

BIBLE BRIEFING

“Sandlelight Romance”

RUTH Chapter 4

Introduction

Boaz took his courtship into court!

He was in love with Ruth, but his love could not disregard God's law. God's law made sure that a dead man's family name did not die with him and that his property was not sold outside of his own tribe or clan. The law of the kinsman-redeemer is found in Leviticus Twenty-five, and the law governing the marriage of widows is found in Deuteronomy Twenty-five. Under these laws the closest living male blood relative had first responsibility to *redeem* a mortgaged estate and *remarry* the widow of his deceased brother.

A citizen from Bethlehem named Elimilech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons, had moved to Moab during a famine. The boys, Mahlon and Chilion, married Moabite girls, Ruth and Orpah. Soon both father and sons died, leaving three widows. The stress and strain of her years in Moab had forced Naomi to mortgage her deceased husband's property. Upon her return to Bethlehem she was in no position to redeem the property herself. The two sons of Elimilech were the natural heirs to the estate. If either one had left a son, he would have inherited the estate. They did not leave a son; so, under Jewish law, their wives could pass the estate on to any child born to them by a kinsman-redeemer of the family of Elimilech. Orpah had remained in Moab, forfeiting her right to the estate of her deceased husband, Chilion. Ruth returned with Naomi and therefore had a claim upon the estate by virtue of her marriage to Mahlon. Any near relative who acted to redeem the estate must also marry Ruth and produce a child who would be the legal owner of the land.

Boaz was a near kinsman; but, in Chapter Three, he told Ruth "there is a kinsman nearer than I." He was in love with Ruth but his love could not disregard God's law. So he took his courtship into court. He put himself completely under the law in order to overcome the obstacle of the law and fulfill his love.

Throughout our studies in the Book of Ruth we have seen how Boaz' love for Ruth is a type of Jesus Christ's love for you, His Church. Chapter Four is no exception! Boaz put himself completely under the law in order to overcome the obstacle of the law and fulfill his love. Jesus Christ, in His incarnation through the virgin birth, put Himself completely under the law in order to overcome the obstacle of the law and fulfill His love for you. As you read in Galatians 4:4-5,

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

Jesus perfectly fulfilled God's law, removing it as an obstacle to your inheritance of eternal life.

This morning we will see these two things:

#1 Jesus Overcame The Law
To Become Your Redeemer
(v1-12)

#2 Jesus Came Under The Law
To Become Your Redeemer
(v13-22)

#1 Jesus Overcame The Law
To Become Your Redeemer
(v1-12)

Boaz had spoken to Ruth about the obstacle of the law; there was a closer kinsman. He set about overcoming this obstacle so he could legally marry Ruth.

¹
Ruth 3:12

Ruth 4:1 Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, "Come aside, friend, sit down here." So he came aside and sat down.

Ruth 4:2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down.

In ancient times, the city gate was the official court where judicial business was transacted in the presence of the elders. Boaz went to court, hailed the nearer kinsman, and assembled the ten witnesses.

Ruth 4:3 Then he said to the close relative, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech.

Ruth 4:4 "And I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy it back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am next after you.'" And he said, "I will redeem it."

Ruth 4:5 Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance."

Ruth 4:6 And the close relative said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

The *property* was attractive to the nearer kinsman, but the *prospect* of marriage to Ruth was not. If he already had children, marriage to Ruth would jeopardize their future inheritance. The fact that Elimilech, Mahlon, and Chilion had all died in Moab might have discouraged him from having anything to do with a Moabite wife! Deuteronomy 23:3 stated

"An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever..."

For whatever combination of reasons, the nearer relative refused his right of acting as kinsman-redeemer and pressed upon Boaz to redeem.

Ruth 4:7 Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging, to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was a confirmation in Israel.

Ruth 4:8 Therefore the close relative said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself." So he took off his sandal.

Ruth 4:9 And Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, from the hand of Naomi.

Ruth 4:10 "Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate. You are witnesses this day."

The custom of removing the sandal probably relates to God's² commandment to walk on the land and take possession. Removing the sandal indicated a refusal to "walk" on the land that was being offered. In years to come the ten witnesses would be able to testify that the transaction had been completed because they saw the nearer kinsman hand his sandal to Boaz. He had forfeited his rights under the law to walk in the land of Elimilech. Boaz was now free to act as kinsman-redeemer and marry his beloved Ruth.

Ruth 4:11 And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said, "We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.

Ruth 4:12 "May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the LORD will give you from this young woman."

Boaz' love for Ruth was evident to all the citizens of Bethlehem...But so was the legal status of the nearer kinsman. The people now rejoiced because love had triumphed within the law. They had witnessed more than a legal transaction; they had witnessed the Lord's transaction! The Lord's hand in this is attested to by the examples they cited from Israel's past:

In Jacob's marriage to Leah and Rachel, the law was preferred over love; in Tamar's relationship to Judah, the law was deferred because there was no love. But in Boaz' love for Ruth, love triumphed within the law in a marvelous manifestation of God's grace.

Jacob was in love with Rachel. He agreed with her father, Laban, to work for him seven years for her hand in marriage. On their wedding night, Laban tricked Jacob, giving him the oldest daughter, Leah, as his wife. Laban explained that it was their law that the older daughter

2

Genesis 13:17; Deuteronomy 11:24; Joshua 1:3 (Cited by Wiersbe)

marry first! The law was preferred over love. Jacob married both Leah and Rachel, producing the twelve tribes of Israel.

Tamar was widowed by the son of Judah. Judah promised her, under the law, that his son Shelah would marry her and produce a child to inherit her deceased husband's estate. Judah reneged on his promise. Tamar dressed herself as a prostitute and slept with Judah. When he found out Tamar, his widowed daughter-in-law, was pregnant, he sought to kill her under the law. Tamar produced evidence that Judah was the father of the child she bore. He had deferred keeping the law. Now he could only defend her for keeping the law - even though she had done so deviously.

In Jacob's marriage to Leah and Rachel, the law was preferred over love; in Tamar's relationship to Judah, the law was deferred because there was no love. Now, in Boaz' marriage to Ruth, love triumphed within the law! Here was a truly remarkable transaction.

Boaz overcame the law to become Ruth's redeemer. He overcame the law, not by disregarding it, but by fulfilling it to the letter. The law was an obstacle to his love that must first be fulfilled before his love could be fulfilled.

God's law was, and is, an obstacle to His love for you. God requires that you keep His law, keep it perfectly, in order to stand in His holy presence. You *cannot* keep God's law. In fact, God's law has the effect of revealing how far short you are of ever keeping it, because God's law exposes your indwelling sin nature. In Romans 7:9-11 you read,

Romans 7:9 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

Romans 7:10 And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.

Romans 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.

The Apostle Paul wrote these words for all of us. He thought he could find spiritual life until he measured himself by God's law. When he looked at the law, the law exposed his indwelling sin nature.

Rather than finding life, he found he was spiritually dead. The law only served to condemn him.

Here is the problem: God loves you, but His law condemns you. He cannot disregard His law in His love for you. The law is an obstacle to His love. He must somehow fulfill His law before He can fulfill His love for you.

Here is the solution: *Jesus Christ has come in the flesh!* In Romans 8:1-4 you read,

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

Romans 8:4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Jesus perfectly kept God's law for you. He fulfilled God's law on your behalf. He cleared away the obstacle that God's law presented that He might act upon His love for you as your kinsman-redeemer!

In Ruth Chapter Four, the nearer kinsman is never given a name. We can give him a name: his name is God's law! He represents God's law, which was an obstacle to God redeeming you. Just as there were ten witnesses to his claim upon Ruth, there are ten witnesses to God's law and its claim upon you - the Ten Commandments. The nearer kinsman was unable to redeem Ruth; the law is unable to redeem you. Ruth would have been left a desolate, impoverished widow under the law were it not for Boaz. You would have been left a desolate, impoverished sinner under the law were it not for Jesus. The nearer kinsman relinquished his claim, handing Boaz his sandal. When you come to Jesus, the law relinquishes its claim against you and your³ feet are "shod...with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

3

Ephesians 6:15

Jesus overcame the law to become your redeemer. What the law could not do for you, Jesus does for you.

#2 Jesus Came Under The Law To Become Your Redeemer

(v13-22)

In order to overcome the law, Jesus had to first come under the law. God had to be born a man - God incarnate. Jesus was God come in human flesh, born of a virgin so as not to inherit a sin nature from any human father. Only such a person could be both kinsman and redeemer for the human race.

The remaining verses of Ruth tell of her wedding to Boaz and of her son, Obed. They establish the people through which Jesus would eventually be born! The very story that most perfectly describes Jesus as your redeemer also establishes His human genealogy as your kinsman.

Ruth 4:13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son.

Ruth 4:14 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel!

Ruth 4:15 "And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him."

These people really knew how to pronounce a blessing! A guy gets married and they compare him to Jacob and Perez; a woman gets pregnant and they see the baby as becoming famous in all Israel.

Ruth 4:16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him.

Ruth 4:17 Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "There is a son born to Naomi." And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Obed was indeed a blessing:

He was a blessing to Boaz and Ruth as they entered into partnership with God in raising him as unto the Lord.

Obed was a blessing to Naomi in several ways. He "restored her life" in the way only grandchildren can. He would be a "nourisher of her old age," caring for his elderly relatives.

Obed was a blessing to Bethlehem in that the great King of Israel, David, would descend from him.

Obed was a blessing to the whole world in that David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, would be born from his family.

Ruth 4:18 Now this is the genealogy of Perez: Perez begot Hezron;
Ruth 4:19 Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab;
Ruth 4:20 Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon;
Ruth 4:21 Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed;
Ruth 4:22 Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.

The Moabites were not to enter the congregation of the Lord "even to the tenth generation." But the story of this Moabite closes with a ten generation genealogy that climaxes with the great name of David!

Jesus came under the law to become your redeemer. As you read in Galatians 4:4-5,

Galatians 4:4 ...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.

In God the Father's perfect timing, God the Son was sent from heaven to earth, born unto a virgin, Mary. Jesus was fully man, and He was fully God. He had to be fully God for His sacrifice to have value in heaven. He had to be fully man in order to be a substitute for all men. He had to be God to have the power of Savior, and He had to be man to have the position of Substitute.

Jesus was born under the law. He was under obligation to obey and be judged by God's perfect law. Unlike any other person, Jew or

4
Deuteronomy 23:3

5
MacArthur, Galatians, page 108.

Gentile, He satisfied the requirements of the law by living in perfect obedience to it. Because He lived in perfect obedience, He is able to redeem all others who were under the law but not obedient to it - provided they believe in Him as Savior and Substitute.

And He bore the curse of the law. On the Cross He took upon Himself the sins of the whole human race. He did this, giving His life a ransom for many - redeeming all who trust Him as Savior and Substitute by grace through faith.

Not only is there no other plan of salvation, there is no other possible plan of salvation! You were born sold as a slave to sin and needing a redeemer. Only a near kinsman who fulfilled the law could qualify to redeem you. Only a near kinsman who fulfilled the law and who could pay the price of your redemption could redeem you. Only Jesus is your kinsman-redeemer.

Conclusion

Ruth is an altogether remarkable book. It may be one of the most important books in the whole Bible. In it alone among all the books of the Bible do you find the work of the kinsman-redeemer illustrated. It is strange that so many great Christians have overlooked its significance. Dr. J. Vernon McGee writes,

"In most works on redemption, very little attention, if any, is given to the person of the redeemer. Consequently, the Book of Ruth is ignored, for the person of the redeemer is of primary importance [in it]. Jonathan Edwards...absolutely ignores Boaz as a type of Christ [in his work on redemption]...Strong, in his Systematic Theology...does not even allude to Boaz as a type of Christ. There is no reference to the Book of Ruth in his entire work on theology. Calvin, in the Institutes [of the Christian Religion], makes no reference to Ruth when contemplating redemption. In any Biblical history of redemption...there ought to be a reference to Boaz in the Book of Ruth."

I'd like to share one final encouragement from the Book of Ruth. Ruth is found between Judges and First and Second Samuel. Judges is the book of "no king" over Israel. First Samuel is the book of "man's king," when God gave Saul to Israel because they asked for him. Second Samuel is the book of "God's king." David came to power and fully established the kingdom in the name of the Lord.

Our world today is like the time of the Judges. Men will not have God to be their king. But things will get so bad in our world that the nations will cry out for a king. That king will appear; he will be man's king, the Antichrist.

After man's king has done his worst, God's King will come powerfully and fully to establish the kingdom in the name of the Lord. Jesus will return to rule and reign over this earth.

In the mean time God's love has triumphed within His law. Jesus has removed the condemnation of the law against you so you can know the communion of His love for you. Jesus is your Boaz; you are His Ruth. Your life is the romance of your redemption.