

In our brief study of the book of Ruth we have found the Gentile maiden of Ruth vowing to follow and love the God of Israel, as she returns to the Promised Land with mother-in-law, Naomi. We have found her in the barley fields of Boaz, gleaning to provide food and hope beyond hope for someone who would show her favor in a foreign land. And we have found Boaz show extraordinary grace and love to this maiden girl by agreeing to be her kinsman-redeemer should he prove to be the only one willing to do so.

You will recall that chapter 3 ended with the revelation that there was one relative to Naomi (and now dead husband Elimelech) who was closer in line to be Ruth's kinsman redeemer. So, as they say, "the plot thickens" as we turn to the final chapter to see the outcome. Will the young lovers be granted their wish to wed? Will the closer relative relinquish his right to redeem? Will this romance of redemption have a happy ending? Let me read chapter 4 to you as you follow along in your Bibles. - *At this point, Chapter 4 of Ruth is read aloud.* -

### **THE COURT AT THE CITY GATE**

Boaz is determined to become the husband of Ruth. As Naomi said to Ruth at the end of chapter 3, *"the man will not rest until he has settled it today."* He was doing far more than a duty. He was in love and was determined to redeem this Ruth for himself. Do you not see Jesus in the heart of Boaz, determined to redeem you to Himself? Like Boaz, Jesus went to extreme measures to make it possible to redeem you because of His love for you. The incarnation (Jesus becoming man) and the cross of Calvary certainly qualify as "extreme measures" – both sure signs of God's great love for you and for His church.

In 4:1 we see Boaz go to the city gate where he knew the closer relative would enter the city. When this closer relative passes by, he entreats this relative to stop and sit with him. Then Boaz creates a legal "courtroom" by entreating ten city elders who pass by to sit as well, as witnesses.

It is clear by now that Boaz is a type of Christ Jesus. But of whom is this closer relative a type? I am convinced, as are many fine commentators, that this "closer relative" must be the Law of Moses. For who else is the one who has the greater claim to "save" or "redeem" us than the Law? And what is the typical representation of the Law but the "Ten Commandments," represented by the ten elders in this story. And did not Jesus go "out of His way" to "sit down" with the Law by becoming a Jewish man, to assert His authority to redeem and save in a way that the Law could not do?

***Romans 8:3-4a*** *For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin. He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us.*

### **BOAZ' STRATEGY**

Boaz is strategic in bringing up the redeeming of the land before he brings up the redeeming of Ruth. The truth is that Naomi did not have land to sell, as verse 3 seems to indicate. The word "sell" is better translated "redeem" or "buy back" the land, for Elimelech her husband had very likely sold the land in the extreme of their need. Naomi needed a close relative to "buy back" the land who had the money and the will to do so, that she and her daughter-in-law could survive in the land.

Note that when Boaz lays out this first part of the redemption to the closer relative he agrees to redeem it (see verse 4). Think of this willingness in regards to the Law – our type of the closer relative. The Law provided a land for Israel – a place of refuge. It provided a perfect moral standard. It provided protection, security and a path to follow. But it could not cleanse and restore. It could not make perfect to be a dwelling place for God.

**Hebrews 10:1** *For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.*

No wonder then, that in verse 6 the closer relative refuses to redeem Ruth by marriage. He says “*I cannot redeem it.*” And the Law cannot bring us into relationship with God, it can only point us to God. Only Jesus, our Redeemer, is able to cleanse by His shed blood and make us perfect for intimacy with God. The close relative was “turned off” at the prospect of marrying a heathen Moabitess. But Boaz was not. And our Jesus is not “turned off” at becoming one with us, despite our unworthiness, for He has washed us clean by His shed blood.

Note that this strategy of Boaz of bringing up the further requirement of redemption of Ruth worked in his favor. And the “strategy” of Jesus going to the cross for us after all seemed lost certainly confounded the Law and worked in our eternal favor!

### **SEALING OF THE DEAL**

Note that the custom of the day to seal a legal arrangement to redeem and buy land was to give a sandal (or shoe) to the redeeming party. This is similar to the tradition of claiming land by putting one’s foot or shoe upon it. We saw this played out in 1969 when Neil Armstrong put his footprint upon the moon and claimed it for America and for mankind.

Note also that the language of verse 7 seems to indicate that this tradition was “*in former times*” meaning that this practice had fallen out of use by the time the book of Ruth was written, giving another nod that it was probably written a few generations later in the time of David.

The ten elders as witnesses constituted a legal binding of the deal. And the Ten Commandments of Moses witness that though they are perfect in their moral standard, they cannot be kept by any man to bring man to God. The Ten Commandments are thus witnesses to the Law’s failure to redeem.

### **THE PROMISE OF REDEMPTION**

Remember that Boaz was the perfect kinsman-redeemer (Hebrew: Goel) because he was (1) the closest relative who had the (2) power (money) to redeem and the (3) willingness to redeem. Likewise, Jesus is our God-man close relative who has the power by his shed blood and willingness by His great love to redeem us.

Here I want you to note something that is often overlooked. It was not the marrying of Ruth or the purchasing back of Elimelech’s land for Naomi that was the chief duty of the kinsman-redeemer. Verse 10 makes the primary duty clear – it was to raise up an heir for the deceased Elimelech. The son to be of Boaz and Ruth was Elimelech’s and Naomi’s grandson. But more important yet, because Obed was Boaz’s son, by Ruth, Obed continued the line of the Messiah. Until Obed, Boaz, being in the line of the Messiah, had yet to have an heir. So there is a double-heirship going on here! The ultimate duty, God’s duty, for Boaz was to raise up an heir for the Messiah.

And as Boaz is a type of Jesus, Jesus’ ultimate duty as our Redeemer was and is to raise up a spiritual genealogy of God’s children. Every person that receives Jesus into his/her heart as Savior and Lord is fulfilling God’s purpose for Jesus’ redemptive act on the cross of Calvary. So dear believer, YOU are a fulfillment of God’s purpose in sending Jesus!

### **THE HAPPY ENDING**

If Ruth had been written by Grimm, or another fairytale writer, it would have ended “and they lived happily ever after.” Boaz and Ruth are married and have a child. The women of Bethlehem say to Naomi, “*may his name become famous in Israel*” – which clearly has been fulfilled in Jesus. Naomi becomes the happy grandmother of Obed, rocking him in her lap in her old age. Bitterness (“Mara”) is restored (redeemed) to pleasantness (“Naomi”). Sigh.

And don't lose sight in this happy ending that our happy ending as children of God is secure. Someday soon, we as the united bride of Christ will marry our Jesus in a heavenly wedding, to be with Him through eternity in wedded bliss. Double sigh. (Warning: Don't miss *this* wedding!)

### **THE CLOSING GENEALOGY**

But the book of Ruth is not quite finished. The final five verses give the genealogy from Perez (son of Judah) through David. This confirms that one of the chief reasons for the book is to indicate that Boaz and Ruth are in the line of Christ, and links the Israeli tribe of Judah to King David. The book of Ruth, then, is the Messianic link through the time of the judges. But is there more to note about this genealogy? Yes indeed.

Perez, through no fault of his own, was born illegitimately by an incestuous union by father Judah and mother Tamar, who was the daughter-in-law of Judah. The sad and sordid story is told in an entire chapter of the Bible, Genesis 38. Perez therefore, was not only a son born out of wedlock, but a son born of a disapproved relationship between a man and woman – true then as it is today. He was, in the true Biblical sense of the word, a bastard - again, through no fault of his own. And thus, he contaminated the line of the Messiah. Note God's law:

***Deuteronomy 23:2*** *A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter in to the congregation of the Lord.*

"Bastard" here comes from the Hebrew word "mamzer" which means "polluted." The typical dictionary definition of "bastard" is "one born out of wedlock." And in recent days the word has come to be a nasty slur to a scoundrel and person considered as base. But these are *NOT* the meanings in Deuteronomy, but of one who is "polluted" because born of an incestuous, totally inappropriate relationship.

And "*into the congregation of the Lord*" refers to more than just "into good standing" or "allowed to be a part." It implies "into leadership of the congregation" and "representing the people of God." So, Deut. 23:2, is saying that if one is born from a polluted, illicit relationship, his offspring until the tenth generation shall not be allowed to represent or lead the congregation of God's people.

So why does Ruth's genealogy begin with Perez? – Because he was known by all of Israel to be the bastard son of Judah. And why are only ten generations given? Because the law stated that no one for ten generations from Perez could serve in "the congregation of the Lord" as leader (king). And why does the genealogy only go through King David? – Because he was the first in the Messianic line from Perez that could serve as King under God's law. He was the tenth from Perez.

This is surely part of the answer to the question as to why Saul was allowed by God to serve as king when he was not God's choice. At that time there was no one in the line of the Messiah ready to become king because of pollution to the line. In the tenth generation from Perez God raised up David who could by law now "*enter into the congregation of the Lord*" as leader and king.

So the book of Ruth concludes with a hidden and sometimes forgotten miracle of God, which is in itself a part of God's "Romance of Redemption" to you and to me - to keep the line of the Messiah pure. God's ways are indeed higher than ours! Don't you love His attention to every detail!

I hope you have enjoyed and been blessed by this brief study of the book of Ruth. May we strive to the godly devotion of the Moabite Ruth, And may we be eternally grateful for the romance of redemption that Jesus has performed on our behalf as our beloved kinsman-redeemer!