

## ENTERING THE FULLNESS OF GOD!

Ruth 4:1-22

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The version for this sermon is the New American Standard Bible*

Nothing compares to this chapter on the power of redemption other than the story of the Prodigal Son, (Luke 15:11-32). The fourth chapter of Ruth is a commanding display about entering the fullness of God, as mentioned in Ephesians 3:19—“*that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.*”

To understand the nature of these divine privileges, you must unravel the cultural customs of that day—there are many in the chapter.

### **THE MARRIAGE ARRANGEMENT, (Ruth 4:1-8)**

The final part in this romantic story begins when Boaz goes to the city gate. This was like going to city hall—the local law court. It compares to a community where a courthouse was located at the town square. In that ancient day, the common communal center of the city was the city gate, (Deuteronomy 21:18-21; II Samuel 15:2; Job 29:7). During any day, most of the population would pass through it.

So, it was not unusual for the relative of Naomi to pass through the gates—and then for Boaz call at once a city council meeting. He selected 10 men, capable of discerning wisely, who were handy at the moment to serve as elders and representatives of the community in the proceedings. This was the quorum required for conducting a synagogue meeting. That was what was required for conferring a marriage blessing. The number probably originated when God told Abraham that He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because of her wickedness. Abraham asked God if it were fair for Him to destroy the righteous with the wicked. At last, God agreed that if there were 10 righteous people, He would not destroy the communities.

It is remarkable that when Jesus spoke about the required number to hold a Christian worship service that He promised that if two or three was gathered in His name, He would be with them, (Matthew 18:20).

The immediate difficulty facing Naomi was the possible lose of her property. Perhaps, her land had already been “mortgaged” off when her family had left for Moab ten years earlier when they faced famine. Or, with the end of the harvest, Naomi and Ruth had no other means of support. So Naomi decided that she had to “*sell the piece of land.*” But there was a far better plan. She could appeal to a relative who would keep the land in the family.

At this juncture, we have come to the heart of the story. It revolves around a rather unconventional practice for us these days, but was normal in that day. It was the kinsman redeemer, (“*goel*” in Hebrew). Elimelech, her deceased husband had the right to an heir. The kinsman redeemer could perform three works:

- Redeem a person from bondage, (Leviticus 25:47-55). A person might sell himself, his wife and children into slavery because of a lack of income.

- Redeem the loss of poverty, (Leviticus 25:25-28). In case of an emergency, a family might mortgage their land to someone who would retain the property rights until the year of Jubilee.
- Redeem from the dead, (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). In the event that a couple never had children, and the husband dies, the wife could ask for her husband's brother to marry her—*“to raise up the name of the dead.”* It was a reproach in Israel to be childless because a man's name would be blotted out. Barrenness was regarded as a special mark of God's displeasure. But mostly, having a child was the hope of every Jewish family because they knew that through *“the woman's seed,”* the Messiah would come.

In Naomi's case, redemption involved more than poverty. It dealt with people—carrying on the family name. That is why suddenly in verse 9, her husband's name with her sons' names are mentioned again. When Elimelech died, the family's rights were passed on to Mahlon, Ruth's husband. With his death and having no children, the family name would become extinct.

The Biblical term “redemption” means “to buy back with a price,” or “to deliver from harm by pay a price.” It meant a rich relative could pay off the agreement. When you consider the seriousness of the problem, you will realize the value of a redeemer. The problem is with the length of such an agreement. It was a fifty-year mortgage. What that could mean that a poor fellow would be a slave until the year of Jubilee. It could mean the loss of property rights for a lifetime. The law of the year of Jubilee meant that at the end of fifty years, all things would revert back to its original condition. All this a redeemer could do—without gaining any personal advantage. He would have, for example, no right to the regained property.

When you consider the very name “mortgage,” you see just how disastrous it could be. “Mortgage” comes from two French words “mort” for death—and “gage” meaning pledge. It was a “death pledge.”

The term kinsman is translated in Ruth 3:13 as ransom, as well as in Isaiah 51:10. In Job, it is “redeemer.” When Job said, *“I know that my redeemer (goel) liveth,”* he was thinking of someone to rescue him from all his life long torments.

The episode of Ruth reveals far more than the redemption of a family—and its name. It pictures the Lord's compassion for the deplorable fallen state into which mankind has fallen. In Adam and Eve's sin, the universe came under mortgage forfeiting humanity's life and destiny.

For a person to become a kinsman redeemer, he must be “nigh a kin,” (Leviticus 25:25, 49). (The word kinsman means a relative.) That is one reason Jesus came man, to be of the seed of Abraham, *“to be made like unto his brethren,”* (Hebrews 2:16-17). *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us!”*

A kinsman redeemer must be willing and able to be a redeemer. As the Son of God and the Son of man, Jesus was able to serve as our redeemer, but He was also willing. Some think that His life was taken from Him when He was crucified.

Vernon McGee distinguishes between a person who commits “suicide” and someone who gives his life:

“Many years ago down in Houston, Texas, when a boarding house caught on fire, a woman broke through the lines and went into that house. It collapsed, and she was burned to death. The headlines read; ‘Poor Wretch Dies: Suicide.’ Later, the newspaper corrected it and printed an apology. Do you know why? It was because when workmen were digging around in the rubble, they found in a back room, a little iron bed, and in that little iron bed was baby, *her* baby. She entered that burning building to save her baby. She wasn’t a suicide. She loved that baby and wanted to save her. The Lord Jesus was a willing Redeemer . . . very willing, and it was because He loved us.”<sup>1</sup>

If He is willing, is He able? I Peter 1:18-19 tells how He not only was sympathetic about man’s sins, but able to do something about it: He was able because He was willing to pay the price of redemption with His own precious blood, “*Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them,*” says Hebrews 7:25.

Jesus is foremost our redeemer. When He opened His ministry, He affirmed His redemptive purpose by reading the prophecy in Isaiah and claiming that was why He had come to earth. He read, “*The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord,*” (Luke 4:18-19). Jesus gave His life as a ransom for sinners, (Mark 10:45; Revelation 5:9-10).

The removing of one’s sandals was a symbolic act of transfer. By it, a person renounced any legal rights and gave the other person the right to tread or go upon the land (to take possession, Genesis 13:17, Deuteronomy 11:24, Joshua 1:3) According to Deuteronomy 25:7-10, the law required a person to surrender his shoes from off his feet—and was to be spit in his face—showing what a reproach it was not to fulfill this sacred obligation. In Boaz’s case, the near kinsman—was never spit upon.

#### **THE IMMEDIATE BLESSING, (Ruth 4:9-12)**

The immediate area around Bethlehem is known as Ephrathah as pointed out at this time in the narrative. The Hebrew means “fruitful.” That was certain to be true for Ruth and Naomi.

The witnesses believed that the union between Ruth and Boaz would be like the house of Rachel and Leah. Those were the women, plus their handmaids, who gave birth to the twelve men—the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel.

The House of Perez (Pharez) of Tamar is mentioned also not only because he came from the largest tribe of all the twelve tribe, but because it concerned a similar marriage arrangement. The incident was a shameful event in the life of Judah. Pharez was the offspring of a Canaanite woman by the name of Tamar, (Genesis 38:1, 29). Tamar

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<sup>1</sup> J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible, Volume 2, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), p.119.

took the law of the kinsman redeemer into her own hands after the death of two of her husbands. She had the right to have a relative marry her because no children were left in her marriages to carry on the family name. She took the initiative, as did Naomi, in the ‘levirate marriage rights,’ (*levir* is from the Latin for brother-in-law). This right has been willfully ignored by Judah so she disguised herself as a harlot and enticed Judah into an illicit relationship with her. This union produced twin boys—Pharez and Zarah.

### **THE LONG TERM BLESSING, (Ruth 4:13-22)**

The story of Ruth opened with Naomi as the central figure and she returns at the end, again as the central figure. She had returned “empty handed” and “bitter” from Moab. Now, with the marriage of Ruth and Boaz with the birth of their son, she returns to the full blessing of the Lord. The same women of the community who had questioned, “*Is this Naomi?*” now exclaim, “*Blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel,*” (Ruth 1:19, 4:14)

When Naomi took the child and nursed him that is to be interpreted as an act of adoption.

Obed became her salvation. His name, (short for Obadiah) implies “worshiper” or “servant of the Lord.” Certainly he reveals how God kept His promises and achieved His purposes.

The book of Genesis has a tenfold division. After the phrase, “*The generations of the heavens and of the earth,*” ten times the book mentions “the generations of,” (Genesis 2:4). It traces the ten generations—through Adam, Noah, Isaac, Esau and Jacob—tracing the line through which Jesus, the Messiah would come. Only three other times in the Old Testament is “the generations of” mentioned—that of the Sons of Levi (Exodus 6:16-19), that of Aaron and Moses (Numbers 3:1) and finally, the generations of Pharez (Ruth 4:18).

The book of Ruth concludes with a startling, yet subtle sign of redemption. The book ends with the list of ten generations.

1. Perez
2. Hezron
3. Ram
4. Amminadab
5. Nahshon
6. Salmon—Married Rahab, (Matthew 1:5)
7. Boaz
8. Obed
9. Jesse
10. David

Why is that significant? It is the measure of redemption. According to Deuteronomy 23:3, a woman like Ruth could not expect too much. Deuteronomy said that a Moabite was not allowed to enter the congregation “*even to the tenth generation.*” For Ruth, the tenth generation climaxes with King David.

David wanted to build a house for God, but God told him that He was building out of his family a house—that House of Judah—from whence came the Lion of the tribe of Judah! And through David would come the Messiah—the Son of David!