

Ruth Chapter 4

Verses 1-6:

To “redeem” during the period of the judges had three meanings: to free from bondage (Lev. 25:47-48), from poverty (Lev. 25:25), or from death (in the case of a widow who needed an heir to carry on the family line and provide for her; (see Deut. 25:5-6).

Boaz redeemed Ruth and Naomi in all three ways, portraying the redemption Jesus offers from slavery to sin, poverty of spirit, and the consequences of death.

God’s divine plan fully blossomed as Boaz redeemed Naomi’s land and Ruth’s hand in marriage.

Naomi, once empty (1:21), is full; Ruth, once a widow (1:5), is married; most importantly, the LORD has prepared Christ’s line of descent in David, through Boaz and Obed, back to Judah (Gen. 49:10) to fulfill the proper messianic lineage.

Ruth 4:1 "Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down."

“Went Boaz up”:

Apparently, the threshing floor was below the level of the gate.

Compare (Ruth 3:3), “go down to the threshing floor.”

“The gate”:

The normal public place to transact business in ancient times (2 Sam. 15:2; Job 29:7; Lam. 5:14).

“Such a one”:

The Hebrew text is not clear whether Boaz called him directly by name (which is then not mentioned by the author) or addressed him indirectly.

The city “gate” served as the place where public affairs were carried on, especially for the administration of justice (Deut. 21:19; 22:24; Joshua 20:4; 2 Kings 10:8), or for the transaction of business arrangements (Gen. 23:10, 18; 2 Kings 7:1).

The penman decided not to name the near-kinsman redeemer here.

It might be that he never knew his name, or it could be that he did not want to give it for shame to the man.

Boaz deliberately went to the city gate to wait for him.

He knew that he would go through this gate, because it was the only one out of the city at the time.

When Boaz calls to him, he comes over to see what Boaz wants.

Ruth 4:2 "And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down."

“Ten men”:

This number apparently comprised a quorum to officially transact business, although only two or three witnesses were needed for judicial proceedings (Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

Boaz had these men as witnesses to what he was about to do.

They were not aware they were there for a witness however.

Ten speaks of world government. Boaz was keeping the law of the land.

Ruth 4:3 "And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which [was] our brother Elimelech's:"

“Naomi ... selleth”:

As a widow, she needed the money for living expenses, knowing that the land would ultimately be returned at Jubilee (Lev. 25:28).

“Our brother Elimelech’s”:

Boaz and the unnamed relative were most likely either brothers or cousins.

Boaz and Ruth had discussed all of the business of Naomi.

Boaz knew that Naomi was poor.

She perhaps had to sell the land for a living.

This other near kinsman was possibly the older brother of Boaz, since he says, our brother Elimelech.

That would answer why the other man had the first right as the near-kinsman redeemer.

Verses 4-7:

At this time in history, to remove one's "shoe" and give it to someone confirmed a transaction, that transferred property from one person to another.

"I will no longer step foot on your property or your belongings" (Deut. 25:8-10).

The close relative transferred his right to "all that was Elimelech's, and ... Chilion's and Mahlon's".

Both the "field" that Boaz bought and the hand of "Ruth" in marriage.

He also relinquished his name and would be called "What's His Face" in the Hebrew (4:1; see also Deut. 25:10).

Ruth 4:4 "And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy [it] before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem [it], redeem [it]: but if thou wilt not redeem [it, then] tell me, that I may know: for [there is] none to redeem [it] beside thee; and I [am] after thee. And he said, I will redeem [it]."

"Buy it":

As authorized by the Mosaic Law (Lev. 25:23-28).

The land was not to be sold to a stranger.

Either Boaz or his brother would have to buy it to keep it in the family name.

This is said before these witnesses, so there will be proof later.

The man immediately says he will redeem it, because he wants the land.

Ruth 4:5 Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy [it] also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.

"Thou must buy it":

Both redeeming Ruth and the land would not have been required by the letter of the levirate law (Deut. 25:5-6).

Perhaps this exemplified Boaz's desire to obey the spirit of the law (see note on 2:4-17) or maybe redemption of land and marriage had been combined by local tradition.

The levirate principle appears first in Scripture at (Gen. 38:8; Matt. 22:23-28).

Now there is a new twist to the circumstances.

The other man has to marry Ruth, to be able to redeem the land.

Boaz reminds him that Ruth is a Moabitess.

He does not stress the fact that she is a Hebrew by marriage to a Hebrew.

His first child will belong to Ruth's dead husband.

Ruth 4:6 "And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem [it] for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem [it]."

Although the nearer kinsman wanted to “redeem” the field that Naomi had up for sale, apparently the additional expense of providing for a wife, together with the probability of losing the property if a son should be born to the widow, caused the nearer kinsman to relinquish his rights to Boaz.

“I mar mine own inheritance”:

He was unwilling to have the family portfolio split between his existing children and the potential offspring of a union with Ruth.

Redeem thou my right to thyself”:

The closer relative relinquished his legal right to the land and Ruth.

This cleared the way for Boaz to redeem both.

It seems he already had a family and his inheritance would have been divided into so many pieces, it would be almost lost for the family.

He does not love Ruth, as Boaz does, or nothing would stop him.

He says in front of all the witnesses, that Boaz can redeem the land and Ruth.

This is just what Boaz wanted to hear.

Ruth 4:7 "Now this [was the manner] in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave [it] to his neighbor: and this [was] a testimony in Israel."

“Plucked off his shoe”:

The Scripture writer explained to his own generation what had been a custom in former generations.

This kind of tradition appears (in Deut. 25:5-10), and apparently continued at least to the time of Amos (2:6; 8:6).

The closer relative legally transferred his right to the property as symbolized by the sandal, most likely that of the nearer relative.

Since Boaz had arranged all the business details relative to acting as the near kinsman, no disgrace would attach to the nearer kinsman (Deut. 25:9).

The transfer of the “shoe” symbolized the relinquishing of his right to act as the nearest kinsman and the exchange of his authority in the matter to another.

We see by this that the "taking off of one's shoe and giving it to someone" gave them the right to walk on the land they were unwilling to walk on.

When the man gives Boaz his shoe, he is giving his right as near kinsman to Boaz.

Ruth 4:8 "Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy [it] for thee. So he drew off his shoe."

Which is repeated to show he gave his full consent to it, that he should make the purchase of it if he pleased, and which he confirmed by the following rite.

"So he drew off his shoe":

Thereby signifying that he relinquished his right to the purchase of the estate, and ceded it to him.

As if this was some acknowledgment for yielding his right unto him.

But here the man plucked off his own shoe, who chose not to redeem.

The proof that Boaz is free to buy the land and to marry Ruth, is shown when the man takes his shoe off, and gives it to Boaz.

The transaction is sealed with witnesses.

Verses 9-10:

“Boaz” was able and willing to serve fully as the “*goel*” both in the redemption of the field and in marriage to “Ruth.”

The story serves as a vivid reminder of the Son of Man who, being rich (2 Cor. 8:9), willingly died in behalf of a destitute mankind (Rom. 5:6-11; Heb. 12:1-2), which He took into union with Himself as His beloved bride (2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:6-9).

Ruth 4:9 "And Boaz said unto the elders, and [unto] all the people, Ye [are] witnesses this day, that I have bought all that [was] Elimelech's, and all that [was] Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi."

"I have bought":

Boaz exercised his legal option to redeem both the land and Ruth before appropriate witnesses.

We may assume, that Naomi either went with Boaz to transact this, or she came up later, and sold the land to Boaz.

Naomi knew that she would be welcome to live with Ruth and Boaz.

After all, she was the one who planned all of this.

Ruth 4:10 "Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye [are] witnesses this day."

"The wife of Mahlon":

Only here is Ruth's former husband identified (compare 1:5 note).

"I purchased ... my wife":

Boaz exercised the spirit of the law and became Ruth's kinsman-redeemer (Deut. 25:5-6).

"The name of the dead":

Perpetuation of the family name (1 Sam. 24:21) was an important feature that the levirate process provided.

Boaz has accomplished exactly what he set out to do.

Now he can marry Ruth.

He has become her near-kinsman redeemer, by the other man forfeiting his rights in front of witnesses.

He bought the land, and will give his first child to the memory of Ruth's dead husband.

Boaz has fulfilled the law.

The son will be able to inherit Mahlon's land through Elimelech.

Ruth 4:11 "And all the people that [were] in the gate, and the elders, said, [We are] witnesses. The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Beth-lehem:"

“We are witnesses”:

This affirmation signaled the strong approval of the city.

“Like Rachel and like Leah”:

Rachel, the most beloved wife of Jacob, was buried nearby (Gen. 35:19); Leah was the mother of Judah (by Jacob), their namesake descendant (Gen. 29:35).

This remembrance went back almost 900 years to ca 1915 B.C.

“Ephratah ... Beth-lehem”:

The ancient name of Bethlehem (Gen. 35:19; 48:7; see note on 1:2).

Michah later prophetically wrote that this city would be the birthplace of Messiah (5:2).

We must remember in all of this that, it was legal in God's sight for Boaz to marry Ruth, because she was a Hebrew by marriage.

Her first husband sinned in God's sight, because she was a Moabite.

Now, she is Hebrew.

It is legal for Boaz to marry her, and be blessed of God.

The elders witnessed the whole thing.

Boaz had done everything decently and pleasing to God.

Boaz had kept the law.

Rachel and Leah had been the mothers of the tribes of Israel.

They were honored women.

This is saying that Ruth is indeed a Hebrew of high morals.

Ruth 4:12 "And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman."

“Pharez ... Tamar ... Judah”: (Read Gen. 38:1-30 for the background to these three).

Tamar, the widow of Judah’s first son, Er, when denied a levirate marriage to Judah’s remaining son, Shelah (38:14), took matters into her own hands and immorally consorted with her father-in-law, Judah (38:18).

Perez, the firstborn of twins by Tamar, became the main ancestor of the Ephrathites and Bethlehemites (1 Chron. 2:3-5, 19; 50-51; 4:4). See note on 4:18.

“Seed”:

The firstborn son would be considered the son of Mahlon.

Additional sons would legally be the offspring of Boaz (Deut. 25:6).

They were wishing that Boaz and Ruth would have a large family.

This marriage is pleasing unto the LORD.

In a good marriage, the husband feels for the wife as Jesus did for the church.

Jesus was also, the near-kinsman redeemer of His bride (all believers in Christ).

The wife feels toward her husband as the church does toward Christ.

The seed that comes is speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He will be descended from both Jew and Gentile.

Ruth 4:13 "So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son."

“He went in unto her”:

Old Testament euphemism for sexual intercourse.

“The Lord gave her conception”:

As with Rachel (Gen. 30:22) and Leah (Gen. 29:31), so also with Ruth (Psalm 127:3).

Boaz and Ruth became husband and wife.

Their love for each other produced a son.

Notice this son comes from the LORD's blessings on this marriage.

Verses 14-17:

Pain makes people either bitter or better.

Although Naomi had been bitter (4:20-21), she was better now that she could see that “the LORD ... had “not left” her, and had restored the family line”.

Ruth was “better” to her “than seven sons,”:

Which were considered the ideal family in biblical times.

More blessings were to come, because through Ruth and Boaz eventually came the Savior.

Ruth 4:14 "And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed [be] the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel."

“The LORD ... not left thee”:

In contrast to Naomi’s worst moments of despair (1:20-21).

“A kinsman ... his name”:

Refers to Obed, not Boaz (4:11), who cared for Naomi in her latter years.

Ruth's son is Naomi's grandson.

He is now her near-kinsman redeemer through Ruth.

His name will be very famous as an ancestor of David, king of Israel, and the fact that he is in the direct lineage of Jesus.

Ruth 4:15 "And he shall be unto thee a restorer of [thy] life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him."

“Better ... than seven sons”:

Seven represented the number of perfection and thus 7 sons would make the complete family (compare 1 Sam. 2:5).

However, Ruth exceeded this standard all by herself.

It is true that Ruth had been better to Naomi than any son could have been.

She will have her hopes renewed in this grandson.

She had lost hope, when her husband and two sons died.

Now, she is renewed as the new baby, Obed, will revive her spirit.

Ruth 4:16 "And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it."

“Became nurse unto it”:

This expresses the natural affection of a godly grandmother for her God-given grandson.

Naomi was not a grandmother, who has little to do with raising her grandbaby.

This boy is like her son.

She helps with the care and training of this baby from the beginning.

Ruth wants it that way. She loves Naomi, and wants to share the baby with her.

Verses 17-22: The list of 10 generations from Pharez, Judah’s illegitimate son, to David seems to reflect the prohibition (in Deuteronomy 23:2; see note), and serves to legitimize David’s claim to the throne of Israel.

From the union of “Boaz” and Ruth was to come the line of descendants that gave birth to king “David”, through whom came Jesus Christ.

Thus, through the union of Jew and Gentile would ultimately come the Savior of all men (see Acts 4:12).

The marriage of Boaz and Ruth may thus serve as a picture of Christ and His church through whom all believers become one (Eph. 2:11-22).

Ruth is the only Old Testament book that puts king David in the line of Judah.

Obed was king David’s grandfather.

Obed’s birth blessed a marriage, a mother, and a mother-in-law, and he continues to bless all humanity even now because through the line of “Boaz ... Obed ... Jesse ... and David” ultimately came Jesus, the Redeemer.

Ruth 4:17 "And the women her neighbors gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he [is] the father of Jesse, the father of David."

"Her neighbors gave it a name":

Here is the only place in the Old Testament where a child was named by someone other than the immediate family.

Obed means "servant."

"A son born to Naomi":

Ruth vicariously bore the son that would restore the family name of Naomi's deceased son Mahlon (compare 4:1)

"Obed ... Jesse ... David":

This complete genealogy appears identically in four other biblical texts (Ruth 4:21-22; 1 Chron. 2:12-15; Matt. 1:5-6; Luke 3:31-32).

Boaz and Ruth were the great-grandparents of David.

"Obed" means worshipper. Another meaning of the name is serving, or servant.

I like the first one best.

The ladies in the neighborhood gave him his name.

The neighbors felt as if God had given this baby to Naomi to replace her son.

This book is obviously penned a little later, because of the mention of Jesse and David, here.

This would be entirely possible, if Samuel was the penman.

Verses 18-22:

"Perez ... David":

This representative genealogy, which spans 9 centuries from Perez (ca 1885 B.C.) to David (ca 1040 B.C.), specifically names 10 generations.

The first 5 (Perez to Nahshon) cover the patriarchal times to the Exodus and wilderness wanderings.

Salmon to David covers Joshua's lifetime and the judges to the monarchy.

This genealogical compression by omission does not signal faulty records, because in Jewish thinking, "son" could mean "descendant" (Matt. 1:1).

The purpose of a family record was not necessarily to include every generation, but rather to establish incontestable succession by way of the more notable ancestors.

Verses 18-19: "Hezron" (compare Genesis 46:12).

Ruth 4:18 "Now these [are] the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron,"

(See note on verse 12).

Although this genealogy only goes back to Perez, it conclusively establishes that David's lineage extends further back through Judah (Gen. 49:8-12), Jacob (Gen. 28:10-17, and Isaac (Gen. 26:24), to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3).

Verses 19-20: "Amminadab":

The father-in-law of Aaron (Exodus 6:23), who does not appear (in 1 Chron. 2:10), but is cited (in Matt. 1:4 and Luke 3:33).

Some Hebrew manuscripts also include Admin between Ram and Amminadab (in Luke 3:33).

Ruth 4:19 "And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab,"

"Ram":

Listed as Ami (in some Greek texts of Luke 3:33).

Verses 20-21: "Salmon":

The husband of Rahab the harlot (Matt. 1:5).

Ruth 4:20 "And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon,"

"Nahshon":

The leader of Judah in the Exodus (Num. 1:7; 2:3; 7:12, 17; 10:14).

Ruth 4:21 "And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed,"

“Salmon begat Boaz”:

Since (Matthew 1:5), lists Rahab the harlot, who lived ca. 1425 - 1350 B.C., as Salmon’s wife, it thus indicates that some generations have been selectively omitted between Salmon and Boaz (ca 1160 – 1090 B.C.).

Ruth 4:22 "And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David."

“David”:

Looking back at Ruth from a New Testament perspective, latent messianic implications become more apparent (Matt. 1:1).

The fruit which is promised later on in the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:1-17), finds its seedbed here.

The hope of a messianic king and kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12-14), will be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation chapters 19 and 20), through the lineage of David’s grandfather Obed, who was born to Boaz and Ruth the Moabitess.

This is the same genealogy as in the New Testament, except for slight variations in the spelling of their names.

The name is spelled differently in Greek.

We see in this book that Jesus is indeed, the God of the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

Ruth Chapter 4 Questions

1. Where did Boaz go to try to catch the kinsman of Ruth and Naomi?
2. What did Boaz do, when he saw him?
3. Who did Boaz take with him to the gate?
4. Why had Boaz brought them?
5. What does the number "ten" speak of?
6. What did Boaz tell the kinsman that Naomi was doing?
7. Who had told this to Boaz, most probably?

8. Why does the author believe the kinsman is Boaz's older brother?
9. Why is Boaz saying this in front of the ten men he brought with him?
10. When the kinsman heard about the land, what did he want to do?
11. When did he change his mind?
12. What makes it legal, in the sight of God, for Boaz to marry Ruth?
13. He does not love Ruth as _____ does.
14. What does the kinsman say in front of the witnesses?
15. What did it mean for him to "take off his shoe and give it to Boaz"?
16. What does Boaz say to the elders, after he receives the shoe of the kinsman?
17. How did Naomi feel about this?
18. In verse 10, Boaz says he purchased Ruth to be his _____.
19. The first child of Ruth and Boaz will belong to whom?
20. How would Ruth be like Rachel and Leah?
21. In a good marriage, how does the husband feel about the wife?
22. How does the wife feel about the husband?
23. The LORD gave Ruth conception, and she had a _____.
24. What is this grandson to Naomi?
25. Who helped Ruth raise the child?
26. Who named the son?
27. What does "Obed" mean?
28. He was the father of _____, who was the father of _____.
29. How does the genealogy here, and in the New Testament, vary?