

4 Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat down there just as the guardian-redeemer he had mentioned came along. Boaz said, “Come over here, my friend, and sit down.” So he went over and sat down.

²Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, “Sit here,” and they did so. ³Then he said to the guardian-redeemer, “Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelek. ⁴I 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.

⁵Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man’s widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.”

⁶At this, the guardian-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.)

⁸So the guardian-redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it yourself.” And he removed his sandal.

⁹Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, “Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon. ¹⁰I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, 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 his hometown. Today you are witnesses!”

¹¹Then the elders and all the people 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 family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. ¹²Through the offspring the Lord gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.”

¹³So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. ¹⁴The women said to Naomi: “Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! ¹⁵He 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.”

¹⁶Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. ¹⁷The women living there said, “Naomi has a son!” And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

¹⁸This, then, is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron, ¹⁹Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, ²⁰Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, ²¹Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, ²²Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.

Chapter 4: “Love’s Reward”

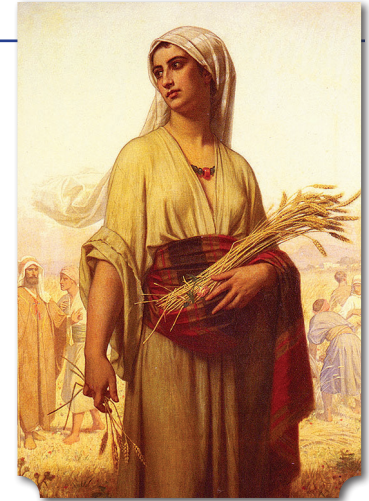
Naomi was right. Boaz was keen to have the matter settled immediately.

The other relative (who is not considered important enough to be named) is perfectly willing to acquire a property. However, once he realizes that the situation will not be profitable for him, he backs down.

(Okay, a quick explanation of the other guy’s situation: if he were to marry Ruth, and give her a child, then the cost of taking in Ruth and raising the child as a heir for the deceased and then giving the purchased inheritance to that son would have been substantial. That’s a very different scenario from simply acquiring a field, which might then turn a profit which he could keep.)

The blessings that are spoken to Boaz by the elders and people, and then to Naomi by the women demonstrate how highly prized children were in that culture.

Childlessness was seen as a curse, especially for women (think of Sarah, Rachel, Hannah, and Elizabeth), and having children a great blessing. The wisdom books in particular are filled with verses that echo these blessings and curses. ▼



“RUTH IN THE FIELDS,” MERLE HUGUES, 1876

PSALM 127:4-5

⁴Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one’s youth. ⁵Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.

It’s interesting that the concluding paragraphs of the story (verses 14-17) focus not on Ruth or Boaz, but upon Naomi. The marriage of Ruth and son born to her is seen by the entire community as a blessing to *Naomi* - a son for *Naomi*.

When the women say to her, “The Lord has not left you without a guardian-redeemer” they are not referring to Boaz, but to the child, Obed. The understanding being expressed is that Ruth’s son takes away the “curse” of childlessness from *Naomi*, and that he might be a provider and comforter to her in her old age. In this sense he is her deliverer. There is also a sense in which the “redeeming son” of Ruth points to the descendant of Ruth, *David*... and the descendant of David, *Jesus*.

The author takes pains to trace the lineage of the family back to Perez (the founder of the family of the tribe of Judah, eg. Judah’s son), and the genealogical account closes with David. This is evidence that the book of Ruth was originally intended to provide a family snapshot of the pious ancestors of that important king of Israel.

For Christians, however, this history that points to David has even greater significance. The closing verses of Ruth are repeated word for word in the opening verses of the gospel of Matthew (“This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham...” - check out Matthew 1:3-6).

As several passages in the New Testament point out, many of the things that are written in the Old Testament are there for our benefit. The genealogical record at the end of Ruth looks beyond David to Jesus, *our Saviour and Redeemer*. ►►

1 PETER 1:10-12

¹⁰The prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. ¹²It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.