

## RUTH 4

### INTRODUCTION

We come now to the final chapter on this wonderful little book. In chapter 1:6 we read that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them and really chapters 2 and 3 show us how God provides for Ruth and Naomi and the main lesson is that God works his providence out through the everyday events of ordinary people's lives.

God had provided laws in order to provide for the poor like Ruth and Naomi, last time we saw how the Lord has worked through life's circumstances in order to provide Ruth with a new husband and today we will see the marriage taking place. But that still leaves Ruth and Naomi with one more need and that is the need for an heir to carry on the family name. In verse 13 God provides an heir as well thus showing once again his providential care of his people.

We need to be encouraged as we read this book in the knowledge that God does care for us and provides for every one of our needs. If he doesn't provide a perceived need for us then the truth is that we do not need it. There is only one theme that I want us to consider today for as we have looked at this book we have dealt with the subject of providence and we have also dealt with the theme of redemption. Today we want to look at that the fact that:

### 1. GOD PROVIDES REDEMPTION FOR HIS PEOPLE

We want to consider this theme by looking at the two scenes in this chapter.

**SCENE ONE (vs. 1-12)** - Boaz has promised to marry Ruth but he is not the nearest Kinsman Redeemer so he sets about approaching this other Kinsman whose name we are not given within the book. Boaz goes to the town gate; now to you and me that seems a strange thing to do but his course of action was perfectly sensible in his own culture and time. Everyone would pass through the town gate as they go to and from work in the fields and therefore if you are looking to find someone who lives in the closely-knit streets of Bethlehem the best place to go to is the town gate.

It was also the place where legal and judicial matters were settled. The judges and leaders of the town sat there and made legal decisions and witnessed business transactions. If you wanted to do business you did it at the town gate. As God continues to work out his providence Boaz sees the other Kinsman Redeemer and invites him to sit down which probably meant something like "come here I want to do business with you."

Boaz puts before this Kinsman the proposition (vs. 2-5), he has 10 elders with him, and these elders were men whose job it was to pass judgements and to settle disputes and to witness legal transactions. We learn here that Naomi has some land, that was certainly hinted at earlier but now she wants to sell it. Her poverty has forced her into it. The question is who is going to buy it? The law says that it is the responsibility of the Kinsman Redeemer to do it (Leviticus 25:25).

Boaz invites the other kinsman to redeem it but assures him that should he refuse to do so then Boaz would redeem it. The offer sounds very attractive to the kinsman and he agrees to redeem it. In his thinking he probably knew that to buy the field would also mean taking on Elimelech's widow Naomi. But as she was now too old to have children he probably thought that he could afford to invest in this property knowing that there was no chance of an future heir, so it was a very good offer, even if it did involve taking on a Levirate marriage with Naomi.

Then Boaz throws in the small print of the contract. To buy the land meant taking not Naomi but Ruth in a Levirate marriage. This was probably a stipulation that Naomi put on the purchase of the land. If you buy the land you get Ruth in marriage also, that's the deal or there's no deal. The reason given is so that the name of the dead who owned the land might be maintained. In the Bible a name was more than an identification label. Here it is being used as keeping the family name going, in marrying Ruth the name of Elimelech will not die out. As I said in previous weeks it's very important that the name of God's people does not die out.

Well! When the kinsman hears the requirement he says he can no longer redeem the land and Ruth it's just too risky. It will cost him to buy the land and then in all likelihood an heir to that land will be born to Ruth and then he will have to divide his own land with even more people.

He is not prepared to put his own estate at risk so he, simply, invites Boaz to do it instead. The path is clear the providence of God has cleared every obstacle Boaz can now marry Ruth and have a child and preserve the family name and land as well as provide for the needs of Ruth and Naomi. The deal is struck (v 7-8) in a very unusual way for us but in a way that was in keeping with the custom of the day (v 7).

Everything is now ready for the marriage of Boaz and Ruth

Let us pause for a minute and apply this to ourselves. Boaz went to great lengths in order to redeem Ruth, he took a risk in approaching the other Kinsman redeemer and finally he would have to pay the cost of the land take Ruth as his wife and have children, all of which is a costly business. But this also reminds us of our redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. He paid a supreme price in order that we could be redeemed.

He left the glory of heaven to come to earth in order to take on human flesh. This is unimaginable for us, for God to lay aside the perfection of heaven and to take a risk if I can put it like that by making himself vulnerable by becoming a little baby. He was dependant on Mary and Joseph for his food and upbringing. He left perfection in order to enter our imperfect world. He limited himself by living as a normal human being even though he was God in human flesh.

He placed himself in a place where he could be tempted, abused and taken advantaged off. It is unthinkable for us as human beings to place ourselves into such vulnerable positions. I remember hearing of a Christian who lived as a homeless person for one week to identify with them and to understand their plight before so that he could help them. That was risky and he was vulnerable but he did it because of love for the homeless. But in a much, much greater way God the Son put himself into a vulnerable position and he did it out of love for sinners he did to identify with us as human beings and he did it to redeem us. But Jesus went further than coming into this world he allowed himself to be fitted up and falsely accused. He allowed himself to be sentenced to death and then he endured the mocking of the crowd and the cruel taunts of the soldiers and finally the sheer pain and humiliation of crucifixion.

He went through all of that in order that he could make us his bride. For that is how the church is described in the Bible we are the bride of Christ. The church is married to the Lord Jesus and that is not because we have chosen him as our groom but because he has chosen us as his bride. I said at our last Lord's Supper that what we need is to be constantly taken back to the cross.

For it's the cross of Jesus that saves us but it is also the cross that keeps us in the faith and keeps us motivated in our service for him. If you find yourself getting a little cold as a Christian then take yourself back again to the cross of Jesus ponder this mystery that God the Son left heaven and came to earth where he suffered and died for me and in doing so redeemed and

made me a member of his church the bride of Christ. I find myself constantly amazed at the reasons Christians give for their failure to be committed to Christ and his church. If the Lord Jesus had of given the same reasons then not one of us would be redeemed. Let us ponder the incarnation, the life and the death of the Lord Jesus and then let us live for him, let the cross be our motivation, let his love be our assurance and let us like Ruth be prepared to commit ourselves to our Husband the Lord Jesus Christ.

**SCENE TWO** - All the people who had witnessed this marriage commitment prayed for the happy couple and pronounced a blessing on the couple asking that God might bless Ruth as He blessed Rachel and Leah (v 11). Rachel and Leah were the Mothers from whom 12 children came with the help of their servants Bilhah and Zilpah. From these 12 children came the 12 tribes of Israel.

There is a hint here that from Boaz and Ruth, God will fulfil his purposes just as he did with Leah and Rachel in such a way that it will have a significant impact upon his people. This is further hinted at when they ask that Boaz and Ruth's family be like that of Perez and Tamar (v 12). Perez is the clan from which Boaz descended (vs. 18-22). For unknown reasons the clan came to achieve pre-eminence in the tribe of Judah.

What the people are asking for and praying for is that Boaz's family line should find similar prominence in Judah. Perez was the oldest of twin boys born to Judah under somewhat scandalous circumstances (Genesis 38). Since Judah refused to give Tamar his youngest son as her husband, she posed as a prostitute, became pregnant by an unsuspecting customer who was Judah. She gave birth to Perez and Zerah.

Perez's birth was unusual as was his conception (Genesis 38:27-30). As if pushing his twin aside at the last moment Perez was born first. But what are the people saying here. Well like Ruth, Tamar was a foreigner who perpetuated a family line threaten with extinction, one that later became the leading tribe in Judah. Therefore In the same way may Ruth be Mother from whom will come One who will rise to great prominence among his people.

This prayed for blessing comes to fruition in a way that they could not have expected. Boaz and Ruth marry and the Lord graciously grants them a baby boy (v 13). Once again the Lord's providence is being worked out for the child did not come only through natural human events but we are specially told that 'the Lord enabled her to conceive.' The women praise the Lord in front of Naomi because he has provided for Naomi a Kinsman Redeemer in the sense of one to preserve her family name and one who will be able to provide for her in her old age.

Their longing for this child; is that he would become famous in Israel. It seems as you read the text that Ruth has given Obed to Naomi so that Naomi can care for him as if he was her own son. Right at the end of this chapter we find out what happened to Obed. He became the Father of Jesse who became the father of David. Who came from the line of David? Well if you follow the family tree as it's picked up in Matthew 1: we discover that Jesus comes from the line of David.

All that was hoped for concerning Ruth's child is actually fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. They prayed that Ruth's child would have a significant impact upon God's people. They prayed and hoped that he would become pre-eminent in the tribe of Judah and that the child born to Ruth would be prominent among God's people. Well as we know no one can become more prominent than being in the line of the Son of God the Saviour of the world.

Ruth's descendant the Lord Jesus did indeed make a significant impact upon his people for what greater impact can you make than coming into the world in order to die for the sins of his people. He is the pre-eminent one who all of history focuses upon even our dating system is based upon the coming of the descendant of Ruth the Lord Jesus. We would never have heard of Obed or

Ruth or Boaz but for the fact that they are in the royal line of the Lord Jesus. We have followed God at work in the life of Naomi and Ruth and his providence leads us to the Lord Jesus. God was fulfilling his purposes and indeed fulfilled his purposes in bringing the Lord Jesus into the world in order to die for sinners. Today he is still working out his providence in the lives of his people and in the world in general. Perhaps if you are not a Christian his providence is leading you to Jesus Christ, not as some historical figure but as your own personal Saviour.

Perhaps he will become pre-eminent in your life. But if you are a Christian then let us do what these woman did when Obed was born they praised the Lord for he provided a Kinsman redeemer for Naomi. Well through the Lord Jesus he has provided for us a true Kinsman redeemer, one who has come to die in our place, to take upon himself our sins and to free us from the burden and bondage of sin.

If that is your experience then let us praise the Lord everyday for his gracious provision of a redeemer for us and then let us submit our lives to this Saviour acknowledging him as both Lord and Saviour of our Lives.

Amen