***Ruth***

Chapter 4

*Boaz Marries Ruth*

**Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there. When the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned came along, Boaz said, “Come over here, my friend, and sit down.” So he went over and sat down. 2 Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, “Sit here,” and they did so. 3 Then he said to the kinsman-redeemer, “Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. 4 I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line.” “I will redeem it,” he said. 5 Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you acquire the dead man’s widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.” 6 At this, the kinsman-redeemer said, “Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it.” 7 (Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.) 8 So the kinsman-redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it yourself.” And he removed his sandal. 9 Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, “Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon. 10 I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon’s widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from the town records. Today you are witnesses!” 11 Then the elders and all those at the gate said, “We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. 12 Through the offspring the Lord gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.”**

**4:1** *town gate.* The “town hall” of ancient Israel, the normal place for business and legal transactions, where witnesses were readily available (vv. 9–12; see note on Ge 19:1). (CSB)

*my friend.* The other kinsman remains unnamed. (CSB)

**4:2** *ten of the elders.* A full court for legal proceedings. (CSB)

**4:3** *selling the piece of land.* See note on 2:20. Two interpretations are possible: 1. Naomi owns the land but is so destitute that she is forced to sell. It was the duty of the kinsman-redeemer to buy any land in danger of being sold outside the family. 2. Naomi does not own the land—it had been sold by Elimelech before the family left for Moab—but by law she retains the right of redemption to buy the land back. Lacking funds to do so herself, she is dependent on a kinsman-redeemer to do it for her. It is the right of redemption that Naomi is “selling.” (CSB)

*brother.* Used in the broader sense of “relative.” (CSB)

**4:5** *you acquire the dead man’s widow.* Now Boaz reveals the other half of the obligation—the acquisition of Ruth. Levirate law (Dt 25:5–6) provided that Ruth’s firstborn son would keep Mahlon’s name alive and would possess the right of ownership of the family inheritance. (CSB)

**4:6** *I cannot redeem it.* Possibly he fears that, if he has a son by her and if that son is his only surviving heir, his own property will transfer to the family of Elimelech (see note on Ge 38:9). In that case his risk was no greater than that assumed by Boaz. This kinsman’s refusal to assume the kinsman-redeemer’s role highlights the kindness and generosity of Boaz toward the two widows—just as Orpah’s return to her family highlights Ruth’s selfless devotion and loyalty to Naomi. (CSB)

**4:7** *one party took off his sandal.* The process of renouncing one’s property rights and passing them to another was publicly attested by taking off a sandal and transferring it to the new owner (cf. Am 2:6; 8:6). The Nuzi documents (see chart on “Ancient Texts Relating to the OT”) refer to a similar custom. (CSB)

**4:9** *witnesses.* The role of public witnesses was to attest to all legal transactions and other binding agreements. (CSB)

**4:10** *name of the dead.* See Dt 25:6. (CSB)

**4:11** *Rachel and Leah … built up the house of Israel.* Cf. Dt 25:9. The Israelite readers of Ruth would have associated the house of Jacob (Israel), built up by Rachel and Leah, with the house of Israel, rebuilt by David, the descendant of Ruth and Boaz, after it had been threatened with extinction (1Sa 4). They also knew that the Lord had covenanted to “build” the house of David as an enduring dynasty, through which Israel’s blessed destiny would be assured (see 2Sa 7:27–29). (CSB)

*Ephrathah.* See note on 1:2. (CSB)

**4:12** *Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.* Perez was Boaz’s ancestor (vv. 18–21; Mt 1:3; Lk 3:33). His birth to Judah was from a union based on the levirate practice (Ge 38:27–30; see note on 1:11). Perez was therefore an appropriate model within Boaz’s ancestry for the blessing the elders gave to Boaz. Moreover, the descendants of Perez had raised the tribe of Judah to a prominent place in Israel. So the blessing of the elders—that, through the offspring Ruth would bear to Boaz, his family would be like that of Perez—was fully realized in David and his dynasty. Thus also v. 12 prepares the reader for the events briefly narrated in the conclusion. (CSB)

*The Genealogy of David*

**13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, and the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. 14 The women said to Naomi: “Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! 15 He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.” 16 Then Naomi took the child, laid him in her lap and cared for him. 17 The women living there said, “Naomi has a son.” And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. 18 This, then, is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron, 19 Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, 20 Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, 21 Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, 22 Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.**

**4:13–17** The conclusion of the story balances the introduction (1:1–5): (1) In the Hebrew both have the same number of words; (2) both compress much into a short space; (3) both focus on Naomi; (4) the introduction emphasizes Naomi’s emptiness, and the conclusion portrays her fullness. (CSB)

**4:13** *the Lord enabled her to conceive.* See note on 1:6. (CSB)

**4:14** *kinsman-redeemer.* The child Obed, as v. 15 makes clear. (CSB)

*May he become famous.* This same wish is expressed concerning Boaz in v. 11. (CSB)

**4:15** *better to you than seven sons.* See 1Sa 1:8. Since seven was considered a number of completeness, to have seven sons was the epitome of all family blessings in Israel (see 1Sa 2:5; Job 1:2; 42:13). Ruth’s selfless devotion to Naomi receives its climactic acknowledgment. (CSB)

**4:16** *laid him in her lap.* Possibly symbolizing adoption (see note on Ge 30:3). (CSB)

**4:17** *Naomi has a son.* Through Ruth, aged Naomi, who can no longer bear children, obtains an heir in place of Mahlon. (CSB)

*Obed.* The name means “servant,” in its full form possibly “servant of the Lord.”

**4:18–22** See 1Ch 2:5–15; Mt 1:3–6; Lk 3:31–33. Like the genealogies of Ge 5:3–32; 11:10–26, this genealogy has ten names (see note on Ge 5:5). It brings to mind the reign of David, during which, in contrast to the turbulent period of the judges recalled in 1:1, Israel finally entered into rest in the promised land (see 1Ki 5:4). It signifies that, just as Naomi was brought from emptiness to fullness through the selfless love of Ruth and Boaz, so the Lord brought Israel from unrest to rest through their descendant David, who selflessly gave himself to fight Israel’s battles on the Lord’s behalf. The ultimate end of this genealogy is Jesus Christ, the great “son of David” (Mt 1:1), who fulfills prophecy and will bring the Lord’s people into final rest. (CSB)