

## ***The Book of Ruth – Chapter 4***

### ***Love's reward...***

#### ***Introduction***

Chapter 3 left us at a dramatic point. Ruth and Boaz were in love and wanted to get married, with Boaz exercising the right of the *goel* – the kinsman-redeemer. Yet, there was a nearer kinsman and he had priority. Would he claim his right towards Ruth, and thus keep her and Boaz from coming together?

#### ***The Law of the Levirate Marriage***

See Deuteronomy 25 v 5 to 10. The word *levir* is Latin for ‘a husband’s brother’. The ‘Law of the Levirate Marriage’ dealt with a situation where there was a widow with no children. She could go to the next of kin and put a claim on him to take her to wife to raise up children for the family.

The ‘kinsman-redeemer’ or *גוֹאֵל* (*go-el*) had to meet three conditions:

1. First, he had to be a near kinsman
2. Second, he had to be able to perform his duties as a kinsman-redeemer
3. Third, he had to be willing to perform his duties as a kinsman-redeemer; it was not compulsory. If he chose not to take her to wife, then he had to give her his sandal as a symbol of shame – because he had failed to do the kinsman-redeemer’s part.

#### ***The Law of Redemption***

The duty of the kinsman-redeemer was more than the duty to preserve the family name of his brother in Israel. It was also to keep land allotted to members of the clan within the clan. When Israel came into the Promised Land during the days of Joshua, the land was divided among the tribes and then among the family groups, or clans. God intended that the land stay within those tribes and family groups, so the land could never permanently be sold.

Every fifty years, it had to be returned to the original family group (Leviticus 25 v 8 to 17). But fifty years is a long time, so God made provision for land that was ‘sold’, that it could be ‘redeemed’ back to the family by the kinsman-redeemer. Again, the kinsman-redeemer had the responsibility to protect the persons, property, and posterity of the larger family – and all of these duties went together.

#### ***Boaz redeems Ruth (Ruth 4 v 1 to 12)***

Then Boaz said, “The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth... in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance” (v 5) – Boaz explained what everyone knew: that this was a ‘package deal’. If someone was going to exercise the right of kinsman-redeemer towards the deceased Elimelech, he had to fulfill this duty both with regard to the property *and* to the posterity, and thus take Ruth as his bride...

***[MORE OVER...]***

- How do you think Boaz (and Ruth) felt when they heard the ‘redeemer’s’ (i.e. the nearer kinsman’s) initial response “I will redeem it” (v 4)?
- How were their feelings turned around when the ‘redeemer’ gave his final response “I cannot redeem it” (v 6)?
- How do these verses show that Boaz was wise, and even shrewd, in dealing with the ‘redeemer’?
- What motivated ‘the redeemer’ to decline Boaz’s offer (v 6)? (Probably, the man had grown sons that had already received their inheritance – the problem of dividing that inheritance among future children was more than he wanted to deal with.)
- “You are witnesses this day” (v 9, 10) – why were the ‘witnesses’ so important in the legal transactions taking place that day, and in the subsequent marriage of Boaz and Ruth (v 11)?
- What does this teach us about the Christian marriage service?

“Ten men of the elders of the city” (v 2) – this echoes the rabbinical basis for the *minyan*, the ten men required by Jewish law to be present before a Jewish synagogue service could be conducted.

### ***Ruth and Boaz marry (Ruth 4 v 13 to 18)***

“Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord... for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth” (v 14, 15) – and this is the same person who returned to Bethlehem saying, “Call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me” (Ruth 1 v 20)!

God brings his plans to fulfilment, with the marriage of Ruth and Boaz, followed by the birth of Naomi’s first grandchild. Naomi can see now that all things work together for good, for those who love God and are called according to his purpose (Romans 8 v 28)... Praise the Lord!

### ***The genealogy of David (Ruth 4 v 12, 19 to 22)***

“Like the house of Perez” (v 12) – what was so special about Perez? Perez was one of the twins born from the illegitimate union between Tamar and her father-in-law Judah (Genesis 38 v 27 to 30). The wedding-toast-style blessings given by the elders were *prophetic*, as there was a law in Deuteronomy 23 v 2 that said that ‘no one born of a forbidden union could enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the *tenth* generation’ – there was a ‘curse’ on the descendants of an illegitimate person for *ten* generations.

If we count the generations (v 19 to 22), starting with (1) Perez; then (2) Hezron; (3) Ram; (4) Amminadab; (5) Nahshon; (6) Salmon; (7) Boaz; (8) Obed; (9) Jesse...

We get to (10) David, God’s anointed king over Israel!