

The Book of Ruth – 10 The Kinsman Claims His Own

Text: Ruth 4:1-10

Introduction

We left this story at a point where Ruth could come to a place of rest because Boaz would not rest until he had kept his promise to her. What was that promise? He would make sure that Ruth got married. Her widow's garments were gone, and she was prepared to marry. There was only one hiccup, there was someone who had the "first right of refusal" and Boaz had to deal with that man. If the man refused, Boaz would marry Ruth. Interestingly, in Chapter 3, this is the last we hear from Ruth personally. Boaz goes out now to deal with the nearest kinsman, legally.

The Court Is Convened

"Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, "Turn aside, friend; sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down." (Ruth 4:1–2, ESV)

True to his word and the expectation of Naomi, Boaz went to the town gate and convened a meeting with the nearest relative (whom we don't know his name) and 10 elders. "The gate served as a combined town hall and courthouse (2 Sam. 15:2; Job 29:7–17; Prov. 22:22; 31:23; Amos 5:10). Elders witnessed transactions (Ruth 4:4, 9–11; cf. Deut. 25:7) and decided cases (cf. Deut. 21:19; 22:15)."¹

"The number ten was significant to the Jews as a quorum necessary for a synagogue gathering and for the marriage benediction. From the most ancient times it represented an official gathering of those in authority."² The number 10 in the Bible signifies completeness, wholeness. "In the OT "ten" apparently was a round number designating the smallest "complete" but effective group confirms this suggestion."³

The Court Is In Session

"Then he said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. So I thought I would tell you of it and say, 'Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.' If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you." And he said, "I will redeem it." Then Boaz said, "The day you buy the field from the

¹ Crossway Bibles. (2008). [The ESV Study Bible](#) (p. 482). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

² Hindson, E. E., & Kroll, W. M. (Eds.). (1994). [KJV Bible Commentary](#) (p. 528). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ Hubbard, R. L. (1988). [The Book of Ruth](#) (p. 236). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.” Then the redeemer said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.”” (Ruth 4:3–6, ESV)

In his opening statement, Boaz focuses on the land. He does not mention Ruth. He reminded the nearest kinsman that he was responsible for buying Naomi’s land to keep it in the family. “The man initially agrees to redeem the land without knowing about Ruth. He probably recognizes this as an opportunity to make a good investment.”⁴ But then Boaz drops the bomb: “*Then Boaz said, ‘The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.’”* (Ruth 4:5, ESV) Now that changed everything!

The man answered and said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.”⁵ We are not really sure what he was thinking. It is obvious that he felt that marrying Ruth would somehow affect his own assets. “Despite its ambiguity, the remark probably meant, ‘I simply cannot afford it.’ That is, any addition to the man’s family would ruin his children’s inheritance. He would, first, here buy Naomi’s property from assets eventually part of his estate—only to lose that investment when Ruth’s first child claimed it, presumably without cost, as Elimelech’s heir. Meanwhile, that child’s care and feeding would further drain his wealth. Similarly, besides the lost investment in land and child, he may have faced additional expense in caring for Ruth, other children born to her, and Naomi, too.”⁶

The Court Case Is Concluded

The nearest relative relinquishes his right and passes it over to Boaz. The matter was made legally binding. “The one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel.”⁷ The court made it’s final judgement: “*Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day.””* (Ruth 4:9–10, ESV)

The Narrator’s Point

Again, this is not a chapter to give us instruction on Israel’s legal proceedings. This is not a chapter to guide your entrepreneurial enterprises. Twice we are told why this is all necessary:

⁴ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Ru 4:3–4). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ru 4:6). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁶ Hubbard, R. L. (1988). [The Book of Ruth](#) (p. 245). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ru 4:7). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

- a. *“Then Boaz said, “The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, **in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.**”* (Ruth 4:5, ESV) [Emphasis mine]; and again,
- b. *“Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, **to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place.** You are witnesses this day.”* (Ruth 4:9–10, ESV) [Emphasis mine]

We would be naïve to think that Boaz did not marry Ruth because he loved her and cared for her. That is patently obvious. But like all good and godly relationships there is a higher calling ... a greater vision. In this case it is summed up this way: ***to to continue that name of the dead.*** Now this relates to something we talked about before. Back in Chapter 2, verse 20 I said that *the Kinsman-Redeemer guaranteed the family inheritance.* The Kinsman—Redeemer was to assure the future security and welfare of the family. For Boaz to marry Ruth meant that he was willing to preserve the line of Elimelech and Mahlon which had been temporarily cut off by their deaths. Therefore, his son by Ruth would be considered in a legal way as being Elimelech’s and Mahlon’s son; and would guarantee their possession of an inheritance, the land, in Israel.

But there is also another nuance to this that is important. Let me explain this in an earthy illustration. When parents have children and those children exemplify some of the characteristics, values and goals of the parent, when the parent dies and the child continues, we often think that in some mystical way the life of the parent is living on in the child. It gives eternal value to the parent and their dreams. In a negative way, some parents can be accused of pushing their child too hard because they want to see themselves in that child. This is somewhat of the idea here in Ruth.

“Name,” however, does not serve just as nomenclature; it also refers to being remembered and honored, a kind of eternal life in having offspring to connect with the deceased. Its broader use has to do with inheritance and “the reality and significance of a man’s deeds and life.”⁸ I think you are going to jump when you see this point: The kinsman-redeemer, in a sense, gives life – eternal life to the deceased relative, by raising up a seed (an offspring).

This is what Boaz was doing. He was continuing the name of the dead men. His actions brought them back to life – so to speak.

⁸ HarperCollins Christian Publishing. NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, eBook: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture (Kindle Locations 63061-63062). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

The Contemporary Application

Again, Boaz is showing us to be a shadow, a road-sign, a picture of Jesus Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer. Notice these characteristics as I pose them in a different way:

1. Boaz took the initiative to legally bring life, to bring to life the enduring legacy of the dead men. Boaz paid the price from his own resources.
2. When the legal decision was made, Boaz, publicly claimed his own. Without embarrassment and with boldness, he claimed his bride before the witnesses.

Can you not see the Gospel of the Lord Jesus here? To those of us who are in Christ, do you not acknowledge that apart from the initiative of the Lord Jesus we would still be lost and without hope. *"We love because he first loved us."* (1 John 4:19, ESV). In grace and mercy Christ suffered for us. *"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."* (2 Corinthians 5:21, ESV). And notably we read in the Letter to the Hebrews, these amazing words:

"For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, 'I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.'" (Hebrews 2:11–12, ESV)

As a husband is not ashamed to call the lady he loves his wife; Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer is not ashamed to call us brothers. He is not ashamed to be identified with us. The author cites Psalm 22:22 to show Jesus' unity and interconnection with the people He redeems. "Can you imagine God's being happy to be called the God of you? Yet He is—not because of who you are in yourself, but because of who you are in Christ . . . When we realize that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and that God is not ashamed to say, "I am their God," it should thrill our hearts. And it should make us all the more conscious that it is in the righteousness of Jesus Christ that we stand and not in our own, which at best is "like a filthy garment" (Isa. 64:6)."⁹

If this bores you I'm a desperately sorry for the state of your soul. What a thrill to see the Gospel lived out in living color through this story!

⁹ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1983). [*Hebrews*](#) (p. 68). Chicago: Moody Press.