

SEARCHING FOR CHRIST IN THE BOOK OF RUTH THE ROMANCE OF REDEMPTION YAHWEH'S PREPARATION FOR HIS TRUE KING

Ruth, chapter 4 | Redemption and Restoration

I | INTRODUCTION / CONNECTIONS / CONTEXT

1 / **Ruth, chapter 4**, is an explicit and prophetic *'pre-enactment'* of Christ—when He will come in the fullness of time to redeem His people from the bondage and moral indebtedness of their sins. Not only would God's Redeemer come from the tribe of Judah and be born in the town of Bethlehem, but He would also be a direct royal descendent of King David. *Isaiah 11.10: In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of Him shall the nations inquire, and His resting place [see Ruth 3.1] shall be glorious.* Paul goes back to get this verse and writes it again in **Romans 15.12** where he is exulting in God's forethought and fore-planning to bring His Redeemer into the world to save not just Israelites and Jews, but peoples from ALL the nations. *Romans 15.12: And again Isaiah says, 'The root of Jesse will come, even He who arises to rule the Gentiles; in Him will the Gentiles hope' [see Ruth 2.11-12].* Again, Paul quotes **Isaiah 59.20-21** in **Romans 11.26-27** when he announces that Christ had come to fulfill all of God's OT promises and pre-enactments of our Redeemer: *...as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."* **THIS is the Christ redemption Boaz is 're-enacting'!**

2 / **The theme of Ruth, chapter 4, is REDEMPTION & RESTORATION.** The central theme of REDEMPTION has been woven all throughout this short-story pre-enactment of the Gospel. The noun or verb form of *go-el* has been used at least 12 times during this narrative. **AND, chapter 4** will bring us full-circle back to **chapter 1** [**'Emptiness & Exile'**] and fulfill all the needs introduced there.

3 / Now, in **chapter 4**, *Boaz will fulfill the redemption of Naomi and Ruth.* As **chapter 3.18** concludes, the narrator is giving us a 'teaser' for the next act. Ruth has returned from the threshing floor where she has proposed to Boaz that he fulfill his role prescribed by the law as their *'go-el/redeemer.'* *"She [Naomi] replied, 'Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today.'"* This is a pre-enactment of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer! Get the picture that God is inspiring and writing here to point us to Christ and to pre-enact what He will do for us when He comes!

4 / In **chapter 4.1**, Boaz makes his appearance at the town's gate—the place where civil and legal transactions were formalized—to accomplish redemption for Naomi, Ruth, and for Elimelech's and Mahlon's family name. When this formal, legal transaction has been made, Boaz can exclaim **"It is finished! – It has been paid in full! It is done! Redemption accomplished!"**

5 / Because...we have to see this! In this immediate transaction, Boaz is going to redeem [see **chapter 4.9-10**]: [1] Elimelech and his family land and inheritance in Bethlehem; [2] Mahlon and his perpetuity of their family's name and lineage; [3] Naomi and her future security and provision; [4] Ruth and her place in the family's name and lineage; **But, God is working through Boaz to also restore the family lineage through whom He has chosen, purposed, and planned for CHRIST to be born to redeem us!** [see **Luke 1.67-75; Galatians 4.1-7; Hebrews 9.11-12; Ephesians 1.7-10; 1 Peter 1.17-21; et al.**]

II | A simple breakdown and historical background of chapter 4...

1/ A simple way to break down this chapter and flesh out the theme of **Redemption & Restoration**:

- **verses 1-11a**: A legal transaction – blessing comes through a costly *redemption*
- **verses 11b-17**: A series of blessings – **the restoration of the family's land and lineage** [11b-12: the blessing of the people and elders in the gate on Boaz / 13-17: the blessing of the women of the neighborhood on Naomi]
- **verses 18-22**: A genealogical pointer to the future and Christ [see **Matthew 1.2-5**]

2 / However, before we begin to explore this narrative and how Boaz pre-enacts, promises, and points to Christ, our Redeemer, it would be helpful to refresh our memories re: how God provided for *go-el/kinsman-redeemer and redemption* in His law...

3 / Yahweh's covenant provisions for redemption

Yahweh had provided for the perpetuity and continuation of two covenant blessings: [1] the *family* (lineage) [see ch 4.10], and [2] their enjoyment of the *Promised Land inheritance* He had given them. And so, if someone fell into need and either of these two covenant blessings were in jeopardy of being broken, a close family member was expected to volunteer to step up and step in to help – to become that needy family member's *go-el / redeemer*. The noun *go-el* comes from the verb *galal* = *to redeem / deliver*. Let's review a couple provisions Yahweh gave them to prevent the loss of either *family* or *inheritance*:

[1] **Leviticus 25.23-28**: if the family's property [which was their land-grant inheritance from Yahweh Himself in the Promised Land, see v 23], had to be mortgaged ['hocked / escrowed'] to another member of their tribal clan, the *go-el* could redeem it [buy it back], regain possession of it for the original owner, and return it to the family. This way, the family would not lose their allotted inheritance in the Land.

[2] **Deuteronomy 25.5-10**: this provision is called *levirate marriage* from *levir* which is Hebrew for 'brother-in-law.' If a brother of a family dies without first fathering a son who will perpetuate and carry on the family name and lineage, then the next available unmarried brother [the widow's *levir / brother-in-law*] will take her as his wife to father a son who will become the heir of the deceased brother to perpetuate his family name and lineage. *This is what Boaz fulfilled in Ruth 4.9-10.*

III | Redemption and Restoration

So – getting back to **Ruth 4, Redemption & Restoration**, here's how the legal transaction was 'finished'!

verses 1-11a: The legal transaction – blessing comes only through a costly redemption

Boaz makes good on his promise to Ruth just a few hours before [3.11-13]

v 1: Boaz immediately makes his way to the 'gate' of the city as soon as it is daybreak – he goes from the threshing floor to the venue of the redemption transaction: the gate—this is the entrance into the walled city from the surrounding fields outside where town's elders & council members would convene and 'sit' to officially conduct the town's legal civil and social matters. **Notice the 5 repetitions of the word 'sit'** – this was their formal legal posture. The narrator highlights and emphasizes how the nearer- *go-el* 'just happened' [Providentially, of course!] to be passing by at that very moment: **"And behold!"** [see also ch 2.3-4]. Boaz calls for him to come and 'sit' down with him. Boaz obviously knows his name—he is a relative [see ch 3.12]—but he is keeping this transaction as impersonal as possible between the two of them. **"Friend"** is actually too personal and friendly for this greeting; more like *"Hey, you there!"*—the words the narrator uses makes him just a generic *"Mr So-and-So."* But, this unwilling *go-el* shall remain nameless forever—while Boaz's name will go down into Messianic redemption legacy and greatness!

v 2: Boaz seeks for a formal quorum of city elders—he may have had to go and find them—but he does, and they, too, are 'seated.' All the legal parties are now present, seated, and ready for the transaction to be formalized. Boaz begins his first public, formal, legal proposal to the nearer-*go-el*...

vv 3-4: Boaz presents the legal *"whereas"* conditions of this transaction... **"Whereas Naomi is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech."** NOTE: Naomi didn't have possession of the land they had mortgaged, some other family member had the 'lien'—but she is seeking a *go-el* to act on her behalf to recover and restore it to Elimelech. **"Whereas you are a nearer-go-el than I am, I thought I would honor Yahweh's law and give you first priority to make the redemption..."** We don't know whether Boaz and the others who have gathered around to witness the **redemption transaction** were surprised or horrified by the nearer-*go-el's* response—but he readily responded **"I will redeem it!"** His thinking was that he would **redeem** Elimelech's property—yes, he would have to take care of Naomi for as long as she lived – but since there were no male heirs, when she died, the land would be his.

v 5: Boaz counters with the additional caveat: whoever **redeems** Elimelech's land **must also marry Ruth to raise up a son/heir to Elimelech's dead heir, Mahlon – Ruth's former husband.** This is the '*levirate*'

marriage provision we referenced above. Boaz obviously saved this additional responsibility as a ‘rider’ or a ‘codicil’ in order to present a complication which he hoped the nearer-*go-el* would have to refuse

v 6: It worked! Boaz probably knew him well enough to know that he was a shrewd landowner, farmer, and businessman. He couldn’t risk or jeopardize his profit and estate in order to fulfill his legal / moral responsibility to marry Ruth [and especially with her being a Moabitess!] in order to raise up and restore a relative’s family and lineage! He wouldn’t be adding to his own personal estate!

vv 7-8: the ‘exchange of the sandal’ ceremony—“Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redemption and exchanging...”: as a formal recognition that he was reneging on his ‘levirate’ responsibility and forfeiting his nearer-*go-el* claim to **redeem** Elimelech’s property, he took off his own sandal and gave it to Boaz—thus relinquishing and transferring the nearer-*go-el* right of **redemption** to Boaz—giving Boaz the ‘right of ownership’ to ‘walk’ on that property. Some historians/commentators believe this custom derived and had evolved from Yahweh’s promise to Joshua when they went into the Promised Land to possess it [see **Joshua 1.3**].

vv 9-11a: Boaz had now bought and ‘owned’ his right to **redeem** and claim Elimelech’s land...and assume the responsibility to provide and care for Naomi for the rest of her life.....and **marry Ruth! and raise up a son to carry on the family name and lineage!**

verses 11b-17: A series of blessings—the restoration of the family’s land and lineage

11b-12: the blessing of the people and elders in the gate on Boaz

13-17: the blessing of the women of the neighborhood on Naomi

1 / I’m calling this section **Prayers, Promises, & Prophecies**. There will two remaining scenes and then the final genealogy [which is a ‘historical scene’]. All of these **Prayers, Promises, & Prophecies** are going to be pointers to Christ. That’s what we will highlight...

2 / I’m calling them: **Prayers** because when you read the words “**May the LORD...**” what you are reading is a **prayer** they are praying to Yahweh to do this. **Promises** because what they are asking Yahweh to do in the lives of these saints is what He had already **promised** He would do. **Prophecies** because they were not aware of how **prophetic** they were speaking. But we know that God was speaking His own **prophetic** words and purposes through them. God was **pre-enacting** and **pre-announcing** what He would do 1000+ years later when He would send Christ into the world to be our anointed and appointed Redeemer!

3 / So now, let’s see how these **Prayers, Promises, & Prophecies** were announced:

Scene 1: ch 4.11b-12 – city elders and townspeople

...at the gate of Bethlehem where the redemption transaction was publicly witnessed. The speakers are the elders and the townspeople who had gathered to witness the redemption transaction. They will make three separate statements in their **Prayers, Promises, & Prophecies**.

[1] “May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel.” Remember: Ruth had been Mahlon’s wife for the 10 years they had been in Moab, and was barren, childless [see **chs 1.4 & 4.10**]. Rachel also was barren until The LORD opened her womb and gave her Joseph and later Benjamin. They are praying that Ruth may become as fruitful as Rachel and Leah, who [along with their handmaids Bilhah and Zilpah] gave birth to the 12 sons who became fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel [**Genesis 29-30**].

[2] “May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem...” Literally, “**May your noble acts be remembered, and may your name live on in perpetuity through the offspring who will be born to you and bear your name for generations to come...**” Just think of the implications of that prayer in terms of **Matthew 1.1-5**.

[3] “...and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman.” This reference is to the tawdry story of **Genesis 38**. Judah is the father of their tribe, the royal tribe – from whom would be born David...and Jesus! But Perez was born to the unwitting ‘levirate’ [incestuous] marriage that his daughter-in-law, Tamar,

deceived and seduced him into. The only similarities between these stories are that both Judah and Boaz bore their sons through a levirate union.

Scene 2: ch 4.13-17 – neighbor women, friends of Naomi

...nine months later, presumably in the home of Boaz, Ruth, Naomi, and now little Obed. The speakers are the neighboring women who love Naomi and have come to celebrate this birth with her and bless her in the name of The LORD with their **Prayers, Promises, & Prophecies**.

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son.” The redemption had been consummated. Now the marriage had been consummated also. The LORD gave conception and the birth of a baby boy – to this formerly barren / childless foreign Moabite woman – who had professed her faith in Yahweh the God of Israel [see ch 1.15-17 & 2.12]. **“Then the women said to Naomi, ‘Blessed be The LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer...’**” All credit, recognition, and praise is given to Yahweh who has given Naomi this little *go-el*—this baby boy who will save her from loneliness, destitution, poverty, and the extinction of her family and name...**and God will save us all from our sins in generations to come through Christ who will be born from this little baby’s lineage! “...and may his name be renowned in Israel!”** As the elders and townspeople had prayed for Boaz [v 11], may this baby boy’s name also be renowned, not just in Bethlehem, but in Israel! **Jesus’ Name will not only be renowned in Israel, but God will give Him the Name that is above every name!** [see Matthew 1.21 & Philippians 2.9-10 & Acts 2.36, & others...] **“He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age...”** This word ‘restorer’ is the same word the narrator used 12 times as ‘turn,’ ‘turn back,’ ‘return,’ etc. as he was showing us there how God was ‘turning’ Naomi’s whole life fortunes *from emptiness to fullness, from bitterness to blessing*. This baby boy *go-el* is going to ‘restore’ her very life to her and take care of her in her old age—for as long as she needs to be taken care of. **“...for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”** Although love is shown in so many persons and so many ways in this **redemption romance**, this is the only time the word ‘love’ is mentioned in this whole narrative of **Romance of Redemption**. And it is Ruth’s love for her mother-in-law Naomi. In the Hebrew culture, seven sons was considered to be the ideal family. Yahweh had given and restored to Naomi more than the ideal of family completeness and fullness in Ruth and her baby boy. Read **Ephesians 1.1-14** in the light of this **promise and prophecy** – how many parallels of promises that God has given us in Christ can you find? ¹⁶**Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse.** ¹⁷**And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.**

Scene 3: ch 4.18-22 -- the genealogy.

This, too, is a ‘scene’ in the sense that the narrator will give us a flashback of history from Perez to David. It is included in the **Prayers, Promises, & Prophecies** because in this genealogy, the human narrator [*inspired by the Spirit of Christ...(1 Peter 1.10-12)*] is revealing to us why he is writing this historical record. Obviously, he is writing this **Book of Ruth** after David had been anointed and inaugurated as Israel’s King. Otherwise, Naomi, Ruth, Boaz, and Obed would have been just among the other millions of common people Israelites who lived and died unnamed during all these generations. But now that David is known, they, too, become part of the public record as his predecessors. They are King David’s lineage and family tree. They are King David’s ‘credentials’ as the rightful king of Israel—being a direct descendent of the royal tribe, the tribe of Judah. **“Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron,¹⁹ Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab,²⁰ Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon,²¹ Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed,²² Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.** *~This prophetic genealogy is repeated in Matthew 1.1-5*

Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.

~Acts 13.23