

THE BOOK OF RUTH

"Redemption Impossible"

Ruth 4:1-6

Introduction

1. The flow of the argument is clear. In chapter 1, Ruth decided to abandon Moab and cleave to the God of Israel. This was her decision of faith. In chapter 2, Ruth benefitted from the work she performed under the gracious provisions of the law (Lev. 19:9, 10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-22). This was her work of faith. In chapter 3, Ruth appealed for marriage in accord with God's gracious provision. She did this only after she demonstrated that she was a worthy suppliant. This was her reward of faith.

2. Now we come to the final chapter of the account. It records the final enduring reward which God has reserved for Ruth. This reward was grounded in the redemption which had been legislated (Deut. 25:5-10).

3. Chapters 1 and 4 are similar in structure. However, in the first chapter there is gloom in Moab, but in the fourth chapter there is joy in Bethlehem. But before the finale of joy, there is the rejection in Bethlehem. This is how it happened:

1. THE SITUATION v. 1.

The whole account here takes place at the city gate of Bethlehem. This was an open space in front of the city gate where the forums were held. It was the place of public affairs (cf. Gen. 19:1; Deut. 22:15, 24; Esther 2:19; Psa. 127:5). When a matter needed to be settled, this was the place to go (Deut. 17:8).

2. THE PREPARATION vv. 1, 2.

By the providence of Almighty God, the nearer kinsman (cf. 3:12) came by the gate where Boaz sat. This is the infinite way our God moves. He is called "such an one." The term refers to someone unnamed, hence a "certain person." The Hebrew particle "behold" shows the event is of God's providence. Others are so named (1 Sam. 21:3; 2 Kings 6:8). Apparently, he is asked to stand by as ten elders of the city are gathered together. This was to provide witnesses to the event. A quorum required for

marriage benedictions was sought. This number ten is also the minimum number required to form a synagogue service. Only sanctified imagination can reconstruct the activities at the gate that day. How much time did it take to get the men to sit down? How did the kinsman respond to all of this? Questions may surely be raised about the event.

3. THE EXPLANATION vv. 3-5.

The skill and art of Boaz is clearly seen here. He initially brings up the matter of the land. It was the land which Elimelech and Naomi possessed. Now that Elimelech is gone, the sold land can be redeemed. Actually, both Naomi and Ruth had a part in the land. Naomi more so in that she was the widow of Elimelech (Num. 27: 8-11). At first, the near kinsman decided this was good. Naomi was beyond child bearing. He reasoned that the land would therefore become a part of his own holdings. There were no heirs. At this, however, Boaz sprung his trap. With the land also went Ruth, the wife of the deceased son, Mahlon. Orpah did not figure in the deal because she had remained in Moab, although she was the wife of the deceased Chilion. The verb "thought" (v. 4) really means to speak to oneself. Moreover, the verb "advertise" means to open the ear, hence to make known or disclose. With all of this information in hand, the issue became complicated. Ruth was an inescapable part of the arrangement.

4. THE REJECTION v. 6.

The kinsman said he could not redeem the land and Ruth. The truth was he could. But he refused to do it in view of his own situation. He admits this by the words: "lest I marry my own inheritance." Money would be spent to buy (redeem) the land of Naomi. Then the land would revert to her heirs, that is, children born to Ruth. This would not benefit the kinsman. His children also would lose all the way. Perhaps the attitude of this man is the one big reason why his name is not mentioned.

Conclusion The historical facts are evident. There is no problem. But they point to our wonderful Lord. He is the kinsman who was related (Heb. 2:9, 10). He paid the price for us (1 Pet. 2:18, 19). We have been redeemed (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). Glory be to our Kinsman-Redeemer, Christ our Lord.