

Ruth Chapter 4

Review

In the beginning of our story, Naomi is deeply saddened by the loss of her husband and two sons, who all died while her family lived in Moab (in modern-day Jordan). After ten years, she decided to return home to Bethlehem. She urged Ruth, her widowed daughter-in-law, not to return with her, but Ruth insisted on returning with her. This was a strong indication of Ruth's faith in God for His care and protection. When Naomi finally arrived home she told the women in her town: *"Call me Mara, for the Almighty has made life very bitter for me. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me home empty."* There was almost nothing worse than being a widow in the ancient world. Widows were taken advantage of or ignored. They were almost always very poor. God's law, therefore, provided that the nearest relative of the dead husband should care for the widow; but at the time, Naomi was not aware that any of her relatives were alive in Israel.

Naomi arrives with Ruth in Bethlehem as the barley harvest is beginning. Ruth gathers leftover grain and, **as it turns out**, finds herself in the fields of Boaz, who is related to Naomi. Boaz shows kindness to her and prays, *"May the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully."* The rest of the book tells how God uses Boaz to answer this prayer. In Chapter Three, we read about Naomi instructing Ruth to go to the threshing floor to ask Boaz to marry her – as their family-Redeemer. Boaz agrees – but first he needs to check with the man who would be first in line for taking care of this responsibility.

Key Words and Historical Background Notes

Town gate (v. 1). This was the center of activity. No one could enter or leave the town without traveling through the gate. Merchants set up their temporary shops near the gate, and city officials gathered to conduct business.

Leaders (v. 4). Usually clan leaders or heads of household, served as the governing body of the city. Judicial and legal matters were in their hands.

Endanger my own estate – If this man married Ruth – and had children by Ruth, his own land (estate) would be divided not only among his current sons – but some of the land would be given to any son Ruth would bear him...thus reducing the amount of land given to his current children.

Like Rachel and Leah (v. 11). Their sons became the initial fathers of Israel's twelve tribes.

Perez (v. 12). He was the father of the most famous tribes in Judah, the one to which Boaz belonged.

Seven sons (v. 15). Since seven was considered a number of completeness, to have seven sons was considered to be the highest level of all family blessings in Israel

4 Boaz went to the town gate and took a seat there. Just then the family redeemer he had mentioned came by, so Boaz called out to him, "Come over here and sit down, friend. I want to talk to you." So they sat down together. ² Then Boaz called ten leaders from the town and asked them to sit as witnesses. ³ And Boaz said to the family redeemer, "You know Naomi, who came back from Moab. She is selling the land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. ⁴ I thought I should speak to you about it so that you can redeem it if you wish. If you want the land, then buy it here in the presence of these witnesses. But if you don't want it, let me know right away, because I am next in line to redeem it after you."

The man replied, "All right, I'll redeem it." ⁵ Then Boaz told him, "Of course, your purchase of the land from Naomi also requires that you marry Ruth, the Moabite widow. That way she can have children who will carry on her husband's name and keep the land in the family."⁶ "Then I can't redeem it," the family redeemer replied, "because this might endanger my own estate. You redeem the land; I cannot do it."

⁷ Now in those days it was the custom in Israel for anyone transferring a right of purchase to remove his sandal and hand it to the other party. This publicly validated the transaction. ⁸ So the other family redeemer drew off his sandal as he said to Boaz, "You buy the land."⁹ Then Boaz said to the elders and to the crowd standing around, "You are witnesses that today I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion, and Mahlon. ¹⁰ And with the land I have acquired Ruth, the Moabite widow of Mahlon, to be my wife. This way she can have a son to carry on the family name of her dead husband and to inherit the family property here in his hometown. You are all witnesses today."

¹¹ Then the elders and all the people standing in the gate replied, "We are witnesses! May the LORD make this woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, from whom all the nation of Israel descended! May you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. ¹² And may the LORD give you descendants by this young woman who will be like those of our ancestor Perez, the son of Tamar and Judah."

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth into his home, and she became his wife. When he slept with her, the LORD enabled her to become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son. ¹⁴ Then the women of the town said to Naomi, "Praise the LORD, who has now provided a redeemer for your family! May this child be famous in Israel. ¹⁵ May he restore your youth and care for you in your old age. For he is the son of your daughter-in-law who loves you and has been better to you than seven sons!"

¹⁶ Naomi took the baby and cuddled him to her breast. And she cared for him as if he were her own. ¹⁷ The neighbor women said, "Now at last Naomi has a son again!" And they named him Obed. He became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David. ¹⁸ This is the genealogical record of their ancestor Perez:

Perez was the father of Hezron.
¹⁹ Hezron was the father of Ram.
Ram was the father of Amminadab.
²⁰ Amminadab was the father of Nahshon.
Nahshon was the father of Salmon.^[a]
²¹ Salmon was the father of Boaz.
Boaz was the father of Obed.
²² Obed was the father of Jesse.
Jesse was the father of David.

Questions:

1. Think about the choices Boaz and the unnamed relative each make in 4:2-10. What do you learn about each man's priorities?

NOTE: *At first the unnamed kinsman probably thought that he would only have to marry Naomi who was beyond childbearing years. Any male children that he would have fathered by Ruth would legally be considered the sons of Ruth's first husband. Thus the land would never pass into his own family's possession, and in fact he would reduce his estate by spending it to purchase the land. He would also need to be financially responsible for supporting Ruth, any children Ruth would bear, and Naomi.*

2. How did Ruth and Boaz's marriage affect Naomi?
3. Remember what Naomi thought God was doing in her life when she was empty of wealth, family, and status. (*"the Almighty has made life very bitter for me"*) What part did God play in filling her emptiness?
4. When Ruth put her trust in God... do you think that she could have imagined that she would become the great grandmother of King David – the most famous king of Israel – whose descendent would be Jesus? What does this tell us about God? *"Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of King David"* (Matthew 1:5-6)

Summary

The last verse of our story shows that God's plan extended beyond Naomi's personal problems. God used Ruth and Boaz to produce Israel's greatest king because their great-grandson turned out to be King David. Hundreds of years later, they also became part of the family line leading to Jesus – who was also born in Bethlehem.

Just as God brought fullness and hope to Naomi through Boaz and his willingness to be the family-redeemer, we are also brought fullness and hope through our family-Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Without Jesus, the Bible tells us that we are also in a state of hopelessness. We all fall short of God's standard of absolute perfection and therefore, are eternally separated

from God because of our sin. (Note: “For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.” – Romans 3:23) However, we can be brought to eternal fullness and hope through Jesus, who came to give His life in payment for our sin. He is our “redeemer” who came to pay our debt (for our sin) – which we could not pay ourselves.

Read how the Bible explains what Jesus did for us: ¹⁸ For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. ¹⁹ It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. 1 Peter 1:18-19

Through the amazing story of Ruth – God gives us a picture of His plan to bring the bitterness of life on earth to an end through the ultimate loving sacrifice of His Son Jesus.

- Do you believe that God can change the bitterness of your hard experiences? Explain.
- Are there ways that God has shown his faithfulness to you and changed your sorrow to joy?