

Boaz Redeems Ruth

At the city gate, Boaz confronts the nearer kinsman and secures the right to redeem Ruth. Their marriage produces Obed, grandfather of King David.

Ruth 4:1-22

CHARACTERS: Boaz, Ruth, Naomi, The nearer kinsman, The elders, Obed

THEMES: Redemption, Marriage, God's sovereignty, Ancestry of Christ, Restoration

MEANWHILE BOAZ WENT up to the town gate and sat down there just as the guardian-redeemer he had mentioned came along. The gate was the place of legal transactions, where elders sat and witnessed important business.

Boaz said, 'Come over here, my friend, and sit down.' So he went over and sat down. Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, 'Sit here,' and they did so. This was a formal legal proceeding with witnesses.

Then he said to the guardian-redeemer, 'Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line.'

'I will redeem it,' he said.

Boaz had presented the opportunity in the most attractive light—land for sale, a straightforward redemption. The nearer kinsman quickly agreed. But Boaz had more to say.

Then Boaz said, 'On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.'

Here was the catch. The redeemer would have to marry Ruth—a Moabite, a foreigner. Any son born to them would be considered the son of Mahlon, Ruth's first husband, and would inherit the redeemed property. The redeemer would pay the price but his own children wouldn't inherit the benefit.

At this, the guardian-redeemer said, 'Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it.'

The man was unwilling to risk his own inheritance. He wanted the benefits of redemption without the cost. He made a practical, selfish choice—and lost his opportunity to be part of God's redemptive story. Scripture doesn't even record his name.

So the guardian-redeemer said to Boaz, 'Buy it yourself.' And he removed his sandal. This was the custom—the sandal was given as confirmation of the transaction, symbolizing the right to walk on the property.

Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, 'Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!'

Boaz didn't say 'I have to take Ruth' but 'I have acquired Ruth.' She was the prize, not the burden. He was both able and willing to redeem.

Then the elders and all the people at the gate said, 'We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have

standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. Through the offspring the Lord gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.'

They blessed them with the greatest mothers in Israel's history and prophesied a great lineage. They spoke better than they knew.

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

The women said to Naomi: 'Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.'

Seven sons was the ideal number, the perfect blessing. But Ruth, the foreign daughter-in-law who chose covenant loyalty, was worth more than seven sons.

Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. The women living there said, 'Naomi has a son!' And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

The genealogy makes the point explicit: Perez was the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.

The Moabite widow became the great-grandmother of Israel's greatest king. And through David's line, she became an ancestor of Jesus Christ, the ultimate Kinsman-Redeemer who was both willing and able to pay the price for our redemption.

Naomi had returned to Bethlehem 'empty.' Now she held the future king's grandfather in her arms. Ruth had left everything to follow the God

of Israel. Now she had more than she could have imagined. And the faithful kinsman-redeemer Boaz had risked his inheritance to do what was right. Now his name would be remembered forever.

The book of Ruth reveals the beauty of God's providence, working through ordinary people doing extraordinary acts of faithfulness. It shows that God's covenant family includes those who choose Him by faith, regardless of their ancestry. And it points forward to the greater Boaz, Jesus Christ, who saw us in our desperate need and said, 'I will redeem you. I am both willing and able.' He paid the ultimate price, took us as His bride, and secured our eternal inheritance.

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