

**GOD WITH US**  
**Part 2: Conquest and Chaos**  
**Joshua – Judges – Ruth**

**Message 12 – Ruth: The Promise Continues**  
**Ruth 3-4**

**Introduction**

On one level, Ruth is the story of a single family struggling to find a way forward in a difficult world. Ruth chapters 1-2 detail the plight of Naomi and her Moabite daughter-in-law, Ruth, as they resettle in Bethlehem, with little hope for a promising future. Ruth chapters 3-4 tell the story of Naomi and Ruth’s amazing turn of fortune. Guided by the sovereign hand of God, they find their “redeemer” in the man Boaz. His love and kindness, his mercy and grace, become the much-needed refuge for a family with little hope. On a higher level, the book of Ruth is the story of God’s great love for the entire human family, for it contains the scarlet thread of **God’s promise** to bring THE Redeemer and Savior to the world through the family line of David. How fitting, then, that the story of Naomi and Ruth finding their redeemer should occur in Bethlehem, the very city that became the birthplace of the Lord 1,000 years later.

**Naomi’s plan for Ruth: 3:1-5**

Naomi was encouraged by the entrance of Boaz into the picture. She knew that he was a relative of her deceased husband, Elimelek, and that he potentially could serve as the “kinsman redeemer” for her and Ruth. According to the laws that God gave to Israel through Moses, if a woman’s husband died and she had to sell family property to survive, the “kinsman redeemer” would step in and buy the property. If it had already been sold to someone else, then he would redeem the property from that person. In this way, the widow would have funds in order to live, while at the same time, the property would remain “in the family.” At a later date, when a suitable heir was raised up in the original family line, the property would be returned to that family. This was God’s way of preserving, through times of hardship, the land inheritance for each family in Israel.

A separate, but related custom in Israel was the law of levirate marriage. This law stated that the brother (or nearest male relative) of a deceased man would marry his widow and raise up offspring for his brother so that the family line would not disappear. These two laws (kinsman redeemer & levirate marriage) were sometimes combined so that the nearest relative (redeemer) was called upon to save both the *land* and the *line* for the deceased man.

Boaz was a close relative of Elimelek, Naomi's deceased husband. Thus, he had the *potential* to serve as the kinsman redeemer and levirate husband for Naomi or Ruth. Yet, he was not the "nearest of kin." There was one who was a closer relative than him.

Naomi, knowing that Boaz was a righteous man who would be good for Ruth and for her, came up with a plan whereby Ruth would *invite* Boaz to consider the possibility of taking her under his wing in marriage, serving as their kinsman redeemer *and* levirate husband.

***Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight. Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do." She said to her, "All that you say I will do" (3:1-5).***

This entire scheme was risky for *any* woman; but perhaps more so for Ruth given her Moabite background. Nevertheless, Ruth moved on this plan *with faith, courage and character*.

What exactly was Ruth asking Boaz to do? "*Ruth wanted Boaz to marry her and thus to provide a refuge for her and Naomi, just as a kinsman redeemer would . . . She appealed to him to be the family member who, at his own cost, would act to rescue those whose future had been blighted, even though he didn't have to do so*" (Iain Duguid, *Esther & Ruth*, p.172).

The qualifications for the kinsman redeemer were fourfold:

- He must be related to the family.
- He must be able to redeem the land.
- He must be willing to redeem the land.
- He must pay the price and make the transaction.

### **Boaz accepts Ruth's invitation: 3:6-13**

That night, at the threshing floor, after Boaz had gone to lie down by his heap of grain, Ruth moved on Naomi's plan.

***"When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down" (3:7).***

In Ruth's day, when a man covered a woman with the corner of his robe it was a symbolic gesture roughly similar to our modern practice of giving an engagement ring (Duguid, 172). This is what happened when Boaz woke up in the middle of the night and found Ruth lying at his feet. Ruth was inviting a betrothal from the kinsman redeemer.

***It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet. He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth your servant. So spread your covering over your servant, for you are a close relative" (3:8,9).***

Ruth invited Boaz to spread his covering over her (to marry her). When God drew Israel out of Egypt, and entered into a covenant relationship with her, He was covering her with His garment: "Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My garment over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine," declares the Lord God" (Ezekiel 16:8). Yahweh became Israel's redeemer and husband, just as Boaz did for Ruth. In the same way, Jesus has become the bridegroom for the Church, His redeemed bride. He has spread the covering of His love over us, removing our sin, our shame and

Boaz once again commended Ruth for her character (3:11, also 2:11,12). She was a "woman of excellence" (noble character).

***" . . . for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence" (3:11).***

He commended Ruth for “*not going after younger men, whether poor or rich*” (v.10). In other words, Ruth was not following the passions of a young woman’s heart; rather, she was pursuing the principles of her godly heart. She was unselfishly seeking refuge both for herself and for Naomi, her mother-in-law by offering to become Boaz’s wife. She was continuing to fulfill her vows of commitment to Naomi, even in her pursuit of Boaz.

That night, Boaz promised to become the kinsman redeemer for Naomi, *and* the husband for Ruth IF the one relative who was more closely related to Elimelek passed on the same offer. He promised to settle the matter by the next day.

*In Hebrew, Boaz said to Ruth: “All my people in the gate know you are a woman of excellence.” The city gate was where people gathered to share daily news and discuss events. It was the ancient version of a social media site. Proverbs 31 describes the virtuous woman. The last line goes like this: “Give her the product of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates” (Prov.31:31). Truly, Ruth’s works were already the ‘talk of the town’ at the city gates. She was a woman of noble character (Prov.31:10) and her reputation had spread like wildfire via the social media site of her day! How about you? What do your social media sites say about your reputation?*

### **Ruth returns to report to Naomi: 3:14-18**

At Boaz’ instructions, Ruth remained all night at the threshing floor, for her own safety. Boaz sent her back to Naomi early in the morning, while it was still dark, so that she would not be seen departing the threshing floor and be accused of anything immoral. Ruth reported to Naomi that her plan had succeeded, and that Boaz would seek to become their kinsman redeemer *and* her husband.

*Boaz was rightly concerned about the ‘appearance of evil’ IF people saw Ruth leaving his threshing floor in the early morning. People would have (wrongly) assumed that Boaz and Ruth were engaging in sexual relations outside of marriage. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul says this to the early church: “Hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1Thessalonians 5:22). We need to pay attention to our lifestyles, making sure that we do not give people the ‘impression’ that we are engaging in unethical or immoral behavior. Abstaining from evil is one thing. Abstaining from the appearance of evil requires an even higher level of diligence and concern for one’s testimony as a follower of Christ. Is there any area of your life where you might be giving the appearance of evil?*

## **Boaz discusses redemption with the other relative: 4:1-6**

The next day, Boaz fulfilled his promise, going to the city gate to discuss the redemption of Naomi's land with the other relative. Boaz first presented the LAND aspect of the kinsman redeemer to this other relative. He would have to purchase the land that belonged to Elimelek, and give the proceeds to Naomi. This seemed like a good deal to the man.

*Then he said to the closest relative, "Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelek. So I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy it before those who are sitting here, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am after you.'" And he said, "I will redeem it."*

Then Boaz presented to the man the *other half* of the deal, the levirate marriage issue. This he did not see coming!

*Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance" (4:5).*

Because Naomi (and Ruth) were without children, there would still be no descendant in Elimelek's line to someday receive back the property from the kinsman redeemer. Thus, the obligation (Levirate marriage law) to marry Ruth and raise up that future heir for the house of Elimelek.

*The closest relative said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem it" (4:6).*

This other potential kinsman redeemer now realized that he would have to return the redeemed property, someday, to a child born of the marriage to Ruth. He was not wealthy enough to purchase the property, give Naomi the money *and* then have the property someday revert back to Naomi's family as an "inheritance." This complex transaction would jeopardize his financial situation and the inheritance he intended to give his own children. Therefore, he forfeited the right to be the kinsman redeemer to Naomi and Ruth, and that right fell to Boaz as their next closest relative.

## **Boaz publicly commits to be the kinsman redeemer: 4:7-12**

Boaz' commitment to become the kinsman redeemer and husband to Ruth was formalized with a shoe covenant. Exchanging shoes was one way, in the ancient world, that land deals were finalized. The shoe (or sandal) was what stepped upon the land; thus it was a fitting symbol for the transfer of land. In this case, it appears that the two men did not exchange sandals; rather, the man passing on the land/marriage deal gave his sandal to Boaz, indicating that he was "handing over" the kinsman redeemer right to the land.

(There was a different situation under which the sandal would be used in a more humiliating fashion. If the kinsman redeemer was *able* but *unwilling* to marry one such as Ruth, then his contempt for God's law was symbolized as the rejected woman removed his sandal and spit in his face [Deuteronomy 25:9]!)

***Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelek and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his birth place; you are witnesses today" (4:9-10).***

The formalities concluded with the elders of the city pronouncing a blessing over Boaz, Ruth and the descendants that would result from their union.

## **Naomi holds the redeemer: 4:13-17**

As this story comes to a close, it is important to notice details in the wording. Thus far, Boaz has been called "the redeemer." Yet, in this closing scene, someone else is called Naomi's "redeemer."

***So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and***

***became his nurse. The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David (4:13-17).***

Though Boaz was, technically, the kinsman redeemer, it would be THE CHILD who would, symbolically, redeem life for Naomi as he would "restore life to her" and "sustain her in her old age." Thus, the story ends with the child taking center stage in the grand story of redemption. How fitting, as this child would carry on the Messianic promise of God, through David down to Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Savior! This child would bring about redemption not only for Naomi and Ruth, but for all of humanity!

*The story of Naomi began with great pain and loss. She lost her husband and two sons, and had only Ruth, the Moabite daughter-in-law left by her side. Yet, God used Ruth to bless Naomi beyond what she could ever have imagined. The women of Bethlehem, who formerly called Naomi "Mara" (bitter), now pronounce a blessing over her, noting especially that "your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." Ruth LOVED Naomi. She was "better than seven sons!" God uses faithful, loving people to accomplish His beautiful plan in the lives of others. How might God want to use your love and faithfulness to bless someone else?*

### **The genealogy of King David: 4:18-22**

The book ends giving the lineage of King David. This indicates two things: 1) The book of Ruth was composed sometime during the reign of David. 2) The purpose of the book was to shed light on the unique circumstances and character of David's forefathers.

***"Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron, and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab, and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon, and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed, and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David" (4:18-22).***

One of the *glaring* facts in the genealogy is the presence of the kinds of people that you would not normally associate with the blessing of God and the "right" to be in the sacred line leading to the Christ. Perez was born of the incestuous relationship between Judah and his more righteous daughter-in-law, Tamar (Genesis 38:1-30). Boaz was born to Salmon and Rahab, the former

prostitute from Jericho, turned convert to Israel (Matthew 1:5). Obed was born to a Moabite woman, Ruth.

*Clearly, God's grace and mercy move Him to redeem the most unlikely people, using their lives to bring His promise to the entire world.*

Perhaps this story was composed *after* David's adultery with Bathsheba. Recall that God promised that the child springing from David and Bathsheba, Solomon, would be the one through whom the sacred lineage would continue (1Kings 1:17). How could that be? How could God choose a child born *from this union* to carry on the sacred promise? The little story of Ruth gives an implied response: God moves in *very* mysterious ways!

*Boaz presents a beautiful picture of Jesus, our kinsman redeemer. Boaz was a "family member." Jesus left heaven's glory in order to become a member of the human family. "Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers" (Hebrews 2:11). Boaz had the wealth to redeem Ruth and Naomi. Jesus had within Himself the wealth and power to pay the redemption price for all of humanity. "He redeemed us with His precious blood" (1Peter 1:18,19). Ruth came to Boaz with little to offer, other than poverty and brokenness. We come to Jesus as needy people with spiritual poverty and brokenness. Boaz saw value in Ruth and Naomi. He was willing to redeem them. Jesus values every human being enough to pay for the sins of the world. Boaz took Ruth to be his wife. Jesus calls the church His "bride." Naomi and Ruth shared in the riches of Boaz. We share in the eternal riches of Christ.*

*God moves in a mysterious way; His wonders to perform;  
He plants his footsteps in the sea; and rides upon the storm.*

*Deep in unfathomable mines, of never failing skill,  
He treasures up his bright designs and works his sovereign will.*

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take, the clouds ye so much dread,  
Are big with mercy, and shall break, in blessings on your head.*

*Judge not the lord by feeble sense, but trust him for his grace;  
Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.*

*His purpose will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.*

*Blind unbelief is sure to err, and scan his work in vain:  
God is his own interpreter, and he will make it plain.*

*William Cowper - 1773*