

• An obstacle - there is someone who is more entitled to redeem Ruth than Boaz is

**Redemption according to custom and the law**

• Boaz approached the 'next of kin' with witnesses present – on the issue of land to be redeemed

• Four duties for 'Redeemers'

• God – Israel's redeemer

• Two responsibilities – land first

• But to acquire the land is also to acquire the widow Ruth

• The next of kin withdraws his interest and makes way for Boaz to acquire the land and Ruth

Boaz now has to deal with obstacles to his redeeming Ruth. One gets a strong impression from Ruth chapter 2 that Boaz had the greatest admiration for Ruth. Ruth herself has proposed to him that he should be her kinsman-redeemer, and therefore her husband. There is no hint of any other wife of Boaz; yet he is obviously older than Ruth. Everything is set for a happy union – except that there is one obstacle. A kinsman-redeemer has to do things in a legal manner and there is someone who is more entitled to redeem Ruth than Boaz is.

There is obviously some connection between the marriage of Boaz and Ruth and the custom of 'Levirate' marriage ('brother-in-law' marriage) mentioned in Deuteronomy 25. The two may not be 100% identical, but obviously they are very similar types of marriage.

Boaz goes to the gate of the town, the place where legal matters were settled. Very soon – God is still working speedily for Ruth – the 'next of kin' comes by. Boaz takes his chance and speaks to him <sup>¶1</sup>. He arranges for some witnesses <sup>¶2</sup> and then tells the next of kin about some land that needs to be 'redeemed' <sup>¶3</sup>. When land was leased to someone outside of the family, it was the duty of the 'next of kin' to do what he could to 'redeem' it – buy it back so as to keep it in the family.

'Redeemers' had at least four duties to their relatives.  
 (i) To redeem a close family member who had fallen into slavery;  
 (ii) To redeem a close family member from landlessness;  
 (iii) To redeem a close family member from childlessness if her husband died prematurely,  
 (iv) To redeem a close family member from loss of life, if his life could be rescued by the payment of a price <sup>¶1</sup>.

One can see how God could be called Israel's 'Redeemer'. He too rescues His people from the death sentence (for the wages of sin is death), from landlessness (for our salvation involves a 'new heavens and new earth', and even now 'all things are ours'). He rescues us from barrenness (we are 'joined to another so as to bear fruit for God'). In many ways God in Christ is our 'kinsman-redeemer'. In elucidating 'redemption', the Book of Ruth enables us to see Jesus with new eyes.

Boaz has two of these responsibilities on his mind, but he has good reasons for mentioning the land first.

Naomi is extremely poor. She could improve her position by selling some land, but it would be best if her closest relative were to become her 'kinsman-redeemer' and buy the land so as to keep it within the family. It is this proposal that Boaz puts to the 'next of kin' <sup>¶1</sup>. The next-of-kin is happy to acquire some land in this way. But then Boaz says to him *'On the day that you acquire the field from the hand of Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you acquire the widow of the deceased husband in order to continue the name of the man who has died in connection with his property'* <sup>¶2</sup>.

At this the next-of-kin is alarmed. He does not want to bring into the world a rival to his own son. He withdraws his interest in Naomi's land and urges Boaz to buy it – plus Ruth <sup>¶1</sup>! The removal of the sandal was his final and legal renunciation of any claim to the land – or to Ruth <sup>¶2</sup>. Boaz makes sure that all of his witnesses have clearly understood what has happened. He has 'bought all the property'. And he has 'acquired Ruth' <sup>¶3</sup>.

¶1 4:1  
 ¶1 4:2  
 ¶1 4:3

¶1 see Exodus 13:13b

¶1 4:4

¶2 4:5

¶1 4:6  
 ¶2 4:7-8  
 ¶3 4:9-10

• A gracious redeemer will remove all obstacles

• Marriage and a son for Ruth and a grandchild for Naomi

• Ruth's great-grandson was King David

**God's purposes in chaotic times**

• The famine – allowed by God to achieve His purpose - a gentile into His kingdom, and the family line of His Son

• Ruth's story provides illumination for the Christian – redeemed by our 'heavenly Boaz' for fruitfulness

The witnesses confirm what has been legally settled <sup>□4</sup> and they pray for Yahweh's blessing on the marriage <sup>□5</sup>.

A gracious redeemer will remove all obstacles to his redemption going forward. Boaz wishes to redeem Ruth. He overcomes obstacles and difficulties in the way.

Soon the couple were married; a son was born <sup>□1</sup>. It was regarded as being a son for Naomi <sup>□2</sup>. Ruth's love for Naomi is obvious to everyone <sup>□3</sup>, and the new-born grandchild is given to Naomi <sup>□4</sup>. The suffering with which our book began <sup>□5</sup> has been eradicated and overruled for good.

Ruth 4:18 traces the family line from Perez to David, running through Boaz and Obed, Ruth's son. David was Ruth's great-grandson. David had some Moabite blood in his veins.

The famine which led to Elimelech's leaving Israel, and which brought so much trouble and distress into his family, had an unusual purpose in it. It was God's way of allowing a gentile into His kingdom, and even into the family line of His Son. The story began with famine and death; it ends with restoration, abundance and newness of life. Secretly and inconspicuously God had been working all the time. In the lives of these quite ordinary people God had a purpose to bring David to Israel. In Judges we are reminded that there was no king in Israel, and as a result chaos prevailed. In the Book of Ruth, the story begins by mentioning the chaotic day 'when the judges ruled' <sup>□1</sup>. This brings to our mind all sorts of calamities and chaos. But the story ends by reminding us that Boaz and Ruth's marriage will soon lead to David, a king in the land, the very thing Israel needs. Despite the faithlessness of the days when the judged rules, God has been faithful to them. He raises up a half-Israelite, half-gentile couple, Boaz and Ruth. Into that line He will send his Son, His Saviour. Ruth a gentile who sought refuge under the wings of Yahweh was given a kinsman-redeemer to meet all her needs. Her story provides illumination for the Christian who is redeemed from death, distress and disaster by a kinsman who drives away any claims from any rival; who might take us to himself. Then our heavenly Boaz buys us for Himself, and we bear fruit unto God.

□4 4:11a  
 □5 4:11b-12  
 □1 4:13  
 □2 4:14  
 □3 4:15  
 □4 4:16-17  
 □5 1:1-15

□1 1:1

	<p><b>Dr Michael Eaton</b> is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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