

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF RUTH

* * * A ROMANTIC REVELATION OF REDEMPTION * * *

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Soli Deo Gloria!

<p>"And Ruth said ... thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God." Ruth 1:16</p>

AUTHOR: Samuel (c. 1000 BC)

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE. The Book of Ruth is closely associated with the Book of Judges (cf. Ruth1:1), the authorship of neither of which are given in Scripture, but the Talmud ascribes both to the Prophet Samuel (c. 1000 BC). This is consistent with certain internal features of the book, such as: 1) the need to explain the practice of exchanging a shoe (Ruth4:7), an obscure detail of the Law (cf. Deut25:9) that apparently fell into neglect after the period of the Judges, and 2) a genealogy from Perez to David¹ given in Ruth 4:17-22.

CANONICAL POSITION. In the Hebrew Bible (i.e., the Tanakh), Judges is the second book of the Prophets, Ruth is found in the Writings (following Song of Solomon). In our English O.T., Ruth follows the Book of Judges and is essentially an appendix to it. Judges 1-16 provide an historical and chronological account of the period of the Judges, but ends with two non-chronological sections (i.e., appendices) in Judges 17-21. Both of the appendices that conclude the Book of Judges relate spiritually dark events that occurred during the time of the judges. In contrast, the Book of Ruth serves as an added appendix that relates a spiritually uplifting account, indicating there were some times during the period of the Judges when the Law of Moses was revered and observed.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT. The events of the Book of Ruth occurred "in the days when the judges ruled" (Ruth1:1), a period of "about the space of four hundred and fifty years" (Act13:20) after the Israelites entered the Promised Land under Joshua until Saul became the first king of Israel. The period of the Judges was plagued by numerous apostasies of the nation of Israel from the LORD, which repeatedly brought them into oppression and/or bondage to surrounding nations (Cp., Lev26:16-17). Although the account of Ruth cannot be placed within the period of the Judges with precision, if they took place during the oppression of the Moabites (cf. Judg3:12-30; Cp., Ruth1:1-2) it would have occurred very early in that period. The Book of Ruth begins at a time when "there was a famine in the land" (Ruth1:1), which indicates it took place during a period of apostasy (cf. Lev26:29; Deut11:13-17). Judges 6:3-4 suggests there was famine during the days of Gideon, which might suggest the events of Ruth occurred during his judgeship.

BACKGROUND FROM THE LAW OF MOSES. The Book of Ruth is read annually by Orthodox Jews on the Feast of Weeks (i.e., Pentecost; Cp., Lev23:15-22),

¹ If written by Samuel, the original purpose of the Book of Ruth could have been (in part) an apologetic to clarify/establish David's eligibility to rule as king of Israel in light of Deuteronomy 23:2.

which commemorates the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai and is connected agriculturally to the barley harvest in the land of Israel (Ruth1:22). Three elements of the Law of Moses are fundamental in understanding the events that transpire in the Book of Ruth: 1) gleaning (cf. Lev19:9-10; 23:22; Deut24:19-21), 2) redemption (cf. Lev25:47-50), and 3) levirate marriage (cf. Deut25:5-10).

KEY WORD/THEME OF RUTH. The key word in Ruth is "redeem", and the theme of the book is **redemption**. Redemption is dramatically illustrated both for the Jew (Naomi) and the Gentile (Ruth).

OUTLINE OF RUTH (adapted from Unger)

I. RUTH'S EXPRESSION OF FAITH	Ruth 1
II. RUTH'S APPROPRIATION OF GRACE	Ruth 2
III. RUTH'S FINDING A REDEEMER	Ruth 3
IV. RUTH'S REST IN REDEMPTION	Ruth 4

DISPENSATIONAL NOTE. Ruth's name is the feminine form of a Hebrew root meaning "to befriend", which is a beautiful expression of her relationship with Naomi; though a Gentile, her friendship to Naomi results in her being blessed by the God of Israel (cf. Gen12:3). The Book of Ruth is rich in typological and dispensational significance (see CHART: TYPOLOGY IN THE BOOK OF RUTH). Boaz, a type of Christ, is obligated to redeem the Jewess Naomi (a type of the nation of Israel) because of their kinship and covenant relationship (Cp., Rom9:4-5), which restores her and her family to their inheritance in the land of Israel, whereas he freely chooses to redeem the Gentile Ruth (a type of the Church) for love (Cp., Eph2:11-13; 5:25). That Ruth is found betrothed to Boaz and covered by his skirt during the threshing floor scene that concludes the harvest is a beautiful type of the Rapture of the Church.

COMPARISONS OF RUTH AND ESTHER (adapted from Fruchtenbaum). The Books of Ruth and Esther are the only two books in the Bible named for women, and they share some interesting similarities and contrasts: 1) Ruth was a Gentile with a Hebrew name, whereas Esther was a Jew with a Gentile name; 2) Ruth was a Gentile who lived among Jews, whereas Esther was a Jew who lived among Gentiles; 3) Ruth married a Jew who was in the line leading to the kings of Israel, whereas Esther married the Gentile ruler of Persia; 4) both illustrate blessing that results from faithfulness to the God of Israel, both for the Gentile (Ruth) and the Jew (Esther); and 5) the Book of Ruth illustrates the **sovereignty** of God (such that the name of the LORD appears prominently throughout the book), whereas the Book of Esther illustrates the **providence** of God (such that the name of the LORD never appears in the book).

CHAPTER 1

RUTH'S EXPRESSION OF FAITH

The first chapter of Ruth provides the details for how a Jewish family came to leave the land of Israel and dwell in Moab, where they suffered much hardship and were greatly reduced in number (a type of the Diaspora; cf. Lev26:32-39; Deut28:63-68), as well as the circumstances that led to their return to Israel (including being befriended by a Gentile woman who would become the object of love of their kinsman-redeemer).

A JEWISH FAMILY IN MOAB

- [1] The events of the Book of Ruth occurred "in the days when the judges ruled"; thus, they took place at some point during the historical period documented by the Book of Judges (c. 1400-1000 BC). Elimelech (v2) and his family were of the tribe of "Judah" and dwelt in "Bethlehem"; since their most famous descendant was to be David (Ruth4:22), David's ancestral connection to the city of Bethlehem is established (Cp., Luk2:4). "Moab" was located on the eastern side of the Dead Sea and was populated by the descendants of Lot through an incestuous relationship with his eldest daughter (cf. Gen19:36-37). The god of Moab was Chemosh, who God called an "abomination" (Cp., 1Kgs11:7).

A Famine in the Land. During the Dispensation of the Law, in which God's relationship with the nation of Israel is governed by the Mosaic covenant, a "famine in the land [of Israel]" is an indication that God has brought a curse upon the nation for covenant unfaithfulness (cf. Lev26:16; Deut28:23-24). Thus, it can be inferred that Elimelech's family left the land of Israel during a period of apostasy.

- [2] "Elimelech" means *God is my king*; "Naomi" means *pleasant* (note, the land of Israel is called "the pleasant land"; cf. Ps106:24; Jer3:19; Dan8:9; Zech7:14); "Mahlon" means *sick*; and "Chilion" means *pinning*. For a Jewish family to flee the land of Israel, even during times of divine discipline (i.e., famine), was to forsake their covenant relationship with the God of Israel; the proper and desired response was repentance, not flight.
- [3] For Israel under the Mosaic covenant, spiritual failure results in temporal judgment; in this case, Elimelech's wife was widowed and his children were orphaned (cf. Exod22:24).
- [4] To make matters even worse, Mahlon and Chilion "took themselves wives of the women of Moab". While not absolutely prohibited by the Law of Moses, doing so came with severe consequences; namely, even a believing Moabite could "not enter into the congregation of the LORD ... to their ten generation (Deut23:2-3). "Ruth" is a Hebrew name meaning *to befriend*.
- [5] Without a husband or children, Naomi has no means of support; she is destitute and living in a foreign land.

RETURN TO ISRAEL

- [6] That the famine in Israel had ended indicates a national repentance on the part of Israel had taken place, and God had relented His curse; "the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread", so Naomi would "return" to Bethlehem (i.e., house of bread). Thus, Naomi "return[ed]" to a spiritually healthy Israel once again faithful to the LORD.
- [7] Initially, both "daughters-in-law" appear willing to return to the land of Israel with Naomi.
- [8] Naomi counsels both her "daughters-in-law" to return to their "mother's house" (i.e., remain in Moab). Being young widows, it would be natural and expected for them to remarry (cf. v9); however, the possibility of marriage for Moabite women would be extremely unlikely in Israel, as it came with severe consequences under the Law of Moses (cf. Deut23:3). Naomi's blessing on her "daughters-in-law" included the petition that "the LORD deal kindly with you", where the Hebrew word translated "kindly" is **chesed**, which generally has a covenant relationship in view. Naomi's petition seems to have been a claim on the provision in the Abrahamic covenant for the LORD to bless Gentiles who had blessed Jews (cf. Gen12:3).
- [9] Note that Naomi appeals to "the LORD" for the blessing of remarriage for her Moabite daughters-in-law, not to Chemosh the god of the Moabites. That both daughters-in-law "wept" over the prospect of being separated from Naomi is indicative of the intimate relationship they had developed with their mother-in-law.
- [10] Both daughters-in-law reiterate their intent to "return" to Israel with Naomi (Cp., v7).
- [11] Here, Naomi alludes to the Hebrew practice of levirate marriage (cf. Deut25:5-10). Naomi does not expect to have any more "sons" to offer her daughters-in-law as "husbands" (which would be an obligation under the Law of Moses), such that their prospects for remarriage in Israel are thought to be exceedingly remote.
- [12] Naomi is "too old" herself to remarry and produce "sons" for the possibility of levirate marriages for her daughters-in-law.
- [13] Even should Naomi give birth to additional sons, it would be unreasonable for her daughters-in-law to wait for them to become old enough to marry. Thus, levirate marriage is not a reasonable option for Naomi's daughters-in-law. Note, Naomi rightly recognizes that her circumstances are a result of "the hand of the LORD is gone out against me" (cf. Lev26:22; Deut28:18,30).
- [14] Orpah's "kiss" was a good-bye; she accepted Naomi's reasoning and determined her best personal option was to remain in Moab. However, Ruth "clave unto" Naomi, determined to remain with her despite Ruth's own prospects under that arrangement appearing quite bleak (i.e., her likelihood of remarriage in Israel was exceedingly remote; further, two widows without family support faced lives of financial hardship at best, poverty at worst).

- [15] Note that the decisions made by the daughters-in-law were not merely practical, but spiritual. For Orpah to go back to Moab was a decision to return to "her gods" (i.e., the pagan gods of Moab, including Chemosh; cf. 1Kgs11:7). Note that under the Mosaic covenant, the LORD could not be properly worshipped outside the land of Israel (e.g., Deut12:14,18; 14:23; 16:16; 31:11).
- [16] Ruth's choice to remain with Naomi and return to Israel was a spiritual decision; "thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God". Ruth has made a conscious decision to turn from the gods of Moab and embrace the LORD, the God of Israel (Cp., 1Thess1:9).
- [17] Note the chiastic structure of Ruth's profession of faith (vv16-17).
 A - Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee:
 B - for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge:
 C - **thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:**
 B' - Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried:
 A' - the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.
 To follow the LORD necessitates a return to the land of Israel (Cp., 2Chron36:23).
- [18] Naomi accepted Ruth's decision, for it was made on the proper basis. Despite the appearance of being personally impractical, it was a spiritual obligation.
- [19] Naomi and Ruth returned to "Bethlehem" (i.e., the house of bread). Undoubtedly the departure of Elimelech and Naomi years before was noted by their friends and family, as was Naomi's return.
- [20] "Mara" means *bitter* (Cp., Exod15:23).
- [21] Naomi recognized her return was in disgrace; she had reaped the fruit of the sin of disobedience (Gal6:7) and suffered the curse of the Law. Yet, under the Mosaic covenant, repentance would restore blessing.
- [22] Although Naomi requested to be called Mara (v20), the author of the book (i.e., the Holy Spirit) continues to call her Naomi; her personal repentance has ended her curse under the Law, foreshadowing the blessing to come. In Israel, Naomi's daughter-in-law is referred to as "Ruth, the Moabitess", a designation that highlighted her despised status under the Law of Moses (Deut23:2-3). That Naomi and Ruth "came to Bethlehem in the beginning of the barley harvest" was not coincidence, but providence.

CHAPTER 2

RUTH'S APPROPRIATION OF GRACE

In Chapter 2, Ruth gleanes in the fields of Boaz, a kinsman of Elimelech. Boaz is attracted to Ruth and begins to show her grace in small and subtle ways. Naomi recognizes Boaz's interest in Ruth and first realizes the possibility for redemption exists.

- [1] Now back in Naomi's hometown of Bethlehem, they find themselves in close proximity to a "kinsman" of Elimelech named "Boaz", who was "wealth[y]". The fact that Boaz is a "kinsman" of Elimelech means he is potentially eligible to redeem Naomi's lost property (cf. Lev25:48-49). "Boaz" means *in Him is strength*. Boaz is in the messianic line (cf. Matt1:5), but he is apparently older and unmarried; thus, the messianic promise of God is in jeopardy.

The Law of Redemption (Lev25:47-50). God gave the Promised Land in perpetuity to the Israelites, divided among them by tribe and family; a family's land could never be permanently lost. When an Israelite lost his property, or even sold himself into servitude, due to inability to pay a debt, his property and his person could always be redeemed². To qualify as a redeemer, one had to be: 1) a near-kinsman³, 2) able to redeem, 3) willing to redeem, and 4) assume all obligations of the indebted recipient (including levirate marriage; Deut25:5). If not redeemed, an Israelite in servitude would be freed after seven years (Exod21:2), and any land lost would automatically revert back to the family on the Jubilee year (Lev25:13,54).

- [2] To "glean" from the field of an Israelite was permitted under the Law of Moses; it was one of God's provisions for the poor, the widow, and the stranger (Lev19:9-10; Deut24:19-21). That "Ruth" went to "glean" indicates that she and Naomi were destitute. At this point, Ruth's expectation to "find grace" is presumably limited to obtaining the food that she and Naomi need to survive, although the mention of "**grace**" undoubtedly foreshadows God's purpose of redemption for her.
- [3] That Ruth "happened" to glean in the "field belonging to Boaz" was not coincidence, but providence. It is reiterated that Boaz was "of the kindred of Elimelech", making him potentially eligible to redeem all that Elimelech's widow had lost.
- [4] Boaz is "the lord of the harvest" (Cp., Luk10:2), **a type of Christ**. In the O.T., men who are types of Christ always take Gentile brides, who are types of the Church (e.g., Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Joseph, Moses, Boaz, David, Solomon). That Boaz blesses his servants using the name of "the LORD" suggests he is a righteous believer.
- [5] Boaz has taken notice of Ruth, who is gleaning in his field. Obviously, he is attracted to her.
- [6] Boaz's chief "servant", who is unnamed, and who introduces him to Ruth, is a type of the Holy Spirit (Cp., Gen15:2; 24:2). The servant does not name Ruth, but notes she is a "Moabitess" (calling attention to her despised status) who returned with "Naomi" (Boaz's kin).
- [7] Ruth had asked permission of the chief servant to "glean" in the field, which was not required, suggesting humility (cf. 1Pet5:6). That Ruth had "continued even from the morning until now" demonstrates her diligence to provide for herself and Naomi.

² Israelite property lost or sold would have the terms of redemption written on the outside of the deed/scroll, which gives insight into the 7-sealed scroll "written within and on the backside" of Revelation 5:1 (Cp., Jer32:6-15).

³ The near-kinsman requirement necessitated the Lord Jesus Christ becoming a man in order to redeem men (cf. Heb2:14-16).

- [8] Ruth could "glean" in an field. Boaz commands her to return each day to his "field". That Boaz addressed Ruth as "my daughter" likely suggests there was a considerable age difference between them. Those who would glean generally came into the field after the reapers had passed through, but Boaz allowed Ruth to "glean" right alongside his "maidens" who were actively harvesting.
- [9] Boaz assures Ruth he has commanded his men not to "touch" her. He also allowed her to drink from the water provided for his workers. These were acts of **grace** that exceeded Boaz's requirements under the Law.
- [10] Ruth recognizes that Boaz was showing her "**grace**". Grace is always undeserved and never owed. It was more that Boaz was rich and Ruth was poor, Ruth was a "stranger" (i.e., Gentile; cf. Eph2:11-12); even worse, as a Moabitess⁴, she was of a race that was specifically distanced from "the congregation of the LORD" by the Law (Deut23:3).
- [11] The grace that Boaz showed to Ruth was related, at least in part, to Ruth's kindness toward her mother-in-law Naomi, which is a divine outworking of the provision in the Abrahamic covenant that promises blessing to those (Gentiles) who bless the descendants of Abraham (i.e., Jews; Gen12:3; Cp., Matt25:31-40).
- Modern Application of Genesis 12:3. Note that the blessing Ruth received for her kindness toward her mother-in-law was displayed while Naomi was outside the land of Israel and experiencing divine discipline for spiritual unfaithfulness. Those who would suggest that there is no spiritual obligation today for individuals (especially Christians) to bless the unbelieving Jews, either inside or outside the modern state of Israel, would do well to learn a lesson from the Book of Ruth.
- [12] It was more than Ruth's mere kindness to Naomi (Gen12:3), Ruth's "full reward" from "the LORD God of Israel" was also a result of her "trust" in Him, for "without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe..." (Heb11:6). Ruth's commitment to Naomi was an outflowing of her commitment to "the LORD God of Israel" (Cp., Ruth1:16). Note the allusion to Psalm 91:4 (Cp., Matt23:37).
- [13] Ruth recognizes she had found "favor" from Boaz, though she was "not like unto one of [his] handmaidens".
- [14] Boaz provided Ruth a meal while she labored in his field, yet another grace. It is possible that the mention of "bread" and "vinegar" (i.e., wine) connotes communion between Boaz and Ruth, types of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Bride (cf. 1Cor11:24-26).
- [15] To "glean" was to come after the reapers and pick up what was inadvertently dropped (which under the Law could not be picked up by the reapers; Lev19:9-10). Yet, Boaz allowed Ruth to "glean even among the sheaves" (i.e., the portion of the field not yet

⁴ The restriction of 10 generations (Deut23:3) was presumably related to a necessary dilution of the corrupt, inbred genome of the Moabites (Cp., Gen19:36-37).

harvested), "without reproach". This is **grace** that exceeds the requirements of the Law.

- [16] Further, Boaz commands his servants to allow "handfuls on purpose" to fall to the ground while reaping, making it easier for Ruth obtain much grain. This is **grace** that exceeds the requirements of the Law.
- [17] At "evening", when Ruth had "beat out" all she had "gleaned", she had "about an ephah of barley" (i.e., approximately a bushel). This amount was much more than would typically be gathered by a woman gleaning for one day.
- [18] Ruth ate from what she had gleaned until she was "satisfied", then gave the remainder to Naomi.
- [19] Naomi recognized Ruth had obtained much more barley than would normally be expected, by which she understood she had been shown grace by the landowner in whose field she had gleaned. Thus, her question, "Where hast thou gleaned today?"
- [20] When Ruth answered, "Boaz", Naomi recognized and acknowledged the "bless[ing]" of "the LORD" and the opportunity that was presented. Clearly, Boaz was attracted to Ruth, and as a wealthy man "near of kin" to Naomi he was potentially eligible to redeem all that she had lost. Here, "kindness" (Heb., *chesed*) has the force of covenant faithfulness. The "dead" is a reference to Elimelech, whereas the "living" refers to Naomi. As a Gentile, God has no covenant obligation to Ruth (cf. Eph2:11-12).
- [21] Boaz's command that Ruth continue to glean in his field till the end of the harvest was an expression of his love for her.
- [22] Naomi recognized her opportunity via Boaz, and likewise commanded Ruth to glean in no other field save that of Boaz.
- [23] Ruth continued to glean in the field of Boaz, not only through the end of the "barley harvest", but through the end of the "wheat harvest" that came later. Note, when used symbolically, the figure of the "harvest" represents "the end of the age" (Cp., Matt13:39).

CHAPTER 3

RUTH'S FINDING A REDEEMER

In Chapter 3, Naomi's bitterness and despair are replaced by hope in the possibility of redemption by Boaz. Naomi plays the role of matchmaker, instructing Ruth as to how to elicit an offer of redemption from Boaz. Note that redemption must include both the restoration of Elimelech's lands to Naomi and the production of an heir to those lands through levirate marriage to Ruth.

- [1] Presumably Naomi's motives were pure. While she desired the redemption of her lands, she is also concerned that her "daughter" Ruth's "rest" (i.e., future security) lies in remarriage.
- [2] The fact that Boaz was of Naomi's "kindred" creates the possibility of his redemption of Naomi (cf. Lev25:48-49). That Boaz "winnoweth

barley tonight" indicates the conclusion of the barley harvest had arrived, which is the agricultural milestone celebrated by the Feast of Weeks⁵ (Lev23:15-21). The "threshing floor" was the place where the harvested grain was winnowed to separate the seed from the chaff.

The Threshing Floor. The threshing floor was generally an open space with a prevailing wind. The "corn" (i.e., grain) was either beaten or tread upon by oxen (Cp., Deut25:4) to dislodge the husk from the seed kernel; the mixture was then tossed into the wind, which would blow away the chaff. In this way the separation of the barley/wheat from the chaff (i.e., winnowing) was accomplished. It is obvious why Scripture would use this violent agricultural process as a picture of final judgment (cf. Matt3:11-12; 13:39-40), in which the separation of believers and unbelievers is accomplished. For Israel, this occurs during the Tribulation period (cf. Ezek20:33-38). Thus, the "threshing floor" becomes a **type** of the Tribulation (i.e., Daniel's 70th Week; Dan9:27; Rev6-19).

- [3] Naomi instructed Ruth to make herself as attractive as possible, then go to the threshing "floor" (v2)—obviously with the intent of approaching Boaz. Boaz would be "eating and drinking", as the conclusion of a successful harvest was a time for celebration. In Naomi's thinking, Boaz would be most approachable following the celebration.
- [4] Following the winnowing and celebration, Boaz and his servants would sleep at the threshing floor to protect the grain till morning, when it would be gathered for storage or sale. Naomi's instructions for Ruth to "uncover his feet" was simply a way for her to subtly wake Boaz from sleep to find Ruth lying with him. There was nothing improper or untoward in this act; Naomi knew that Boaz would understand this for what it was, a request for redemption, as he did. Note that Boaz "will tell thee what thou shalt do". That is, following Ruth's request, all the work of redemption would fall to Boaz (neither Naomi nor Ruth would have any part in it).
- [5] As a Gentile, Ruth understood none of this. However, Ruth commits herself to following Naomi's instructions.
- [6] Ruth did exactly as Naomi had instructed her; she believed Naomi's instructions and put her professed faith in the God of Israel (cf. Ruth1:16-17) into action.
- [7] A profoundly important typological implication is found at this point. During the threshing floor scene in the Book of Ruth (a type of the Tribulation), Ruth (a type of the Church) is found to be at the feet of Boaz (a type of Christ). Since the Lord Jesus Christ will be in heaven during the Tribulation, the implication is that the Church will be present in heaven with Him, which unequivocally necessitates a **pre-tribulational rapture**.
- [8] The uncovering of Boaz's feet had the desired effect, he awoke to find "a woman lay at his feet".

⁵ It is for this reason that the Book of Ruth is closely associated with the Feast of Weeks in Jewish liturgy.

- [9] "Spread, therefore, thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman" were the words Naomi had instructed Ruth to say to Boaz. This was not an illicit request, as some have suggested, but a formal request for redemption, and Boaz understood that.
- [10] Boaz is flattered by Ruth's request for redemption, which necessarily includes levirate marriage to her. Boaz's allusion to "young men" suggests that he is older, and that it might be expected that Ruth would seek remarriage to someone younger than him. While that might be more natural, there is much more than remarriage for Ruth in play (i.e., the redemption of Naomi, of which marriage to Ruth is merely a part).
- [11] Ruth is characterized as a "virtuous woman" (Cp., 2Cor11:2; Rev19:8). Note, in responding "I will do to thee all that thou requires", Boaz understands the request and accepts the responsibility to redeem (i.e., he is both able and willing).
- [12] Here is introduced an interruption in an otherwise straightforward plot line. Although Boaz is a "near kinsman" of Naomi, "there is a kinsman nearer than I". The implication is that if Naomi desires redemption, the "nearer" kinsman has the priority to act on her behalf.
- [13] Boaz is willing to defer to the nearer "kinsman", should he be willing and able to redeem. However, if he is not, Boaz pledges to "do the part of the kinsman to thee".
- [14] Presumably, Naomi advised Ruth to approach Boaz alone and at night out of respect for her kinsman. As a near kinsman, Boaz was not obligated to redeem Naomi (and marry Ruth), although refusal to do so would bring a degree of personal shame on him (Cp., Deut25:8-10); thus, making such an appeal to Boaz privately was probably done so as to avoid such shame for Boaz should he decline. In the end, such discretion was not necessary, as Boaz was eager to do the part of a kinsman-redeemer.
- [15] The "six measures of barley" that Boaz sent home with Ruth was not only a generous gift to the poor women, but a sign to Naomi of Boaz's intentions (cf. Ruth3:18).
- [16] As a Gentile, Ruth would not have understood the implications of what had transpired that night between the two Jews, Naomi and Boaz, with her as their go-between, but Ruth's communication to her mother-in-law of "all that the man had done to her" would have been clear to Naomi.
- [17] Boaz's gift of "six measures of barley" was a sign, not to the Gentile Ruth, but to Naomi (a Jew).
- [18] Naomi immediately understood the meaning of the symbolic communication from Boaz. As God worked six days in the creation of the heavens and the earth before resting (Gen2:2), so Boaz "will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day". The message from Boaz to Naomi was that he would work without ceasing to ensure her redemption was completed. Note that Naomi's charge to Ruth was to "sit still" (Cp., Exod14:13; Josh3:8); that is, once Ruth's request of Boaz had been made, there remained nothing more for her to

do. Typologically, this is consistent with the fact that the work of our redemption is wholly Christ's, with no work on our part required or allowed (cf. Eph2:8-9; Tit3:5); however, our request of Christ for redemption is made by exercising personal faith in Him (Act16:31).

CHAPTER 4

RUTH'S REST IN REDEMPTION

In Chapter 4, Boaz works to accomplish the redemption of Naomi, which includes taking Ruth to wife. The issue of the nearer kinsmen is resolved, and Boaz and Ruth wed. The seed that comes from their union is in the Messianic line leading directly to King David.

- [1] The "gate" of a city was where official civil business was conducted and was attended by city elders during normal business hours (Cp., Gen19:1). Boaz confronted the nearer "kinsman" at the "gate", such that the city elders would be witnesses to their interaction.
- [2] Note, "ten [Jewish] men" became in a sense a quorum. It is considered the minimum number of men needed to establish a synagogue. It is derived from Genesis 18:32.
- [3] The first step in the redemption of Naomi was to buy back the "parcel of land" that had been "Elimelech's", who was a "brother" (i.e., kinsman) to both Boaz and the nearer kinsman.
- [4] The nearer kinsman is nearest in relation to Naomi, so he has the priority claim to "redeem", assuming he is able and willing; Boaz is second in priority, and he makes clear that if the nearer kinsman refuses to "redeem" Naomi's land, he would. Unfortunately, the nearer kinsman replied, "I will redeem it".
- [5] Only at this point does Boaz reveal that the work of redemption must include the taking of "Ruth, the Moabitess" to wife in order to "raise up" seed for the "inheritance" of Elimelech's redeemed "field". Boaz's approach seems to imply that he expected this part of the redemption process to be a sticking point for the nearer kinsman.
- [6] Faced with this requirement, the nearer "kinsman" replied, "I cannot redeem it". His excuse given for being unable to redeem was, "lest I mar mine own inheritance". This seems to suggest that he was willing to purchase Naomi's land as a personal investment. Since Naomi was past child-bearing age, she would not give birth to a child to inherit Elimelech's redeemed land; thus, the land would devolve to the property of the nearer kinsman upon her death and be inherited by his sons. However, levirate marriage to Ruth would almost certainly produce a son to inherit Elimelech's land; thus, the nearer kinsman's investment would be lost, and the money paid to redeem Elimelech's land would reduce the "inheritance" his own sons would receive.

In the presence of the ten witnesses, the nearer kinsman conceded his "right" to redeem to Boaz.

Typological Note. There was another element at play; namely, that to marry a "Moabitess" was technically a violation of the Law of Moses

(cf. Deut23:3). In this sense, the nearer kinsman is a type of the Law. The Law was unable to accomplish the redemption of Naomi and Ruth (cf. Rom8:3); thus, Boaz redeemed them by **grace**, not by law (Cp., Jn1:17).

- [7] The author of the Book of Ruth (likely Samuel) felt it necessary to explain an odd custom that was practiced "in former times", but which had apparently ceased to be practiced by the time of the writing of the book⁶. In refusing to redeem, the nearer kinsman "took off his shoe, and gave it to" Boaz. The picture conveyed two things: 1) it denoted the transfer of property, symbolizing Boaz's right to set foot upon and take possession of the land (Cp., Josh1:3), and 2) it was a visual symbol of shame on the one who refused to redeem his kinsman (cf. Deut25:8-10).
- [8] Boaz, in possession of the "shoe" of the nearer kinsman, was freed to "Buy it for [himself]".
- [9] The official transaction was made in the presence of the city "elders" as "witnesses". Boaz's redemption included buying all the land that was formerly "Elimelech's", which should have been inherited by his sons "Chilion" and "Mahlon", for Naomi.
- [10] Boaz's redemption also included the "purchase" of "Ruth, the Moabitess" as his "wife", which by levirate marriage meant that their first son would be reckoned as Elimelech's heir (not Boaz's; cf. Deut25:6).

Typological Note. Boaz is said to have "purchased" Ruth as his wife, even as Christ "purchased" the Church to be His Bride (cf. Act20:28; Eph5:25-32).

- [11] The city "elders" accepted their responsibility as "witnesses". In the benediction they pronounced upon the union of Boaz and Ruth, they seemed to be aware of its profound significance, comparing Ruth to "Rachel and Leah, which two did build the house of Israel". Their blessing was a prayer that the marriage of Boaz and Ruth would produce bountiful seed. Boaz was in the Messianic line (Matt1:5); he was older, unmarried, and without seed; thus, the coming of Messiah was in jeopardy.

Specificity of Scripture. Note that in mentioning "Ephrathah", the "Bethlehem" in the land of Judah was specified (cf. Gen35:19; 48:7; Cp., Mic5:2; Matt2:6), distinguished from a Bethlehem in the land of Zebulun (Josh19:15).

- [12] The allusion to "Perez", the illegitimate son produced by the illicit union of "Judah" and "Tamar" (cf. Gen38:1-30), was a prior occasion when the Messianic line was in danger of extinction, but was preserved by an unlawful union of a Jewish man with a (possibly) Gentile woman (cf. Matt1:3). In any event, Judah and Tamar were unmarried, so their son Perez was illegitimate and subject to the exclusion of Deuteronomy 23:2.

⁶ Note that the period of the Judges occupied "about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet" (Act13:20).

- [13] Note, "the LORD gave [Ruth] conception" (Cp., Gen29:31; 30:2,22; 33:5; Ps127:3); procreation, as a work of creation, is under the sovereign control of God (cf. Ps139:13-16).

Typological Note. As the Gentile bride of Boaz (a type of Christ), Ruth is a type of the Church (Cp., Eph5:25-32).

- [14] The "women" recognized the LORD's "blessing" on "Naomi" in providing a "kinsman" who was able and willing to redeem her and restore to her all the land of Elimelech, including an heir to inherit it. The "name" of descendants who would come from the union of Boaz and Ruth would indeed be "famous" in Israel, as they would include David and all the kings of Judah and ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ.

Note on the Abrahamic Covenant. God's covenant with Abraham promised to give him and his seed a land "forever" (Cp., Gen13:15). Implicit in the promise to give Abraham's seed a land "forever" is the necessity for an unending line of descendants to inherit that land. Thus, the Abrahamic covenant ensures that Abraham's seed will be preserved, either providentially or supernaturally.

- [15] The "he" (v14) who would be "a restorer of thy life" to Naomi would be the offspring of Boaz and Ruth, their son Obed (v17). From a purely physical perspective, Obed as an adult son would "nourish" Naomi in her "old age", without which she would have remained destitute without a husband or sons to care for her. In continuing the Messianic line, Obed would also be responsible for bringing forth the Messiah (cf. Matt1:5-16), who would ultimately make eternal "life" available to Naomi. In providing an heir for Naomi that entered into the Messianic line, her "daughter-in-law" was "better to [her] than seven sons".

- [16] Naomi treasured her grandson who was a gift from the LORD.

- [17] "Obed" means *worshiped*. The remainder of the chapter is a genealogy that begins at Perez and concludes with (King) David. It is noted at the beginning that "Obed" was the father of "Jesse", who was the father of "David". Thus, Obed was the grandfather of David, making Boaz and Ruth the great-grandparents of King David.

THE MESSIANIC GENEALOGY

- [18] "Perez" was the illegitimate son of Judah (cf. Gen38:15-29). As the firstborn son of Judah, Perez was in the Messianic line (Gen49:10); but as an illegitimate son, his line of descent was excluded from the blessings of national Israel for ten generations (Deut23:2). See Matt1:3.

- [19] See Matt1:3-4.

- [20] See Matt1:4.

- [21] See Matt1:5. Note that "Salmon begot Boaz of Rahab" (Matt1:5), who was an Amorite (Josh2:1). The Law of Moses forbid intermarriage between Jews and Amorites (Deut7:1-3). From a human perspective, perhaps Boaz was more willing to take a Moabitess as his wife, understanding that his mother was an Amorite?

- [22] See Matt1:6. Thus, David was the tenth generation in the bastard line of Perez, and the first descendent of Perez who was eligible to enter into the blessings of national Israel (Cp. Deut23:2). This explains why God directed Samuel to anoint Saul, a Benjamite (1Sam9:1-2), when the children of Israel prematurely demanded a human king (1Sam8:5). As a Benjamite, Saul could not have fulfilled God's prophecy that the kings of Israel would come from Judah (Gen49:10). David was God's chosen king (2Sam7:11-17), but the peoples' demand for a king came one generation too early; David could not be birthed and exalted as king until the tenth generation from Perez.

Note on the Genealogy of Ruth 4:18-22. Since the author of the Book of Ruth knew the genealogy that extended to King David, it is most natural to understand that the book was written no earlier than the time of David; this makes the Jewish assertion that Samuel was the author of the book plausible. It also makes sense that Samuel would author such a book, perhaps as an apologetic against any who would dispute David's eligibility to be king based on his descent from Perez; the Book of Ruth demonstrates that the ten generations from Perez were fulfilled in David, making him fully eligible to enter into the blessing of the LORD (cf. 2Sam7:11-17; 1Chron17:10-15).

--- S.D.G. ---

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