

**THE NARRATOR INTRODUCES A CONNECTION TO BOAZ.** ARTHUR JACKSON: To intimate why Boaz, at the first knowledge of Ruth, showed her such favor as is related in the following part of the chapter, this is here prefixed that he was a near kinsman of Elimelech's, Naomi's husband. ANNOTATIONS ON RUTH 2:1.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Topsell, *The Reward of Religion*, 97–98\*; citing [1 Chron 2:10](#); [Josh 2:4–5](#); [Mt 1:4](#); [Heb 11:31](#).

<sup>2</sup> Jackson, *Annotations*, 203\*.

**WORLDLY DIGNITY CAN BE FRAIL.** EDWARD TOPSELL: Seeing that Boaz and Elimelech are said to be kinsmen, as those who are descended from the same predecessors and ancestry, we are admonished of the frailty and vanity of worldly dignity, that however parents provide for the maintenance of posterity, yet the Lord must dispose the decay of their children. Here we see poor Naomi has a wealthy and an honorable kinsman, yet she is a destitute and a desolate widow. Her husband and she were no mean persons, but undoubtedly both descended of noble families. The years were but few since the death of Joshua, under whom the inheritance of every tribe was given by lot, and all the Jews and Israelites wealthy possessors. Yet see this godly Naomi has no alternative but to live of the gleanings of her daughter, which neither her parent nor her husband did ever think upon. LECTURES ON RUTH 2:1.<sup>3</sup>

**THE HARD LIFE DOES NOT MOVE RUTH TO WAVER IN FAITH.** RICHARD BERNARD: When Ruth came into Judah, she and Naomi dwelt together, but yet in poor estate, and now serving in order to help themselves by labor, Ruth recalls to herself what to do in this case. She murmurs not against the God of Israel, as his own people the Israelites did in the wilderness, and were ready to return into Egypt; she did not think of Moab. She was not offended with Naomi's poverty, nor with the rest for not affording her plenty; but she resolves to use her own labor for her help, while the time did serve. From which we may learn that honest hearts truly entertaining religion do not forsake it or the godly for worldly wants. Ruth could not for these things be made to start back. COMMENTARY ON RUTH 2:2.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Topsell, *The Reward of Religion*, 98\*.

N. Scott Amos and Timothy George, eds., *Joshua, Judges, Ruth: Old Testament*, vol. IV, Reformation Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020).

Exported from Logos Bible Study, 9:14 AM October 25, 2025.

**THE CAREFULNESS OF RUTH.** EDWARD TOPSELL: After the Holy Spirit had set down the description of Boaz, as the necessary occasion to understand that which follows, in the next verse he describes Ruth. Here he shows us the carefulness of Ruth toward her mother and herself, they being in a foreign place, that they would not in hunger remain at home, but rather risk peril in an honest labor by going abroad to the fields. Therefore, she comes to her mother and asks permission, which being granted, she goes forth as the providence of the Lord directs her journey, and she comes to the harvest field of Boaz her kinsman. LECTURES ON RUTH 2:2.<sup>5</sup>

**COMMENDING THE MODESTY OF RUTH.** LUCAS OSIANDER: Doubly is the name of this woman to be commended for her modesty. This is both because even if the law permitted it, she did not wish to work in a field except that the owner freely allowed it; and then from the fact that she did not even undertake to go out from home to a field without the consent of her mother-in-law. The first example is to be imitated by the poor, who should not think themselves permitted rudely to extort, as if due something, from the rich; the second example is to be followed by young women and widows, that they not rashly wander at random, without the consent of those who have been set over them. COMMENTARY ON RUTH 2:2.<sup>6</sup>

**AN EXAMPLE OF OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS.** EDWARD TOPSELL: We note here a most excellent example of obedience to parents, and avoiding of idleness: Ruth was lately come to Bethlehem, where it is likely she might have long tarried, before her mother would have entreated her to so base a

<sup>5</sup> Topsell, *The Reward of Religion*, 102\*.

<sup>6</sup> Osiander, *Liber Iosue, Iudicum, Ruth*, 258; citing [Deut 24:19](#).

labor as gathering of barley. But seeing herself employed in nothing, first she comes to her mother, and after asking leave as one desirous of some honest, though never so simple a calling. If she had departed, not acquainting Naomi with it, to labor for their living, she might well be excused. But it appears that she must come to her, not to tell her she would go to such a task, but to ask her to give permission to glean in the fields, promising she would not go beyond her bounds, but only gather in that place where the owner thereof should grant her permission. When the mother had granted this, she went forth to the field of Boaz. In this we see what effect godliness works in the hearts of children, for Ruth offers her service for which her mother had not asked, she refused no labor were it never so base, she was not ashamed of her poverty, even in a foreign country; all this must be attributed to her religion. LECTURES ON RUTH 2:2.<sup>7</sup>

**OBEDIENT TO MOTHER AND WILLING TO WORK HARD.** THOMAS FULLER: Here two excellent graces appear in Ruth. First, obedience: she would not go to glean without the leave of her mother-in-law. Truly I say to you, I have not found so much duty, no, not in natural daughters to their own mothers. How many of them nowadays, in matters of greater importance, will betroth and contract themselves not only without the knowledge and consent, but even against the express commands of their parents? Second, see Ruth's industry, that she would condescend to glean. Though I do not think with the Jewish rabbis that Ruth was the daughter to Eglon, king of Moab, yet no doubt she was descended of good parentage, and now see, willing to glean. From this we may gather that those who formerly have had good birth

<sup>7</sup> Topsell, *The Reward of Religion*, 107–8\*.



and upbringing may afterward be forced to work hard to maintain themselves.... Let this teach even those whose veins are washed with generous blood, and arteries quickened with noble spirits, in the prosperity to furnish, qualify, and accommodate themselves with such gentle arts and liberal mysteries as will neither blemish nor burden to their birth, that so if hereafter God shall cast them into poverty, these arts may stand them in some stead, towards their maintenance and relief. COMMENTARY ON RUTH 2:2.<sup>8</sup>

**RUTH, AN EXAMPLE OF CHRISTIAN HONESTY.** EDWARD TOPSELL: Here we may note an example of Christian honesty, one of the fruits of religion: for she tells her mother that she would go gather where she could get leave, as if the Holy Spirit had said, the gleanings are poor, yet the poor must not take them without the consent and favor of the owners. The Lord everywhere exhorts to give to the poor, but he never bids the poor to take where they are found, without knowledge of the owner, but they must do as Ruth here does, not take their right (the very gift of the Lord) without the favor of the owner. This condemns the rashness of many, who think if they are poor that others are bound to give to them, and small matters they may take freely, without the consent of the one who owns it. Yet we see not only religion, but also plain reason to say to the contrary, for the least thing one has is their own, as well as the greatest, and one law condemns the taking of a handful *and* a bushel of corn, though the offence be not so great. But some say it was permitted by the Lord that a person might take the ears of corn and rub them in their hand and eat them, as the disciples did, without the consent and without trespass of the owner;

<sup>8</sup> Fuller, *A Comment on Ruth*, 133–34\*.

such might also take a bunch of grapes and eat them, and likewise the fruit of the orchard, but the same law. And therefore we may take without the consent of the one who owns it. I answer: if the question is asked of an apple, or an ear of corn, or a bunch of grapes, as then was permitted, so I think there is none that will now stand in it. Lectures on Ruth 2:2.<sup>9</sup>

**THE SECRET PROVIDENCE OF GOD LEADS RUTH TO BOAZ'S FIELD.**

LUDWIG LAVATER: It befell that without being directed there, she came into the field of Boaz, or it came to pass or chanced; this word *mikrah* signifies success, the issue, or chance.... If you consider Ruth's will, it was by chance that she went into that field; if the purpose of God, he led her as it were by the hand. Those things that seem to us to be done by chance are not done without the providence of God. SERMONS ON RUTH, THE [NINTH SERMON](#) (ON 2:3).<sup>10</sup>

**CAN CHANCE PLAY A PART HERE?** THOMAS FULLER: How does the [Holy Spirit](#) come to use this word “happened,” a profane term, which deserves to be banished out of the mouths of Christians? Are not all things ordered by God's immediate providence, without which a “sparrow alights not on the ground”? Is not that sentence most true, “God stretches from end to end strongly, and disposes all things sweetly? Strongly, Lord, for you; sweetly, Lord, for me.” So St. Bernard<sup>†</sup>. Or was the providence of God solely confined to his people of Israel, that so Ruth being a foreigner of Moab must be left to the risk of hazard? How does the [Holy Spirit](#)

<sup>9</sup> Topsell, *The Reward of Religion*, 107–8\*.

<sup>10</sup> Lavater, *The Book of Ruth Expounded*, 54r\*.

<sup>†</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) was a French abbot and theologian. The text cited under his name is from [Wis 7:30–8:1](#).

come to use this word? Answer: Things are said to happen, not in respect of God, but in respect of us, because often they come to pass not only without out purpose and forecast, but even against our intentions and determinations. It is lawful therefore in a sober sense to use these expressions, “it chanches” or “it fortuneth.” Nor can any just exception be taken against those words in the collect, “through all changes and chances of this mortal life,” provided always that in our forms of speech we dream not of any chance as unbelievers understand it.<sup>‡</sup> COMMENTARY ON RUTH 2:3.<sup>11</sup>

**AN EXAMPLE OF HOW GOD’S PROVIDENCE WORKS.** EDWARD TOPSELL: When her mother had granted, she went forth and came to the possessions of Boaz her kinsman. Here we may behold the hand of the Lord favoring her diligence, and leading her to the appointed place where among all others she might be, as she was most gently entreated. For she a simple stranger, knowing no one besides her mother, not acquainted with people or country, was ignorant of where to go, but God (who directs the goings of all) ordained her footsteps to Boaz’s possession, where first, she should find favor and feeding, that by this means the way of her marriage might be prepared. Here we see an excellent example of the providence of God, looking upon the poorest as well as the richest, and working all things in the world from the highest to the lowest. LECTURES ON RUTH 2:3.<sup>12</sup>

**THE KINSMAN BOAZ.** RICHARD BERNARD: These words are again mentioned to show that it was the same Boaz men-

<sup>‡</sup> The words of the collect are taken from the Book of Common Prayer.

<sup>11</sup> Fuller, *A Comment on Ruth*, 136–37\*; citing [Mt 10:29](#).

<sup>12</sup> Topsell, *The Reward of Religion*, 108–9\*.

N. Scott Amos and Timothy George, eds., *Joshua, Judges, Ruth: Old Testament*, vol. IV, Reformation Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020).

Exported from Logos Bible Study, 9:14 AM October 25, 2025.

tioned before, and also to show why Ruth had so quickly obtained leave to glean there, and why Boaz respected her so much afterward, and that of a sudden, on so small acquaintance, and to give us to know what a way hereby was made to further the Lord's intent in matching Boaz with this Ruth, Elimelech's daughter-in-law, and the wife once of Mahlon, one of his sons. Since he had died, the next kinsman was to raise up the name of the dead, and to take the widow for his wife, so that Elimelech might not want one for his inheritance among God's people. COMMENTARY ON RUTH 2:3.<sup>13</sup>

**SPOUSES ARE JOINED BY THE LORD'S DESIGN.** JOHANNES BRENZ: By some chance Ruth seems to have turned aside to the field of Boaz, but if one should think carefully about the outcome of the event, one will find that she had been led to this very field in some way by the hand of God. And so God leads her there to Boaz's field for this reason, so that there he might join her in marriage to Boaz, and so free her from her sorrows. And he will make her the most famous of women. Thus one has an example that confirms that our Lord God is a truly outstanding arranger of marriages. Our Christ says, "Those whom God has joined together, let no one separate." Therefore, he shows that God is one who arranges marital unions. For this reason, Eve was by God both formed from Adam while he slept and was unaware, and was led to Adam himself who knew nothing of such a plan. This indicates, therefore, that spouses are wonderfully and by the most secret means joined together by God. Solomon says in a similar fashion, "A home and wealth are received as an inheritance from parents, but a prudent wife comes from

<sup>13</sup> Bernard, *Ruth's Recompence*, K7r-v\*.

the Lord.” So it is very helpful for us to understand these points: first, that whoever wants to enter into a marriage should not look for violent means, tricks, and deceits for winning to himself a wife. But because the Lord is the arranger of marriages, let him also permit the Lord to fulfill his duty, and let this man seek fair and just means of obtaining a wife. Second, that it is necessary to know that marriage comes from the Lord. For the burdens of marriage are manifold, and spouses cannot patiently endure these unless they understand that they are engaged in the kind of life that God has ordained and blessed. COMMENTARY ON RUTH 2:4.<sup>14</sup>

**BOAZ’S APPEARANCE WAS NOT AN ACCIDENT.** RICHARD BERNARD: This passage is used to set out a remarkable thing, and is placed here as if it had been said to the reader, take notice of God’s providence herein, as a thing worthy of observation, that Boaz should now come into the field, at this time, to his reapers; and in God willing the reader to behold this, we may learn that the provident hand of God is in all things to be diligently marked and observed. For hereby we shall see God in everything, and so acknowledge his ruling hand in and over all; we shall see his favor and help in delivering his children and servants ... in furthering them to their honor and welfare, as he does here Ruth.... Let us then observe wisely the hand of God’s providence, that he may have the glory in all things, when we see his rule and power either in his works of mercy, or works of judgment. COMMENTARY ON RUTH 2:4.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Brenz, *In librum Iudicum et Ruth*, S6v–S7r; citing [Mt 19:6](#); [Gen 2:18–22](#); [Prov 19:14](#).

<sup>15</sup> Bernard, *Ruth’s Recompence*, K7v–K8r\*.

**BOAZ FIRST PRAYS GOD’S BLESSINGS ON HIS LABORERS.**

EDWARD TOPSELL: After Boaz came to the field, he salutes the reapers, and says, “The Lord be with you,” and they answered, “The Lord bless you.” In this we see the first thing he does is pray for the laborers in this godly salutation, for he wishes the presence of God to be with them, which is his favor, for his presence signifies his favor and his blessing (as absences signifies his judgments and cursings). LECTURES ON RUTH 2:4.<sup>16</sup>

**THE HUMANITY OF A WELL-MEANING SALUTATION. LUDWIG**

LAVATER: We have an example in this place of salutation. The manner of salutation is not only old, but most profitable to reconcile and confirm love, which our Savior diligently commends to all godly men.... But we must take heed lest we do it with a hypocrite’s mind. It is a point both of courtesy and of humanity to salute others, and to pray for them. If great and mighty men salute poor men, they are marvelously affected, seeing that they are not despised of them. Neither was it to be doubted that this salutation of Boaz was most acceptable to his reapers. There are some who do of envy and hatred disdain to salute others, who should remember that commandment of Christ, that we must pray for and wish well to our enemies. How often does it come to pass that many who will not willingly salute one another after they have been absent and asunder would desire nothing more than to live together and to use all duties of humanity to each other. SERMONS ON RUTH, THE TENTH SERMON (ON 2:4).<sup>17</sup>

**BOAZ IMMEDIATELY NOTICES RUTH. RICHARD BERNARD: He no**

<sup>16</sup> Topsell, *The Reward of Religion*, 111\*.

<sup>17</sup> Lavater, *The Book of Ruth Expounded*, 56r–57r\*; citing Mt 5:44.

sooner came into the field and had saluted his reapers but his eye was on Ruth. He took special notice of her, and asked who she was, and to whom she belonged. This shows a guiding power of God herein, and also that before this time he had not seen her. Old Naomi had not sent her, it may seem, to his house, nor out in public to be gazed on, and yet was she famous for her virtues, which will spread themselves abroad well enough, though the party in person be known to few. COMMENTARY ON RUTH 2:5.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Bernard, *Ruth's Recompence*, L2v\*; citing [Ruth 3:11](#).