

Ruth 4

The previous chapter left us at a dramatic point with Boaz exercising the right of the kinsman-redeemer to claim Ruth as his wife. But there was a kinsman-redeemer closer to Ruth and he had priority.

In his confrontation with the closer kinsman-redeemer, how would you characterize Boaz's actions? How does he conduct himself? He was honest and up front, not manipulating, prepared, had a well thought out strategy, in control, done his homework. Boaz was in his element --- among the men he was a strong commanding leader; among the women he was tender, sensitive.

When Boaz presented the offer to the other kinsman-redeemer to buy the land how did he respond (v. 4)? He initially agreed to redeem the land. Certainly, Ruth and Naomi were watching and listening. How their hearts must have sunk when they heard the nearer kinsman say, "I will redeem it." But Boaz had a trump card up his sleeve.

What was the trump card (v. 5)? Boaz told him that he wasn't only dealing with Naomi and the property of Elimelech, he also had to deal with Ruth – Naomi and Ruth were a package deal.

Naomi by herself was not a threat/concern – Why not? Since Naomi was older and beyond the child-bearing years (1:12), it was biologically impossible for the nearer kinsman to marry Naomi and raise up children to preserve the family name of her deceased husband Elimelech.

Why was Ruth a concern? Ruth was another matter - she *was* able to marry and bear children and carry on the name of Elimelech.

Why did including Ruth change the kinsman-redeemer's mind (v. 6)? His estate would be endangered. A potential son through Ruth could become an heir to compete with his own children. Ultimately the land would go to Ruth's heirs, not his own.

What observations can be made about the closer kinsman-redeemer? He was concerned about his wealth, selfish, displayed a lack of character. He was the antithesis of Boaz.

What can we conclude from the enthusiastic response of the witnesses and elders (vv. 11-12)? They held Boaz (and Ruth) in high esteem, with great respect. Boaz and Ruth had endeared themselves to the people. When people see lives that are lived honorably, consistently and without hypocrisy, they respond positively.

Why were Rachel, Leah, Perez and Tamar held up as examples (vv. 11-12)? Rachel and Leah gave birth to 8 fathers of the 12 tribes. They were renowned for building up the house of Israel. Tamar was a Gentile (Canaanite), a widow like Ruth, and also like Ruth she was included in the line of Christ. Perez was the offspring of the illicit union between Judah and Tamar. He also is in the line of Christ.

In spite of their illicit union, the Jewish people considered Judah to be a sort of Boaz in his relationship with Tamar. He was the head of an extended family and he provided an heir for Tamar and her deceased husband.

What is the significance of the statement "the Lord enabled her to conceive" (v. 13)? God opens the wombs of women. He is the author of life. Note that she had no children with her first husband after 10 years of marriage (1:4).

How did the women of the city regard Naomi (vv. 14-15)? They were gathered around her, they must have liked her, there was an element of respect, they rejoiced with her, they were probably sympathetic. Note that Boaz was not mentioned in their praises.

Why seven sons (v. 15)? The number seven in the Bible signifies complete or perfect. The ancient Israelites believed that seven sons constituted the supreme blessing that could come to a Hebrew family (1 Samuel 2:5; Job (1:2)).

What changes do you see in Naomi (v. 16)? She went from being empty to being full, from sorrow to joy.

Who named the child (v. 17)? The women of Bethlehem. This is one of only two instances in Scripture when a child received its name from someone other than the immediate family (Exodus 2:10).

Why does this book conclude with a genealogy (vv. 18-22)? To show where this little story fits in the bigger picture -- the genealogy of David and Christ. To show the continuity of God's purposes through the ages. History is not haphazard or coincidental. It is orchestrated clearly and specifically by the hand of God. What seems like a little story is actually one of great significance.

Application:

The Lord had a great and sovereign plan for Ruth's life just like He does for our lives. I can imagine God saying something like this to Ruth. "I have a great and wonderful plan for your life and here is how my great plan is going to start out – first, your husband is going to die. And then your father-in-law is going to die. Then I'm going to take you to a foreign land and a foreign people with a different language far away from everything familiar to you. And you're going to live with a complaining, whining, old woman. And by the way you're going to be destitute, a beggar. And you're going to do hard manual labor in order to eat. This journey is going to be a walk of faith Ruth, not a walk of sight. Are you ready? Are you willing to trust in me?" **Are we willing to trust in God's sovereign design for our lives even when the going gets tough?**

Note that Ruth's future was not limited or doomed by her pagan background/environment/ upbringing.

Doing the right thing often involves an element of risk, the possibility of loss, may damage a career, alienate people. But God honors a courageous stance. We can see that in the life of Boaz and Ruth.

God does great things through faithful and obedient servants. Little did Ruth and Boaz realize that from their union would come Israel's greatest kings including David and Jesus Christ.

Be conscious of character and integrity issues. Boaz and Ruth did the right things in both their public and private lives. Our character is measured in large part by what we do when no one is watching.

Lesson for singles -- In chapter one, Ruth seemed to be giving up on her best chance of marriage by leaving her native land of Moab and giving her heart and life to the God of Israel. But as Ruth put God first, He brought her together in a relationship greater than she could have imagined.

The story brings us back to the idea of Jesus as our *kinsman-redeemer*; this is why He became a man. God might have sent an angel to save us, but the angel would not have been our *kinsman*. Jesus, in His eternal glory, without the addition of humanity to His divine nature might have saved us, but He would not have been our *kinsman*. A great prophet or priest would be our kinsman, but his own sin would have disqualified him as our *redeemer*. Only Jesus, the sinless God-man, can be both the *kinsman* and the *redeemer* for mankind!

Neither circumstances nor environment make or break a believer. Faith does. Boaz was a wealthy man who lived in a spiritually apostate, morally corrupt environment. Nevertheless, he overcame his temptations by faith in God. Ruth was a poor Moabite woman and extremely vulnerable. Yet she overcame her temptations by faith, too. From this we learn that circumstances and environment are not determinative. They do not determine our destiny nor do they control our spirituality. Our attitude and relationship to God do. That is why it is so important that we maintain a daily intimate relationship with Him. No matter what environment or circumstances we are up against, we can be overcomers like Boaz and Ruth by trusting in and committing ourselves to God, and following Him faithfully.