

• The story takes a step forward

1. Ruth enquires after the blessings of redemption

• Ruth needs 'rest'

• Naomi's initiative

• The 'rest' will come with redemption by a kinsman

• Naomi instructs Ruth to make a symbolic proposal to Boaz

• She asks him to marry her because he is a kinsman-redeemer

• The Christian is 'married' to Jesus

At this stage in the story Ruth has now become aware of this 'kinsman-redeemer' who is so gracious towards her. At first she was hardly aware that 'redemption' was involved in her coming to faith in the God of Israel. Then she became aware of his knowledge and concern about her. Now the story takes a step forward.

1. Ruth enquires after the blessings of redemption. Naomi is very conscious that Ruth needs a 'redeemer'. She approaches Ruth with a suggestion. Ruth must ask Boaz to 'redeem' her, to take her as his wife. Naomi knows the benefits of being 'redeemed' by Boaz.

Ruth needs 'rest'. The initiative is taken by Naomi. *'My daughter, should I not seek "rest" for you, so that it may be well with you...?'* ¹. Ruth needs to be able to have an assurance of provision, an assurance of protection. One of the blessings of redemption is 'entering into rest'. When blessing is guaranteed the beneficiary 'enters into rest'. There is such an assurance of blessing that the person receiving the benefits 'rests' – enters into total confidence that good things are at hand.

The 'rest' will come when a kinsman-redeemer takes his responsibility and does the work of redeeming. Naomi now wants Boaz to fully play a part in Ruth's life as kinsman-redeemer. 'Is not Boaz our kinsman?' says Naomi. There is hope that Boaz will specially take responsibility for Ruth because he is related to the family and **part of the work of being a kinsman-redeemer is to marry the childless widow**. Naomi tells Ruth she must prepare herself as a desirable young woman. She must put on some perfume and some nice clothes, and go to the 'threshing floor' where Boaz is staying overnight, since there is much work to be done there at harvest time ¹. She must go down there but keep away from where Boaz is sleeping until very late at night. She must wait until Boaz has had supper and is feeling relaxed and ready for his night's sleep. Then Ruth is to go and uncover his feet and lie down at the lower end of his bed ². It is a piece of symbolism. It is a way of saying, 'Would you not like to have me as your wife and as the one who shares your bed?' Naomi tells Ruth to make this symbolic proposal and then leave the rest to Boaz.

Why did Ruth have to do things this way? Why could Boaz not be approached in a more straightforward manner? It probably has to do with the fact that Ruth was a foreigner. Boaz had obviously greatly admired Ruth (as Ruth 2 makes clear) but did not know how to respond to this Moabitess. Naomi's plan was to get Ruth to be highly attractive, and then do something that challenged Boaz to act speedily.

Ruth does as Naomi asks ¹. She lies down at the lower part of his bed ². He wakes up and finds Ruth lying at his feet ³, She asks him to marry her because he is a kinsman-redeemer ⁴. It is put clearly in verse 9. Part of the work of a redeemer is to marry the widowed, childless relative.

The story is suspenseful in its own right, but it also throws light on the Christian's redemption. The Christian's relationship to Jesus is like the marriage relationship. The Christian is 'married' to Jesus ¹. Without

¹ 3:1

¹ 3:3

² 3:4

¹ 3:5-6

² 3:7

³ 3:8

⁴ 3:9

¹ see Rom 7:4

• *Jesus' incarnation made Him our kinsman and responsible for our redemption*

2. Next we see Boaz' response.

• *Delight*

• *But legally – someone else has a higher claim*

• *Illustrates an important aspect of redemption – it is based on relationship*

• *Based on the custom of 'Levirate marriage'*

• *Jesus, our kinsman is delighted to be our redeemer and to rescue us when we ask*

such a relationship to Jesus the Christian will be fruitless; he or she will produce no 'offspring' for God. But by being released from the Mosaic law ^{Ⓜ2}, and by being joined to Jesus, he or she bears fruit for God.

The reason why Ruth expects to be 'redeemed' in this way is that Boaz is a kinsman. Family relationship leads to responsibility as a redeemer. Jesus' incarnation was necessary for Him to be our redeemer. Jesus has to become one with us if He is to be our redeemer.

2. Next we see Boaz' response. He thanks her! He is delighted with the idea of taking her as his wife and 'redeeming' her. He is so grateful she has not sought protection from anyone else ^{Ⓜ1}. She wants to be redeemed by one who is truly qualified to be her redeemer. She is not seeking redemption anywhere else. No younger man has enticed her ^{Ⓜ2}.

Though he is delighted at the thought of being her 'redeemer', he has to do it in a legal manner. There is someone who has a higher claim to be kinsman than he has ^{Ⓜ1}. Ruth may stay close to him for that night. Soon he will see to it that redemption will be provided for Ruth ^{Ⓜ2}. She gets some rest ^{Ⓜ3} but leaves early so that Boaz will not be embarrassed by difficult questions ^{Ⓜ4}. He abundantly provides for her ^{Ⓜ5}. She goes and tells the story to Naomi ^{Ⓜ6} who is confident that Boaz will speedily do what is right.

Some important aspects of redemption surface at this point. Redemption is based on relationship. Redemption has to be legal. These two points are vital to the Christian's redemption which operates at a much deeper level. Jesus could not have redeemed us without becoming one with us. He had to be our kinsman before He could be our redeemer.

The story is based on the custom of 'Levirate marriage' (or something very similar to it). In ancient Israel a childless widow might marry her dead husband's brother. It would enable her to bear children and not be childless. It gave her security. It is a custom which still continues in parts of the world.

The story helps us to understand our own salvation. Jesus is delighted to be our redeemer. He came into this world as our kinsman in order that He might do the work of rescuing us from our plight. We may apply to Him to do the work of redeeming us when we are in distress in this wicked world.

^{Ⓜ2} Romans 7:1-4

^{Ⓜ1} 3:10

^{Ⓜ2} 3:11

^{Ⓜ1} 3:12

^{Ⓜ2} 3:13

^{Ⓜ3} 3:14a

^{Ⓜ4} 3:14b

^{Ⓜ5} 3:15

^{Ⓜ6} 3:16-17



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