

Tim Bouter

Purchase and Redemption in Ruth 4

“Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, “Turn aside, friend, sit down here.” And he turned aside and sat down. He took ten men of the elders of the city and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down. Then he said to the closest relative, “Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. So I thought to inform you, saying, ‘Buy it before those who are sitting here, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am after you.’” And he said, “I will redeem it.” Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance.” The closest relative said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem it.”

Ruth 4:1-6 NASB

Jewish law gave the nearest kinsman¹ the right of redeeming family members and property that had been sold due to poverty, as well as avenging the blood of a family member that had been murdered. The book of Ruth implies that the

¹ The kinsman was called by the Hebrew name “gō’êl”, which is the participle of the Hebrew verb gâ'al (“to redeem”). In order to qualify, the gō’êl had to be near of kin, be willing and have the ability (resources) to redeem.

Levirate marriage duty (Deut. 25:5-10) also extended to the nearest kinsman. As it was the right of the kinsman (if he were willing and able) to redeem property that had been sold outside of the family (Lev. 25:25), so it was the privilege of the same kinsman to get the first offer of the estate before the property was sold (compare with Jer. 32:7). Since Naomi was destitute, and the immediate inheritors had all passed away, it was now open for the next kinsman to purchase the land, and thus preserve the inheritance in the family according to the custom of Israel. The land had no doubt been mortgaged by Elimelech when they left for Moab during the famine, thus the purchased property also had to be redeemed (Ruth 4:4, 6) before the inheritance could be claimed by the kinsman.

As Boaz bought the encumbered property, so our Lord² on Calvary bought this sin cursed world with His own blood. In buying the land, Boaz also acquired Ruth to be his wife. She was the "*treasure hidden in a field, which...for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field*" (Matthew 13:44). Dispensationally, both Ruth³ and the hidden treasure represent the Lord's earthly people, Israel⁴ (Ex. 19:5; Psa. 135:4). During the present dispensation, Israel has been set aside (hidden in a field), but in a future day the Lord will return to this world to redeem the purchased possession (Eph. 1:14) and claim His inheritance, as we read in the prophet Isaiah:

¹"Sing, O barren, you who have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry loud, you who have not labored with child! For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman," says the Lord. ²"Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; do not spare; lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes. ³For you shall expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants will inherit the nations, and make the desolate cities inhabited. ⁴Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; for you will forget the shame of your

² The Lord Jesus became our Kinsman through the incarnation (Gal. 4:4-5; Heb. 2:14-15). He was willing to redeem us (Mat. 20:28; Heb. 10:7) and able to pay the price (Jer. 50:34; 2 Cor. 8:9).

³ As a Gentile, Ruth pictures Israel's present status as Lo-Ammi, that is 'Not My People.'

⁴ The word *gō'êl* is rendered in the Authorized Version as "kinsman", "redeemer" and "avenger". Christ (in the past, present and future) is all three to Israel: at His First Advent He came according to the flesh as Israel's Kinsman, through His death on the cross He has become Israel's Redeemer, and when He comes to reign He will destroy Israel's enemies as their Avenger.

youth, and will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore. ⁵For your Maker is your husband, The Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth.” (Isa. 54:1-5)

If Boaz is a picture of the Lord Jesus, our Redeemer, then who does the nearer kinsman in the book of Ruth symbolize? Verses 44 and 46-47 of First Corinthians 15 provide the answer: *There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body... However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven.* The Lord from heaven, the second Man, is represented by Boaz, so the nearer kinsman must therefore represent the first man, who was of the earth. The nearer kinsman, although first willing (v. 4), was not able to redeem (verse 6). Just as the nearer kinsman could not raise up the name of the dead, the natural man cannot produce spiritual life. *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”* (John 1:12-13).

Ten elders were called in to act as witnesses. They represent the Ten Commandments, and were told to sit down, as they could do nothing but confirm the inability of the nearer kinsman to redeem. The Law could only condemn, for it is written, *“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever”* (Deut. 23:3).

“For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.” (Rom. 8:3 NASB)

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