

## Ruth

### Lesson 5

#### Following the King: Life in the Harvest Field

#### Purpose for the Book of Ruth:

*The book of Ruth establishes Christ's rightful claim to the throne. But the book also gives us a picture of the character of this King. And the interesting thing about the book of Ruth is that it is essentially a love story – a romantic but somewhat strange love story. What a surprising twist for a book about a King!*

#### The Here and Now.

*The King is coming!*

*But Ruth did not live in the Kingdom and neither do we at this point. We live in the here and now. The King is coming – but how are we to live in this day and time? How do we exercise faith in the midst of the turmoil of our time?*

#### The Harvest

Ruth enters the land at the time of the barley harvest which would have been around April or May (Ruth 1:22)

The two principal grains during Ruth's time, that were cultivated in ancient Palestine were wheat and barley. In growing grains, the farmer would wait for early rains to plow. (Psalm 65:9-10.) The rains were necessary in order to plant. Before the rains came, the farmer would spend time preparing his equipment. But when the rains came, the farmer would plough up the earth. Usually the rains would come in October or the first part of November, but sometimes the rains would not come until as late as February. But whenever the rains came, the farmer would plough. Once he had ploughed the earth, he would sow the seed. The farmer would carry the seed to his field in a large sack on the back of a donkey and then he would carry a leather bag on his arm with seed – he would replenish the seed in his leather bag with seed from the large sack and then manually scatter the seed. And a member of his family or a servant – if he had one - would follow behind with the plough to plough the seed under into the ground. Fred Wight, *Manners and Customs in Bible Lands*.

Then the farmer would wait for the harvest so he could reap the benefits of his hard work.

## Provisions for Hospitality.

### (1) Eating the Grain in the Field.

Once the grain in a wheat field had passed the milk stage and had begun to harden, it was then called “fereek” and was considered to be delicious to eat raw. People in the land would pluck the heads, and then rub them in their hands and eat them.

For centuries, the unwritten law of hospitality had been that wayfarers could eat of the wheat as they passed by or through a field – but they must not carry any away with them. The law of God allowed this same privilege.

*When you come into the standing corn (i.e. grain) of your neighbor, then you may pluck the ears with thine hand; but you shall not move a sickle unto thy neighbor's standing corn. Deut. 23:25.*

Cp. Luke 6:1-2.

The Pharisees criticized Jesus' disciples – not for eating wheat when they passed through a wheat field --- but rather for doing it on the Sabbath Day.

### (2) The Care of the Poor in connection with the Grain Harvest.

Leviticus 23:23

*And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not make clean riddance of the corners of your field when you reap, neither shall you gather any gleanings of your harvest: you shall leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger.*

Leviticus 19:9, 10 & Deuteronomy 24:19-22.

## Bread in Bible Times

In Bible times, most of the population would have lived almost entirely on either bread or what could be made from wheat or barley flour. In the Bible, the expression “eating bread” carries the idea of eating a meal.

Genesis 43:31, 32 *The Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews.*

Ruth 2:8-22.

What other provisions, along with the barley grain, did Ruth find in the gleaning of Boaz's field?

- *She met the owner of the field.*
- *She is invited to dine with him. She has more than enough.*
- *She is invited to come every day to glean in the field.*
- *She is given his protection.*
- *She is praised by Boaz for her reputation.*

*There is a picture here in Ruth 2 of a growing relationship with the owner of the harvest field.*

### Typology in Ruth 2 The Harvest

*Luke 10:2*

*Then He said to them, the harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few, therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.*

*Matthew 9:35-39*

*Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.*

Our Church Age is a time of harvest.

And in Ruth 2, we can see Boaz as a type of Christ – the Owner of the harvest and our Provider.

### Lessons on the Harvest from Ruth 2

- (1) There is a purpose in going out into the harvest. Ruth 2:27

- (2) There is the privilege of being part of the harvest.

I Corinthians 1:26-29

*For you see your calling brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised He has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.*

Like Ruth, we are impoverished, but we have the privilege of laboring in the harvest field for God in spite of our being undeserving.

- (3) There is provision for our own needs. Ruth 2:14

Matthew 6:33

*But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

With added blessings Ruth 2:14-16.

Ephesians 1: 3

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.*

Proverbs 10:22

*The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.*

- (4) There are perils in the harvest field, but we have God's protection.

Ruth 2:8-9

*Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art thirsty, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn.*

*In the world you will have tribulation, but I have overcome the world.*  
John 16:33

- (5) There is Praise from the Owner.  
Ruth 2:11-12

Hebrews 6:10

*For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have showed toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

- (6) Most importantly, we have His presence with us.

Ruth 2:14; 2:20

Revelation 3:20.

*Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him; and will sup with him, and he with me.*

Matthew 28:19-20

*Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

### For Further Thought

How does “life in the harvest” seem to you at this point? What refreshment in your Christian life and ministry can you find from focusing on the character and Person of the owner of the harvest?

What unexpected “handfuls of grain/blessings” have you experienced in your life over the last year? Take a moment to give thanks for those blessings that God has brought into your life.