

BIBLE BRIEFING

“Love Me Threshing”

RUTH

Chapter 3

Introduction

The Book of Ruth is a love story, and it is a law story.

As a love story...

...it describes the courtship of Boaz and Ruth. For Boaz, it was love at first sight when, in Chapter Two, he saw Ruth gleaning in his barley field and exclaimed, "Whose young woman is this?" He invited Ruth to lunch and he made arrangements for her to return to his field everyday of the barley harvest. He sent her home with gifts of food for her and for her mother-in-law. Ruth's mother-in-law, Naomi, recognizing Boaz' romantic intentions, said, "Blessed be the one who took notice of you."² She encouraged Ruth to go forth each day and be "noticed" in the field belonging to Boaz. It is a love story.

It is also a law story...

...as it describes Boaz as Ruth's kinsman. The word *kinsman*, or *relative*, occurs twelve times in the Book of Ruth, six of them here in Chapter Three. It is the Hebrew word *go'el*, more completely translated "kinsman-redeemer." An Israelite could sell himself, his family, or his land in cases of extreme hardship or poverty. The *go'el* was the nearest living male blood relative. He was responsible, under Jewish law, to act as a redeemer of the mortgaged property and persons. He was the kinsman who could redeem what was lost, the *kinsman-redeemer*. Boaz was a near relative to Ruth's deceased father and her deceased husband. He was a kinsman-redeemer. It is a law story as you see him, especially in Chapter Four, take their

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Ruth 2:5

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Ruth 2:19

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Leviticus 25:39-43

courtship into court to clear the legal obstacles standing in the way of him exercising his responsibilities as kinsman-redeemer.

The Book of Ruth is the love story and the law story of redemption. Seeking her love, Boaz claimed Ruth as her kinsman-redeemer. Seeing his love, Ruth claimed Boaz as her kinsman-redeemer. The story ends joyfully with a baby being born in Bethlehem.

But that is not the end of the story! Centuries later a descendant of Boaz and Ruth was born in Bethlehem. He was Jesus, born in Bethlehem of the virgin, Mary. His miraculous birth made Jesus *your* kinsman. He is your kinsman-redeemer, able to purchase you out of slavery to sin and death. Seeking your love, Jesus came from heaven to earth and claimed you as your kinsman-redeemer. Seeing His love, you come to Jesus and claim Him as your kinsman-redeemer.

Ruth Chapter Three is your guide to appreciating and appropriating the love of Jesus Christ as your kinsman-redeemer.

#1 Seeing His Love, You Come To Jesus
And Claim Him As Your Kinsman-Redeemer
(v1-11)

Boaz first loved Ruth. He saw her gleaning in his field, fell in love at first sight, then went about courting her affection in a very tender and gentlemanly way. Naomi, seeing the evidences of his love for Ruth, sent her daughter-in-law to the threshingfloor to make her claim upon Boaz as her kinsman-redeemer.

Ruth 3:1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?"

Ruth 3:2 "Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our kinsman? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.

Ruth 3:3 "Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

Ruth 3:4 "Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do."

Ruth 3:5 And she said to her, "All that you say to me I will do."

Ruth 3:6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her.

Ruth's behavior seems strange to us, almost forward, but she was in fact acting according to the customs of her time. Boaz had indicated his intentions, and now it was up to Ruth to indicate her interest. The barley harvest was over, and the time for threshing and winnowing had come. Boaz had joined his laborers in the work of threshing the grain. Many citizens were gathered there, with their families, celebrating the bountiful harvest. They were winnowing the grain at night to get the advantage of the night breeze. Winnowing involved picking up the grain with some tool, after it had been tramped upon, and then pitching it into the wind so that the chaff would be blown away. After the workmen had labored into the night and the wind had died down, they ate a late meal, and then slept there on and around the threshingfloor to stand guard over the winnowed grain.

Ruth's coming to Boaz at night was extremely modest. It was a public place, with entire families camped there in the open. It was a perfect and discrete opportunity for her to claim him as her kinsman-redeemer.

Ruth 3:7 And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

One of the responsibilities of the *go'el*, under the Jewish law, was to marry his deceased brothers' wife to raise up children with the deceased brother's name. Ruth covered herself with the corner of Boaz' long outer garment. This was a symbolic and modest way of telling Boaz that she would be willing to accept him as the *go'el* to take her deceased husband's place as her husband. You read of this custom in Ezekiel 16:8, where God says of His relationship to Israel,

Ezekiel 16:8 When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine, says the Lord GOD.

Spreading your outer garment over a woman, or a woman placing herself under the outer garment, was an acceptable way to propose marriage or to accept a proposal of marriage.

Ruth 3:8 Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet.

Ruth 3:9 And he said, "Who are you?" So she answered, "I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a near kinsman."

Ruth 3:10 Then he said, "Blessed are you of the LORD, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich.

Ruth 3:11 "And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman.

Boaz immediately understood her intentions. He had been courting her, but he thought she might prefer the company of the younger men, and had been somewhat hesitant to impose upon her. He wanted Ruth to be in love with him, not just be under the law with him.

Seeing his love, Ruth came to Boaz and claimed him as her kinsman-redeemer. In the same way, seeing His love, *you* come to Jesus and claim Him as *your* kinsman-redeemer!

Boaz came to the field, saw the impoverished gleaner, and loved her first. Jesus Christ came from heaven to earth, seeing the human race in its spiritual poverty, and loved you first.

Naomi saw the love of Boaz for Ruth and applied it to her so she would understand and respond to it. Just so, God the Holy Spirit applies the love of Jesus Christ for mankind to your heart so you can understand and respond to it.

Once Ruth responded to the love of Boaz, she immediately assumed the role of his engaged bride-to-be: she washed, anointed herself, and put on her best garments:

Ruth was "washed" and "anointed."⁴ When you come to Jesus Christ you are washed clean of your sins and you are anointed as you receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Then, on a daily basis, you are washed by the cleansing power of God's Word, and you go on being anointed by His Spirit for service and ministry.

Ruth exchanged her widow's rags for her "best garment."⁵ When you come to Jesus He takes away the filthy rags of your own righteousness and replaces them with His own perfect righteousness.

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Ruth 3:3

⁵
Ibid.

Ruth⁶ was instructed to present herself to Boaz and to do what he told her. After you come to Jesus you are to present yourself to Him in obedient service.

Jesus is your Boaz; you are His Ruth. Seeing His love for you, you come and claim Him as your kinsman-redeemer.

#2 Seeking Your Love, Jesus Came To You And Claimed You As Your Kinsman-Redeemer

(v12-18)

Boaz made Ruth's response possible by loving her first. He came to her in the field and indicated his intentions to fulfill his responsibilities as her kinsman-redeemer. He did so out of love, not just out of the law. He loved Ruth.

As we listen to Boaz, we learn of a legal obstacle to his intentions to redeem Ruth:

Ruth 3:12 "Now it is true that I am a near kinsman; however, there is a kinsman closer than I.
Ruth 3:13 "Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be that if he will perform the duty of a near kinsman for you; good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the LORD lives! Lie down until morning."

There was a kinsman closer than Boaz. This other man had first rights at redeeming his deceased brother's property, and he had first responsibility to marry Ruth and raise up an heir to his deceased brothers' inheritance. Most of Chapter Four is occupied with Boaz overcoming this legal obstacle. When we look at Chapter Four next week we'll see what the other kinsman represents. He represents the Law of God which offers mankind redemption if the Law is kept perfectly. The Law is an obstacle to redemption: No one can keep the Law perfectly, so no one can ever be redeemed from their sin by living under the Law. Like Boaz, Jesus clears you of the legal obstacle so He can act as your Kinsman-Redeemer!

Ruth 3:14 So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another. Then he said, "Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."

Ruth 3:15 Also he said, "Bring the shawl that is on you and hold it." And when she held it, he measured six ephahs of barley, and laid it on her. Then she went into the city.
Ruth 3:16 So when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "Is that you, my daughter?" Then she told her all that the man had done for her.
Ruth 3:17 And she said, "These six ephahs of barley he gave me; for he said to me, 'Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.'"
Ruth 3:18 Then she said, "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day."

Boaz gave Ruth a generous measure of barley as a token of His sincerity. What he had begun, he would finish. He would clear the legal obstacle and fulfill his responsibility as her kinsman-redeemer.

We have been talking a lot about the kinsman-redeemer. Let's take a moment to read the passages that describe this person: Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 25.

Leviticus 25:23 'The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me.
Leviticus 25:24 'And in all the land of your possession you shall grant redemption of the land.
Leviticus 25:25 'If one of your brethren becomes poor, and has sold some of his possession, and if his kinsman-redeemer comes to redeem it, then he may redeem what his brother sold...'
Leviticus 25:47 '...Now if a sojourner or stranger close to you becomes rich, and one of your brethren who dwells by him becomes poor, and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner close to you, or to a member of the stranger's family,
Leviticus 25:48 'after he is sold he may be redeemed again. One of his brothers may redeem him;
Leviticus 25:49 'or his uncle or his uncle's son may redeem him; or anyone who is near of kin to him in his family may redeem him; or if he is able he may redeem himself.'

Deuteronomy 25:5 "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her."

These laws are based on the principle that God owns the land He gave to Israel by right of creation. They were His stewards of the land and could not finally dispose of it as they saw fit. The land was to remain in the family God originally gave it to. By providing for a kinsman-redeemer God saw to it that the land never passed out of its original ownership. By providing that the kinsman-redeemer marry the deceased brothers' widow God insured that no family would ever cease.

From these passages you can derive four important criteria about the kinsman-redeemer:

1. He must be a near kinsman.

2. He must himself be free from any legal entanglements.
3. He must have the price of redemption.
4. He must possess the ability to redeem.

Boaz met all of these criteria as he stepped in to redeem Ruth. Anyone who would act as kinsman-redeemer must meet all of these criteria.

God sees the whole human race in need of redemption. When you *redeem* something or someone you buy back by paying a price for that which was sold. Romans 7:14 describes you as "...sold as a slave to sin." You are born into this life subject to the dominion and curse of sin, and you are a slave to Satan and to death. You are in real need of a redeemer!

Your redeemer, though, must meet God's four criteria: He must be your near kinsman, he must himself be free from any legal entanglements, he must have the price required for your redemption, and he must possess the ability to redeem you. Jesus Christ - *and only Jesus Christ* - meets all of these!

Jesus Christ is your near kinsman. Jesus Christ, Who was eternally God, became a man. He took upon Himself human flesh. He did this in His incarnation that He might redeem you:

Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,
Galatians 4:5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Jesus Christ is free from any legal entanglements. You are condemned by God's Law. It's standard is perfection, and all of your efforts to keep it perfectly fall short. Ask yourself this question: Am I less perfect than God? If your answer is, "Yes," then you are condemned to judgment and hell.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee states the obvious when he says,

"A drowning man is in no position to rescue someone else who is drowning. A man who rescues people who are in a sinking ship cannot himself be in that sinking ship. The lifeline must be thrown from someone who is in a place of...safety."

To redeem you, a person would have to himself have first perfectly kept God's Law and owe no debt to God. Jesus, in His life on earth, perfectly kept God's Law. He said of Himself, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." In every point, Jesus was perfect. He alone stands ready to redeem. When He throws the spiritual lifeline to some sinking soul, He is able to rescue, for He stands upon the vantage point of having lived an impeccable, perfect life of holiness before God.

Jesus has the price of your redemption. The kinsman-redeemer must have the price which is the legal amount necessary to provide for deliverance. God says in His Word that the price of redemption from sin is blood. In Leviticus 17:11 you read,

Leviticus 17:11 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.'

God called for the shedding of blood to atone for sin and to bring redemption and deliverance. The blood of animals could never atone for sins. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." There must be found some man, some kinsman, who is satisfactory to God, who is willing to pay with his blood the price required for redemption.

The problem is to find someone who will satisfy the holiness of God. He must be related as a near kinsman; but anyone who has the blood of Adam flowing through his veins is disqualified for he, too, will need a substitute. No man can qualify.

This is where God quite literally stepped in. "Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not

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Ruth's Romance of Redemption, page 154.

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Matthew 5:17

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Hebrews 10:4

desire, But a body You have prepared for Me." ¹⁰ The blood of animals could not redeem man; the blood of man could not redeem man. So God took upon Himself a human body that was not contaminated by the sin nature. He did this in the virgin birth. No sin tainted blood flowed through his body. He then shed this blood on the Cross, fully atoning for the sin of the human race. Twenty-one times the Bible identifies the precious blood of Jesus as satisfying the price of your redemption, e.g.,

1 Peter 1:18 ...you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,
1 Peter 1:19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Jesus possesses the ability to redeem you. Redemption involves purchasing back what was originally sold or lost. What you originally lost in the Garden of Eden when Adam sinned was eternal life in the presence of God. Only Jesus can restore you to eternal life in the presence of God. In His resurrection from the dead He is called the "firstfruits of them that sleep." Because He rose, you will one day rise and enjoy eternity - you will be restored to the estate that was lost by Adam, but regained by the Risen Lord!

To be your kinsman-redeemer someone would have to meet these criteria. In order to meet them he would have to be God come in human flesh, live a perfect sinless life on earth, die a substitutionary death on the Cross, and then rise from the dead. The Lord, Jesus Christ, *He* is your kinsman-redeemer. There is salvation in no other Name! Seeking your love, Jesus came and claimed you as your Kinsman-Redeemer.

Conclusion

The Book of Ruth is the love story and the law story of your redemption.

As a law story, you see how Jesus fulfills the legal requirements necessary to redeem you as your near kinsman.

As a love story, you see Jesus seeking your love, coming from heaven to earth, and claiming you as your kinsman-redeemer.