

Day 263 - WEDNESDAY: October 18th

Ruth 4

Ruth 4:1-22 NKJV

Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, "Come aside, friend, sit down here." So he came aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down. Then he said to the close relative, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. And I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy it back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am next after you.' " And he said, "I will redeem it." Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance." And the close relative said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it." Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging, to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was a confirmation in Israel. Therefore the close relative said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself." So he took off his sandal. And Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, from the hand of Naomi. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate. You are witnesses this day." And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said, "We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house

of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the LORD will give you from this young woman." So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel! And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him." Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him. Also the neighbor women gave him 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. Now this is the genealogy of Perez: Perez begot Hezron; Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon; Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed; Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.

### **Daily Deep Dive:**

The UCG reading program states: "Because Boaz was not the nearest kinsman, he had to give the choice to the nearer kinsman of whether to redeem Naomi's land and marry Ruth or not. This was a serious choice because it was not just about inheriting land or marrying a widow, it was about continuing a family line. Several interesting things take place in this story. Verse 2 speaks of Boaz going before 10 elders of the city. According to the *Interpreters One Volume Commentary*, this incident provided a precedent for the later view that 10 men formed a quorum. In addressing his relative before the quorum, Boaz informs him that with the land comes the obligation to marry Ruth (verse 5). But why would this be? And why does the land have to be bought from Naomi? Isn't the whole problem that someone else now possessed the land? First of all, we should understand that when land was sold in Israel, it was more like a lease or rental agreement since all land reverted to the

original owner at the Jubilee, every 50th year. The original owner and his family still possessed title to the land. Elimelech sold his land in time of hardship. That land was redeemable by Elimelech's family through paying the "balance of the lease" to the current occupant. Title would have passed to Elimelech's sons and on down to the nearest of kin.

Widows, however, were not listed in the line of inheritance (see Numbers 27:8-11). The nearest kinsman would thus seem to automatically become the new owner of the property. So why would he need to purchase it from the widow?

Keil and Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament* explains: "The question arises, what right had Naomi to sell her husband's land as her own property?... The true explanation is no doubt the following: The law relating to the inheritance of the landed property of Israelites who died childless did not determine the time when such a possession should pass to the relatives of the deceased, whether immediately after the death of the owner, or not until after the death of the widow who was left behind. "No doubt the latter was the rule established by custom, so that the widow remained in possession of the property as long as she lived; and for that length of time she had the right to sell the property in case of need, since the sale of a field was not an actual transfer of title but simply the sale of the yearly produce until the year of jubilee.

"The field of the deceased Elimelech would, strictly speaking, have belonged to his sons, and after their death to Mahlon's widow (Ruth), since Chilion's widow had remained behind in her own country Moab. But as Elimelech had not only emigrated with his wife and children and died abroad, but his sons had also been with him in the foreign land, and had married and died there, the landed property of their father had not descended to them, but had remained the property of Naomi, Elimelech's widow, in which Ruth, as the widow of Mahlon, also had a share.

"Now, in case a widow sold the field of her deceased husband for the time that it was in her possession, on account of poverty, and a relation of her husband redeemed it, it was evidently his duty not only to care for the maintenance of the impoverished widow, but if she were still young, to marry her, and to let the first son born of such a marriage enter into the family of the deceased husband of his wife, so as to inherit the redeemed property, and perpetuate the name and possession of the deceased in Israel.

"Upon this right, which was founded upon traditional custom, Boaz based this condition, which he set before the nearer redeemer, that if he redeemed the field of Naomi he must also take Ruth, with the obligation to marry her, and through this marriage to set up the name of the deceased upon his inheritance."

In verse 6, the near kinsman realizes that in buying the land he would be eventually giving it to heirs of Elimelech, thereby losing not only the land but also the money used to buy the land and provide for Ruth and Naomi. This he sees as ruining his own inheritance. Perhaps he already has children from a previous marriage who, he feels, would be left insufficiently provided for in such a circumstance.

Whatever the case, he defers the right of redemption to Boaz in verse 7 and gives Boaz his shoe as a witness to make it official (see Deuteronomy 25:5-10). This "custom itself, which existed among the Indians and the ancient Germans, arose from the fact that fixed property was taken possession of by treading upon the soil, and hence taking off the shoe and handing it to another was a symbol of the transfer of a possession or right of ownership" (Keil and Delitzsh).

Deuteronomy 25 required spitting in the face of one who refused to fulfill the obligation of being the redeemer. That appears to be left out here—perhaps indicating some mitigating circumstances in favor of the relative, such as the children he was already providing for. Or perhaps

the spitting is simply not recorded. Some believe the fact that the near relative's name is not mentioned in the story connotes a blotting out of his name for refusing his obligation.

Boaz declares his intention to marry Ruth and all is approved. A blessing is even pronounced, invoking the example of Tamar, a former levirate marriage from whom most of the tribe of Judah had descended (Ruth 4:12).

The story comes to a close with Boaz marrying Ruth, and it seems that God blessed them right away with children (verse 13). Interestingly, the concluding scenes are of Naomi. The women of the community recognize that in the face of all of the difficulty Naomi had experienced, the conclusion of the matter was far better than anything that could have been anticipated. Ruth became "better to you than seven sons" (verse 15). Oddly, it is neighbor women who name the son born to Boaz and Ruth—they name him Obed, which means "Serving." Perhaps they played a major part in helping Ruth through her pregnancy, enough so that their input was solicited and accepted.

The book finishes with a review of the genealogy that is very interesting because the genealogy has changed, with Boaz taking the place of Elimelech. Instead of losing everything, as his relative feared, Boaz gained a preeminent place in the history of Israel. In direct descent from Obed is Jesse, the father of David, from whom descended Jesus Christ. We might wonder how, a few generations later, the descendant of a Moabitess becomes the king of Israel, when Deuteronomy 23:3 prohibited the descendants of Moabites from entering the congregation of the Lord for ten generations. "The Jewish Midrash implies that this prohibition related only to the women who wed Moabite males" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on Ruth 1:4). We cannot, of course, know for certain. There is, it should be noted, a problem with Moabite wives in Ezra and Nehemiah's time—but these women are pagan, not courageous

women of faith who committed their lives to the true God. Ruth, on the other hand, well illustrates what the apostle Peter later said in Acts 10:34-35: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him." Let that be a lesson to all of us." [END  
I don't have anything additional to add to this chapter and the conclusion of this wonderful book!