

Ruth 4
December 18, 2016

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Is there such a thing as a “free lunch?” [No] Why? [A free lunch is a situation in which a good or service is received at no cost, with the true cost of the good or service ultimately born by some party]

Ex: Who is providing free breakfasts for underprivileged children in the school systems? [Us]

Ex: Who provided the welfare check to those who don’t work? [We do through our taxes]

This is Economics 101. There’s no such thing as a free lunch. It cost somebody to provide the goods that someone allegedly received for “free.” When a good or service is being delivered, it represents a **transaction**. The transaction probably occurred before you even received the good or service. It was transparent to you.

All of us engage in transactions on a regular basis. I bet you count the cost before you buy. If you’re looking for product “x,” you look around to see if you can get the same product for less somewhere else. Think about **the largest transaction** you’ve ever entered into. For most, that’s probably buying a house. I bet you performed due diligence before you bought the house. You had inspectors look it over. You built contingencies in the contract in case something came back as unsatisfactory. You compared the cost of your house to similar houses to make sure you weren’t paying over FMV.

Transition: All of us have engaged in transactions, both large and small, that help us appreciate that nothing is for free and that we have to count the cost. These kind of day to day transactions are basic “quid pro quos.” We get this for that. However, in our Scripture reading for today, we are going to read about a certain type of transaction, and that is **redemption**. It’s important that we understand the definition of “redemption” for today’s study.

Redemption—the purchase back of something that had been lost, by the payment of a ransom. The Greek word so rendered is *apolutrosis*, a word occurring nine times in Scripture, and always with the idea of a ransom or price paid.

There are many passages in the New Testament which represent Christ’s sufferings under the idea of a ransom or price, and the result thereby secured is a purchase or redemption (comp. Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Gal. 3:13; 4:4, 5; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; Titus 2:14; Heb. 9:12; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Rev. 5:9). The idea running through all these texts, however various their reference, is that of payment made for our redemption.

You and I have never been placed in a position where we had to redeem something that has been lost. [Give example of someone kidnapping your child and someone anonymously calls you and says “pay one million dollars and we’ll return your child.”] Our focus will be on a redemption transaction by a kinsman-redeemer (K-R) for Ruth. If you were with us last week, we learned

that Ruth essentially made a marriage proposal to Boaz as a K-R by uncovering his feet at the threshing floor. Boaz knew he wasn't the closest K-R, so he made a plan to resolve this the very next morning. But Ruth already knew that her redemption was assured before he left for the city gate! As we study the last chapter of Ruth, I want to bring into focus the *largest transaction that has ever been made for US!* I hope by the end of this hour that all of us will be able to appreciate being redeemed by tagging the SIMILARITIES between Boaz and Christ as redeemers and Ruth and us as the redeemed.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.1:

- Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there. When the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned came along, Boaz said, "Come over here, my friend, and sit down." So he went over and sat down.

V.2:

- Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, "Sit here," and they did so.

V.3:

- Then he said to the kinsman-redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech.

V.4:

- I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line." "I will redeem it," he said.

V.5:

- Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabite, you acquire the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property."

V.6:

- At this, the kinsman-redeemer said, "Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it."

V.7:

- (Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.)

V.8:

- So the kinsman-redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it yourself." And he removed his sandal.

V.9:

- Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon.

V.10:

- I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from the town records. Today you are witnesses!

V.11:

- Then the elders and all those at the gate said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.

V.12:

- Through the offspring the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.”

V.13:

- So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, and the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

V.14:

- The women said to Naomi: “Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel!

V.15:

- He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.”

V.16:

- Then Naomi took the child, laid him in her lap and cared for him.

V.17:

- The women living there said, “Naomi has a son.” And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

V.18:

- This, then, is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron,

V.19:

- Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab,

V.20:

- Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon,

V.21:

- Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed,

V.22:

- Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: Our setting is at the town gate of Bethlehem where Boaz has found the K-R. Boaz states that Naomi is selling her property. Why do you think she was selling her property? [No information is given as to how she came to possess it. Her poverty apparently required that she sell it]

Q: Boaz initiates the transaction at the town gate with the closer K-R. How does Boaz describe the transaction being requested of the closest K-R? [The K-R is being asked to buy the piece of land that belonged to Elimelech.]

Q: How does the K-R initially respond? [Yes]

Q: Boaz explores the K-R “yes” to make sure he’s counted the cost. Boaz reminds the K-R what his new responsibilities will be. What were they? [He would maintain the name of Elimelech with this property by acquiring Ruth as a new wife and care for her.]

Q: Once the K-R counted the cost, what was his decision and why? [He said “no” because he didn’t want to endanger his own estate for his own heirs.]

Q: How was buying Elimelech’s land “endangering” his own family?

A: Perhaps he was too poor to sustain the land and a wife. Or, as some have suggested, perhaps he feared marrying a Moabitess lest the fate of Mahlon, Ruth’s first husband (v. 10), befall him. Perhaps the best view is that when he learned from Boaz that Ruth owned the property along with Naomi (v. 5), he knew that if Ruth bore him a son, that son would eventually inherit not only the redeemed property but probably part of his own estate too. In that sense the nearer redeemer would “endanger” his estate.

Observation: This K-R, with the help of Boaz, counted the cost and made the wisest decision on behalf of his own family, which was admirable. If you were in this man’s shoes, you would do the same thing.

Q: So once the closest K-R said “no,” Boaz gave a resounding “yes.” What was the symbolic act that occurred once a transaction was legally final? [The declining K-R removed his sandal and gave it to Boaz. The passing of the **sandal** symbolized Boaz’s right to walk on the land as his **property** (cf. Deut. 1:36; 11:24; Josh. 1:3; 14:9). So, if you saw a man walking down the road without a sandal on, you would know he had just sold some land and that it had all been done legally.]

Q: What was the reaction of the elders/witnesses? [Thrilled! The elders prayed for numerous and distinguished progeny for Boaz. Their prayer acknowledged that children are a gift from God (**offspring the LORD gives you**; cf. Ps. 127:3). Little did they realize that from this union would issue Israel’s greatest kings including David and the Eternal King, the Lord Jesus Christ. **Perez** may have been named here: (a) because of the levirate connection with **Tamar** (see the *Introduction*), (b) because Perez’s descendants had settled in Bethlehem (1 Chron. 2:5, 18, 50–54; note “Ephrathah” and “Bethlehem” in 1 Chron. 2:50–51), and (c) because Perez was an ancestor of Boaz (Ruth 4:18–21).]

Q: We all love happy endings. Once Boaz and Ruth became husband/wife, how did the Lord bless them? [He “enabled Ruth” to conceive, and it was a SON. So Ruth was assured, yet again, that she would not be without a K-R.]

[DEB – 2 Column Headings Similarities Between (Boaz and Christ), (Ruth and Us)]

Q: Let’s work together and compile a list of SIMILARITIES between Boaz and Christ that you’ve seen in our study of Ruth. All chapters are eligible for this exercise. What do you see?

- Both were willing to take in a **Gentile**
- Both were willing to take in the **disgraced and despised**
- Both offered **rest** to the Gentile
- Both offered **Bread**, to **dine** with the redeemer
- Both were **generous** in their provisions
- **Blessed be the man who took notice of you!**” (2:19) [Christ not only noticed us, but He knew us before we were formed in our mothers’ wombs.]

- He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.” (2:20) [Christ always shows us kindness.]
- Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.’ ” (2:21) [Choose to “follow me.”]
- Ruth **surrendered** herself to Boaz by humbly lying down at his feet. (3:7)

LOOK:

God sent His Son to be our “kinsman-redeemer” for all of His creation. Christ paid for our redemption. What Christ did for us is the largest transaction that has ever been made for us. And let’s be clear on how significant this is. We had a sin debt that we could not pay! The debt against us was not viewed as simply cancelled, but is fully paid. God is a holy and just God. He was not willing to “overlook” or cancel our debt and act like it never happened. Payment for our sin debt was REQUIRED. Christ’s blood or life, which he surrendered for us, is the “ransom” by which He delivered us from being slaves of sin and from its penal consequences is secured. That’s why Christ’s final words on the cross were, “It is finished.” He was saying, “The transaction is complete.”

Close with Liturgies Reminding Class of Christ’s Redemptive Act for Them:

“Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left **YOU** without a kinsman-redeemer.” (Ruth 4:14)

“You were bought at a great price.” (I Cor 6:20)

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us (Gal 3:13)

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.” (Eph 1:7)

“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Col 1:13-14)

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.” (I Tim 1:5-6)

“He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.” (Heb 9:12)

“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” (I Pet 1:18-19)

“With your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.” (Rev 5:9b)

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Pentecost, J. D. (1985). Daniel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, pp. 426-428). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

V. Receiving Redemption's Loving Rewards (4:1-13)

With the action having turned in his direction, Boaz now took the initiative. Would the nearer kinsman take what had been offered to Boaz?

A. *A refusal of redemption (4:1-8)*

4:1. **Boaz went up to the town gate** of Bethlehem. The town gate was where personal business and civic affairs of the people were transacted. The threshing floor was below the level of the city itself, and for that reason Boaz went "up" to the gate. The area was quite hilly. **The kinsman-redeemer** closer to Elimelech (3:12) **came** by the gate and **Boaz** asked him to **sit down**. The fact that the man's name was not given may have been poetic justice since he refused to become the redeemer. The words **my friend** became a catch phrase in Israel. Rabbinic writings used the designation for an unknown "John Doe."

4:2. **Boaz** called together **10 of** Bethlehem's **elders**, and they also sat down. They would serve as witnesses of the legal transaction (vv. 4, 9-11). Why he chose 10 is not stated. (Centuries later 10 became the number necessary for a Jewish marriage benediction or a quorum for a synagogue meeting.) This was now a man's world where a public decision was to be made on an important matter that profoundly affected the women who had brought it to this point.

4:3. Boaz had a carefully planned strategy. He unfolded the elements in the case step by step. First, he explained that **Naomi** (and Ruth; cf. v. 5) had a field for sale **that belonged to** Naomi's late husband. No information is given as to how she came to possess it. Her poverty apparently required that she sell it. But if possible the land should remain in the family (cf. Jer. 32:6-12).

4:4. The nearer kinsman had the first right to the property and Boaz was **next** after him. If Ruth's closer relative would not **redeem** (purchase) it, Boaz was prepared to do so. The man then agreed to **redeem** the piece of land.

4:5. But then **Boaz** explained that when the nearer kinsman redeemed **the land**, he must also acquire **Ruth the Moabitess**. Apparently at the death of Elimelech the property had passed to Mahlon so Mahlon's **widow** Ruth was included in the redemption responsibility. A son, to whom the property would belong, should be raised up to perpetuate the family **name**.

4:6. When the nearer **kinsman** heard this stipulation about marriage, he refused his right of purchase. He feared that his **own estate** might be endangered. So he gave the right of redemption to Boaz. Why did he change his mind? (Cf. "I will redeem it," v. 4b, with "I cannot redeem it," v. 6.) Perhaps he was too poor to sustain the land and a wife. Or, as some have suggested, perhaps he feared to marry a Moabitess lest the fate of Mahlon, Ruth's first husband (v. 10), befall him. Perhaps the best view is that when he learned from Boaz that Ruth owned the property along with Naomi (v. 5), he knew that if Ruth bore him a son, that son would eventually inherit not only the redeemed property but probably part of his own estate too. In that sense the nearer redeemer would "endanger" his estate. However, if only Naomi were the widow (not Naomi *and* Ruth), then no son from the levirate marriage would inherit part of the redeemer's estate because Naomi was past childbearing.

4:7–8. A legal transaction was finalized not by signing a paper but by a dramatic symbolic act that others would witness and remember. The passing of the **sandal** symbolized Boaz’s right to walk on the land as his **property** (cf. Deut. 1:36; 11:24; Josh. 1:3; 14:9). After giving his **sandal** to **Boaz**, the unknown **kinsman** moved from the scene and into anonymity. But the name of Boaz has been remembered in all succeeding generations (cf. Ruth 4:14).

B. An accomplished redemption (4:9–12)

Boaz moved quickly to complete the transaction. He claimed and received the right of redemption, both for Elimelech’s land and for Ruth, who was the only widow left capable of giving birth to a son who would perpetuate the family name.

4:9–10. **Boaz** called **the elders** to witness the transaction as he took possession of Naomi’s **property** and **acquired Ruth the Moabitess** (cf. 1:22; 2:2, 21; 4:5). Boaz evidenced no reluctance to call Ruth a Moabitess. He respected her as a worthy person. He would raise a son to continue the name of Elimelech and of Elimelech’s son, Mahlon. In verses 9–10 all the family members were mentioned again except Orpah. She had also faded into anonymity with the nameless nearer kinsman. Though not stated, it may be assumed that with Ruth, Boaz also took responsibility for **Naomi**. This logically followed from the commitment Ruth had made to her mother-in-law. This was later confirmed by the Bethlehem women (v. 15). Boaz is a beautiful illustration of the Lord Jesus Christ who became mankind’s Kinsman-Redeemer and who makes things right before God the Father for those who trust in Him.

4:11. **The elders** gave willing witness to this redemption transaction. They blessed Boaz with the desire that the Lord make Ruth a fertile mother. Their mentioning **Rachel and Leah** has significance. Rachel, named first, had been barren for many years before she bore children. Similarly Ruth had been barren in Moab.

The elders prayed that Boaz would **have standing** (*hayil*) **in Ephratah**. This word *hayil* (“valor, worth, ability”) is used of Boaz (2:1) and of Ruth (3:11). Ephratah (also spelled Ephrath and Ephrathah) was another name for **Bethlehem** (cf. Gen. 35:19; 48:7; Micah 5:2). The elders prayed that Boaz would be **famous** in Bethlehem. God abundantly answered their prayers as many have witnessed.

4:12. The elders also prayed for numerous and distinguished progeny for Boaz. Their prayer acknowledged that children are a gift from God (**offspring the LORD gives you**; cf. Ps. 127:3). Little did they realize that from this union would issue Israel’s greatest kings including David and the Eternal King, the Lord Jesus Christ. **Perez** may have been named here: (a) because of the levirate connection with **Tamar** (see the *Introduction*), (b) because Perez’s descendants had settled in Bethlehem (1 Chron. 2:5, 18, 50–54; note “Ephrathah” and “Bethlehem” in 1 Chron. 2:50–51), and (c) because Perez was an ancestor of Boaz (Ruth 4:18–21).

C. A rewarded redemption (4:13)

4:13. This climax to the narrative is brief but full of meaning. Marriage, God-given conception, and the longed-for heir were all mentioned in a few words.

Ruth had been barren in Moab for the entire period of her marriage to Mahlon (1:4–5). Now her faithful obedience was rewarded as God gave her conception. In a sense this foreshadowed the miraculous birth of the Son of God that would take place in Bethlehem when the fullness of time had come (Luke 1:26–38; 2:1–7; Gal. 4:4). The sojourn in Moab lasted at least 10 years

(Ruth 1:4). By contrast, within a few short weeks of their return to Bethlehem, Naomi and Ruth had experienced blessing that was rich and full.

VI. Conclusion (4:14–21)

This conclusion of the narrative contrasts beautifully with its introduction (1:1–5). Deep sorrow turned to radiant joy; emptiness gave way to fullness.

A. *A joyful filling (4:14–17)*

4:14. **Naomi** again moved to the center of the scene. **The women** of Bethlehem who had witnessed Naomi's emptiness when she returned (1:19) now praised God that she had received a **kinsman-redeemer**. Had Naomi not been past the time of childbearing (1:12; 4:15) she might have been the one at the feet of Boaz that night on the threshing floor (3:7). The women knew this and they spoke of Boaz as the kinsman-redeemer of Naomi as surely as if she had gone there. They blessed Boaz with a blessing similar to that of the elders (cf. 4:11). They asked that Boaz be **famous in Israel**, a request that God granted. The Book of Ruth is filled with benedictions and blessings of Israel's people (1:8–9; 2:4, 12, 20; 3:10; 4:11–12, 14–15).

4:15. The women predicted that Boaz would care for Naomi by renewing her **life** and giving her security for her **old age**. Ruth, whom Naomi had not thought worth mentioning when she came to Bethlehem, was declared by the women to be of more worth **than seven sons**. Seven sons symbolized the supreme blessing that could come to a Hebrew family (cf. 1 Sam. 2:5; Job 1:2). Ruth's worth was related to the occasion of the **birth** of her son.

4:16–17. **Naomi** became the nurse for **Obed**. This may have been a formal act of adoption. The women of Bethlehem named the boy Obed which means "worshiper." Naomi accepted the name. She, the empty one, was now full. The bitter one was now blessed. Naomi had a **son** (actually a grandson but "son" in Heb. often means "descendant"). In time God's providential purpose became clear. The child became the grandfather of King **David**.

B. *A surprising genealogy (4:18–21)*

Perez's family line provided documentation for God's providential care. The seemingly ordinary events in the Book of Ruth (e.g., travels, marriages, deaths, harvesting, eating, sleeping, purchasing land) revealed the guiding activity of the sovereign God.

4:18–20. **Perez** was the son of Judah through Tamar (Gen. 38:12–30; Ruth 4:12). **Hezron** was among the family of Jacob that went to Egypt (Gen. 46:12). **Ram** is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 2:9. **Amminadab** was the father-in-law of Aaron (Ex. 6:23). **Nahshon** was head of the house of Judah (Num. 1:7; 7:12; 10:14).

4:21. **Salmon** was **the father of Boaz**. According to Matthew 1:5, Boaz's mother was Rahab, the Canaanite harlot from Jericho. However, Rahab lived in Joshua's time, about 250–300 years earlier. Probably, then, Rahab was Boaz's "mother" in the sense that she was his ancestress (cf. "our father Abraham," Rom. 4:12, which means "our ancestor Abraham").

Obed, Boaz and Ruth's son, became **the father of Jesse**, who became **the father of David** (1 Sam. 17:12). (See the chart "David's Ancestry from Abraham," near 1 Sam. 16:1–13.) Jesus Christ's lineage, through Mary, is traced to David (Matt. 1:1–16; cf. Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; Rev. 22:16). Christ is therefore called "the Son of David" (Matt. 15:22; 20:30–31; 21:9, 15; 22:42).

Christ will someday return to earth and will sit on the throne of David as the millennial King (2 Sam. 7:12–16; Rev. 20:4–6).

In spite of all appearances to the contrary, the faithful God had been about His business on Ruth's behalf. Believers should also be about His business. The rewards of responsible living are always the sweet fruit of God's grace.

Prime, J. (2007). Opening up Ruth (pp. 78-89). Leominster: Day One Publications.

God delights in providing redemption. 'Redemption' is a Bible word with a Bible meaning. It assumes a problem. It presupposes that people are trapped in trouble and need to be set free from it.

The classic Bible example of redemption is the Exodus, when God set the people of Israel free from Egypt. In Egypt they were slaves—oppressed, suffering and in misery. But God acted to redeem them by sending them a man, Moses, through whom he brought them out of slavery and eventually into the land he had prepared for them. God so delights in redeeming people and is so expert in it that he does not only provide one illustration of his redeeming work, he provides many, including the story of Ruth. His redeeming work in the lives of Naomi and Ruth comes to its climax in Ruth 4.

The Vincent Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam displays many of the well-known masterpieces of the famous Dutch painter of the nineteenth century. In the basement of the museum there is a display of sketches Van Gogh did in advance of particular parts of his final masterpieces. So, for example, on the first page of one sketchpad, there is a pencil sketch of a human finger. On the next page there is a sketch of the same human finger, and on the next another, and on the next another, and so on. If we were able then to take that sketch and put it next to a finger of a character in one of Van Gogh's masterpieces, we would find it was an exact match. Van Gogh, the master expert painter, produced these sketches—brilliant in themselves—all sketched in preparation for the final full colour masterpieces.

Every story of redemption in the Old Testament is similar. While stories like the Exodus are brilliant acts of redemption in themselves, they are actually only (as it were) illustrative sketches *in advance of*, and *in preparation for*, the ultimate masterpiece of redemption, when God provided for the redemption of rebellious sinners through the Redeemer, Jesus, to set them free from the chaos and disaster caused by sin.

As we study the redemption story recorded in Ruth 4 we discover that the redemption provided through Boaz is an illustrative sketch just like this. Ruth 4 shows that:

Redemption is costly (vv. 1–11)

As we saw in Ruth 3, a kinsman-redeemer was a close relative of a family who was trapped in difficult circumstances. When the man of the family died without leaving a male heir, it was vital that the man's family name should be preserved. The law said that the widow of the dead man should marry her husband's closest male relative (the kinsman-redeemer), with the first son of that union becoming the dead man's heir. It was also the case that, if a man died without an heir, his land could be taken over by his nearest male relative. The details of how that worked out in practice are not completely clear, but that is the backdrop to what we read in 4:1–11.

As widows, Naomi and Ruth needed a kinsman-redeemer who would provide an heir to inherit the land of Naomi's deceased husband, Elimelech. Boaz was ideal, but, as he told Ruth at

the threshing-floor (3:12), there was a kinsman-redeemer nearer than him. Boaz had committed himself to taking action the next morning and 4:1 describes him keeping his promise and taking steps to see if the nearer kinsman was willing to act. Boaz waited for the unnamed man to come along (another ‘coincidence’?), and got him to sit down before he raised the issue with him. He started with the land, verses 3 and 4. It all seemed an attractive proposition and the unnamed nearer kinsman said he was willing to redeem the land, until Boaz informed him that if he took the land he would acquire Ruth too and the responsibility to provide an heir for Elimelech in accordance with the law. At this the kinsman-redeemer said, ‘Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it’ (v. 6). The cost was too great for the nearer relative. It was a price he was unwilling to pay.

How different from Boaz. He was prepared to accept that cost, illustrating the way the redeemers provided by God accepted the cost of redemption:

WILLINGLY—Boaz had no hesitation in taking on this responsibility (3:18). His aim was to settle the matter that day (4:1).

PURPOSEFULLY—All Boaz’s actions are very deliberate and thought-through. He did not leave anything to chance. He made sure everything was done properly.

FAITHFULLY—In all he did that day he was fulfilling his promise to Ruth the night before (3:13).

UNSELFISHLY—It was not for his own benefit (4:9–10). It was to maintain the name of the dead man with his property.

Every time believers gather around the Lord’s Table they remember the costly act of redemption accomplished by the Lord Jesus on the cross—of how he willingly bore the cost of the redemption of sinners. With the Lord Jesus there was no sense of his arm being twisted—of him being reluctant, or doing something against his will. He willingly paid the redemption price with his own blood. As Peter writes, ‘For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect’ (1 Peter 1:18–19). The Lord Jesus paid the price purposefully. The Gospels reveal that the cross overshadowed his whole life. He set his face towards Jerusalem, travelling there with resolution and determination, arriving at just the right time—Passover time—that through his death he might pay the price necessary for the redemption of sinners. He performed that costly act faithfully. He died in accordance with God’s promise that redemption would be provided. And he did so unselfishly—not for his own benefit, but for the benefit of those he died to redeem.

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour’s blood?
Died he for me, who caused his pain?
For me, who him, to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me.

But how does his death on a cross 2000 years ago provide redemption for sinners today? The answer is found in the second point Ruth 4 teaches about redemption.

Redemption is a legal transaction (vv. 7–12)

The town gate was the place where legal business was transacted. Boaz deliberately gathered the elders as witnesses (v. 2). The narrator provides necessary background information when he explains that in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the way of legalizing transactions (v. 7). So, if you saw a man walking down the road without a sandal on, you would know he had just sold some land and that it had all been done legally. Boaz also announced to the witnesses that all had been legally transacted (v. 9), and the witnesses confirmed it (v. 11). The significance is as follows.

For Boaz to redeem Naomi and Ruth:

The law had to be satisfied not bypassed

In his sovereignty, God could have made things much simpler. The story would have been much more straightforward had Boaz been the nearest kinsman. God does nothing without reason. Given its connection with the bigger plan of redemption, it would seem that the reason for this twist in the plot is to show that for redemption to take place the law must always be satisfied, not bypassed. That is certainly true when we think of the redemption God provided through the Lord Jesus.

The Bible is clear that the whole of humanity is in a mess because of their sin. The law of God demands that sin and rebellion should and must be punished in accordance with God's justice. In his perfection and righteousness, God cannot overlook sin. The just and right demands of his law must be met, and that is exactly what happened as the Lord Jesus died on the cross. In his perfection he died to satisfy the just demands of God's law in the place of others. Through the cross, the law was not bypassed, it was satisfied. On the cross, a legal transaction took place. And it was the satisfaction of the demands of God's law that Jesus proclaimed from the cross as he said, 'It is finished' (John 19:30). This leads to the second point of significance pointed to by the actions of Boaz.

The completion of the transaction had to be announced and witnessed

Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, 'Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from the town records. Today you are witnesses!' Then the elders and all those at the gate said, 'We are witnesses' (vv. 9–11).

When houses or cars are bought and sold documents are signed, witnessed and recorded in public registers for all to see. The nearer relative taking off his sandal and hobbling away was a public declaration that the deed was done. The words of the elders and other witnesses confirmed it had been done. As he cried, 'It is finished' (John 19:30), Jesus was announcing that by his death he had completed all the legalities necessary to redeem sinners. It was an act witnessed by many. The completion of Jesus' work of redemption was then announced by his resurrection from the dead—something that was also witnessed. And what we have in the New Testament is the testimony of the witnesses whose task was to say, 'Yes, redemption was accomplished. God's law was satisfied, not bypassed. We were there. We saw the evidence. It is certain.'

It is upon this announcement and the declaration of the witnesses of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead that the Christian relies. Eternal redemption is declared to be certain because God's law was satisfied. The justice of God for every sin of the believer—past, present, future—was satisfied by the Lord Jesus on the cross, once and for all time. That is the basis of all Christian assurance, well summed-up in the second verse of the hymn 'Before the throne of God above':

When Satan tempts me to despair,
And tells me of the guilt within,
I look to heaven and see him there
Who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Saviour died,
My sinful soul is counted free;
For God the Just is satisfied
To look on him, and pardon me,
To look on him, and pardon me.

Redemption is transforming (vv. 11–22)

Redemption transforms people's lives.

The transformation of Ruth (vv. 11–12)

From the time Boaz redeemed her, Ruth had a new identity, a new position and a new status.

Then the elders and all those at the gate said, 'We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. Through the offspring the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.'

Up to this point, Ruth has been referred to as 'Ruth the Moabitess' (see e.g. 1:22; 2:6; 2:21), emphasizing that she was a foreigner. Now she was Ruth the wife of Boaz, soon to be the mother of Obed. She was now a redeemed person, with a special part to play in God's redemptive purposes. The hopes expressed by the words of the elders in verses 11 and 12 are significant. Rachel and Leah were the wives of Jacob, the mothers of the tribes of Israel. Tamar, like Ruth, was a foreigner. The people of Bethlehem were descendants of her union with Judah. Ruth would be like Rachel, Leah and Tamar—significant in God's plan.

With the benefit of hindsight we know that these high hopes were not vain hopes. Obed was the father of Jesse, who had eight sons, the youngest of whom was David, from whom our Lord Jesus Christ was descended. The significance of both Tamar and Ruth is confirmed by their inclusion in the genealogy with which Matthew starts his Gospel.

Redemption transforms those who are redeemed. All new Christians discover that they have a new identity. They become part of the Bride of Christ. They discover that they are not their own because they have been 'bought with a price' (1 Cor. 6:19–20). Every believer becomes part of the family of Ruth and Boaz through the Lord Jesus, through whom God continues to fulfil his redemptive purposes in the world.

The transformation of Naomi (vv. 13–17)

The narrator wants us to know that the birth of a son to Boaz and Ruth was the Lord's doing—'the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son' (v. 13). The surprise is that the focus then shifts from Ruth to Naomi as we are told what the women said to Naomi. Back in 1:19 the women spoke about Naomi, exclaiming, 'Can this be Naomi?' Now they praise the Lord for the transformation he has brought about. 'The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD," who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth' (vv. 14–15).

It should be noted that the women speak here not of Boaz, but of the child born as 'kinsman-redeemer', saying of him, 'he will renew your life and sustain you in your old age.' Redemption transforms by renewing life and giving hope for the future. When she first returned to Bethlehem from Moab, Naomi had no hope for the future. Through the Lord's kindness in providing her with a redeemer, her life was renewed and the child in her lap gave her hope for the future. All this points to Jesus. As the Redeemer, he renews the life of all he redeems and gives hope for the future.

The name Obed means 'servant'. Apart from his name we know little else about him, but he was born to be a servant of God's redemptive purposes. That is exactly what our Lord Jesus was. He was the servant of the Lord, who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). He calls all he redeems to follow his pattern of service.

The story of Ruth started with rebellion—with a family going their own way instead of God's, suffering the bitter consequences. It ends with the renewal of Naomi's life—and with others rejoicing with her in the kindness God had shown her by providing her with the kinsman-redeemer she needed. All her hope was now focused on the son that was born, just as the hope of the Christian is focused on the Son who was born to be the Redeemer.

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (p. 403). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

4:10 Boaz's giving of money to Naomi to "acquire" Ruth was not the purchase of a slave but the payment of a bride price. Such a payment was a protection for the bride; the bride's family held the money, which would be given to her in the event of her being divorced or widowed.

4:13 Regarding an Israelite marrying a Moabite, see Jdg 3:5–7 and Ru 1:1–4. Ruth had become a believer in the true God (1:16–17), so Boaz was not marrying the adherent of a false religion, which would have been prohibited (cp. Jdg 14:1–4).

4:17–22 This passage is significant in the larger scope of the biblical narrative; it presents the ancestry of David, which became also the earthly ancestry of Jesus Christ (Mt 1:5–6; Lk 3:31–32; cp. Rm 1:3; Rv 22:16).

Easton, M. G. (1893). In *Easton's Bible dictionary*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

REDEMPTION—the purchase back of something that had been lost, by the payment of a ransom. The Greek word so rendered is *apolutrosis*, a word occurring nine times in Scripture, and always with the idea of a ransom or price paid, i.e., redemption by a lutron (see Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). There are instances in the LXX. Version of the Old Testament of the use of *lutron*

in man's relation to man (Lev. 19:20; 25:51; Ex. 21:30; Num. 35:31, 32; Isa. 45:13; Prov. 6:35), and in the same sense of man's relation to God (Num. 3:49; 18:15).

There are many passages in the New Testament which represent Christ's sufferings under the idea of a ransom or price, and the result thereby secured is a purchase or redemption (comp. Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Gal. 3:13; 4:4, 5; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; Titus 2:14; Heb. 9:12; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Rev. 5:9). The idea running through all these texts, however various their reference, is that of payment made for our redemption. The debt against us is not viewed as simply cancelled, but is fully paid. Christ's blood or life, which he surrendered for them, is the "ransom" by which the deliverance of his people from the servitude of sin and from its penal consequences is secured.

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