

## Ruth 2016 4A

- We're approaching the climactic moment in our story of Ruth and Boaz at the end of Chapter 3
  - Ruth followed Naomi's instructions on the night of the harvest
    - She approached Boaz respectfully to invite a marriage proposal
    - And she was rewarded with Boaz's promise to redeem her one way or another
    - Ruth spent the evening with Boaz without anyone being the wiser, so that Boaz's reputation would not be compromised
  - But Boaz also told Ruth that there was a legal hurdle preventing him from redeeming Ruth
    - We'll rejoin the conversation in Ruth 3

**Ruth 3:11** "Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.

**Ruth 3:12** "Now it is true I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.

**Ruth 3:13** "Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the Lord lives. Lie down until morning."

**Ruth 3:14** So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."

**Ruth 3:15** Again he said, "Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it." So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her. Then she went into the city.

**Ruth 3:16** When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did it go, my daughter?" And she told her all that the man had done for her.

**Ruth 3:17** She said, "These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"

**Ruth 3:18** Then she said, "Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today."

- As Boaz explains, he is prohibited from acting to redeem her, because another man in the family was a closer relative
  - The Hebrew word translated "closer relative" is the word for kinsman redeemer

- So Boaz is essentially saying that he can't redeem Ruth because he is not legally the closest relative
- He is not the kinsman redeemer
- The other man is technically the one who must act to redeem Ruth
- But Boaz adds that if this man is not able to redeem her for any reason, then Boaz is prepared to step in and assume that responsibility
  - As I've said before, Boaz was not obligated to act in this way
  - He was volunteering to assume this role in case Ruth is found without a redeemer
- Meanwhile, Boaz protects Ruth through the night
  - He would have been within his right to ask Ruth to return home
  - If someone had seen her lying at his feet, it would have brought shame to him
  - Nevertheless, he puts her safety above his own reputation
  - A young girl walking alone at night was a recipe for disaster
  - Boaz protects her at risk to himself
- In keeping the visit secret, Boaz is also protecting Ruth
  - He's protecting her reputation as well
    - In v.14 we see Boaz giving direction to his servants not to report she had been with him
    - Boaz wasn't asking them to lie, since no one was going to ask them about something that wasn't publicly known
    - He's asking them for discretion to prevent gossip and lying
  - Furthermore, Boaz continued caring for Ruth and Naomi's needs
    - In the past they were allowed to glean in the fields
    - But the harvest has come to an end, so the gleaning is over
    - Therefore, Boaz gave Ruth a generous portion of his grain to take to Naomi, once again caring for Naomi through Ruth

- The text says six measures of barley
- A measure was probably two hand scoops or so
- The result would have been enough to keep her and Naomi fed for several more days
- The fact that he sent her with enough grain for a few days is itself an indication of how quickly Boaz planned to move on this matter
  - He wasn't expecting these women to be alone much longer
  - And Naomi picks up on this sign when Ruth returns
- When Ruth reports what happened to Naomi and shows Naomi the six measures of barley, Naomi immediately understands the meaning
  - She says wait my daughter
  - Let's see how this turns out
  - He won't rest until this is settled today
  - Or said another way, Boaz can only rest after he has redeemed Ruth
  - We can safely assume Boaz's speed is an indication of his desire for Ruth as a potential bride
- And sure enough, Boaz acts quickly

**Ruth 4:1** 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.

**Ruth 4:2** He took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down.

- The next morning, Boaz goes to the gate of the city
  - Why is everyone meeting at a gate, you might ask?
    - It was a consequence of how cities protected themselves in this day
    - Cities in ancient times were surrounded by high walls for protection

- But of course, there must be a way in and out of the city, so there were gates in the walls
- Adding a gate to a fortified wall instantly made it the most vulnerable part of the wall and the weakest link in your security
  - If you opened the gate to let the city's residents go in and out, then you were also likely to let in the bad guys
  - And they didn't open the gate if someone just knocked
  - *Knock knock, who's there? Nebuchadnezzar...*
- So gates were actually fortified chambers of rooms inside the walls – like a courtyard literally inside the wall itself
  - A visitor entered through an outer door and had to pass through the chamber to reach the inner door leading into the city
  - Inside the chamber were guards, positioned high above on the top of the city walls that encompassed the gate chamber
  - So if an army breached the outer wall, it would encounter a second door barring their entry into the city
  - And archers shooting from above could pick them off in the chamber
- Nevertheless, a city was a place of commerce
  - Many people from the surrounding areas traveled into the city to conduct business daily
    - People came in to sell and buy in the city
    - Others lived in the city but left to work the fields during the day
    - And if a person needed to conduct official business, he would travel to the city to meet with city officials
  - With all this traffic in and out of a city, how did the city ensure the security of those who lived inside?
    - A practice developed to conduct as much business as possible in the chambered gates of the city
    - These chambers felt like bazaars where merchants lined up to sell and trade

- And the chambers also became City Hall
- Judges held court in gates of the city during the day
- And the elders of the city might convene in this space to hear from witnesses in some important matter
- In this way, many people who did not live in the city could still gain access in a secure way
- So when we hear that Boaz went up to the gate of the city of Bethlehem in v.1, we should understand Boaz has gone to City Hall to meet with officials of the city
  - Boaz also has a second purpose in going to the gate
    - Since this was the primary way in and out, Boaz goes to the gate expecting to see his closer relative
    - He has arrived early precisely so that he can catch this man as he leaves for the day to work the field perhaps
  - As he encounters the man, Boaz asks him to “turn aside” and to sit down in the gate
    - Boaz and this man are related, so the man must have recognized Boaz and stopped in response to his greeting
    - Boaz’s invitation to sit would have been friendly, but the setting would have suggested something more serious
  - The next thing the guys realizes, Boaz has assembled ten men from among the elders of the city
    - Boaz must have had these guys prepared for a meeting
    - So Boaz has orchestrated the situation to place his relative on the spot, in an official proceeding concerning Naomi’s and Ruth’s situation
    - Boaz seems to have wanted the man to be caught a little off guard so that the situation might play to his advantage
- With Boaz, his relative and these ten men assembled in the gate, an official inquiry is now underway
  - These men are witnesses to the conversation that will take place between Boaz and the relative

- So whatever they decide together will become settled in law
- No man will be able to go back on his word or claim this meeting never happened
- Boaz wants this matter settled justly and permanently
- When the conversation is over, the matter will be finished

**Ruth 4:3** 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.

**Ruth 4:4** “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.”

- Boaz begins the conversation announcing to this relative that Naomi has come back from the land of Moab to her property
  - Since Elimelech is dead, Naomi would have inherited the family property that once belonged to her husband
    - There was no requirement that she sell her property
    - But the land is unproductive after ten years abandoned
    - And a woman without a son would not possess the ability to work the land
    - So under the current circumstances, she probably had no choice but to sell it to provide for herself
  - The Law of Moses addressed this very situation in Leviticus

**Lev. 25:24** ‘Thus for every piece of your property, you are to provide for the redemption of the land.

**Lev. 25:25** ‘If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor he has to sell part of his property, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back what his relative has sold.

- Naomi needed to sell her property just to survive
- And under those circumstances, the Law required that the nearest relative buy it
- This law ensured that a person in desperate circumstances could find a sympathetic buyer

- Selling to a member of the family ensured the land remained within the tribe
- And it increased the chance that the selling price would be fair assuming family ties encouraged honesty
- So Boaz turns to this relative and invites him to redeem the property, that is to buy it from Naomi
  - If the man wouldn't buy it, Boaz says he is prepared to assume that responsibility
  - Boaz will buy Naomi's property if the relative declines
  - Boaz is betting that the opportunity to purchase the land will be too good for the relative to pass up
  - He will naturally jump at the chance to enrich himself through a distress purchase and without a bidding war
- Finally, notice that Boaz says Elimelech was a brother to these men
  - We can't be sure he means a literal sibling
  - But regardless, we know these men share a blood relationship
- Immediately, the man says he will redeem the land, which is exactly what Boaz knew he would say
  - Boaz has played this situation well
    - He has drawn this man out into the open
    - Remember, the Law placed no timetable on the act of redemption
    - This relative had the right of first refusal as kinsman redeemer
    - But legally, he could have waited forever to decide if he was going to act
    - In that time, Boaz couldn't have acted since he was not the closest relative
  - By offering the land first, Boaz brought this man out of his indecisiveness and off the fence and forced him to commit
    - The relative has made a decision to purchase the land

- By committing to buy the land, the relative has also officially assume the role of kinsman redeemer for Naomi's family
- Boaz's tactic was brilliant
  - Boaz gave the man an incentive to act
  - And he used the opportunity to purchase the land as the bait
- To help you understand Boaz's strategy, I need to draw a parallel to our day today
  - Suppose my brother has found a great used car for sale
    - The car belonged to an older man who barely drove it
    - It has only 10,000 miles on it and his widow is trying to sell it cheap
  - This car is a steal and I really want to buy it
    - But my brother-in-law saw it first, so he gets first chance
    - But he's hesitating and he won't make a decision
    - Meanwhile, I'm worried that someone else will buy the car while I'm waiting on my brother-in-law to decide
  - So I tell him that I'm ready to buy it if he doesn't want, and in effect I force him to commit one way or the other to the deal
    - If he wants it, then buy it by the end of the day
    - Otherwise I will go to the widow tomorrow and make the purchase
    - That's what Boaz has done here in forcing the relative to either act or get out of the way
- Now there are some differences between my analogy and Boaz's situation
  - First, Boaz is engaged in a legal question
    - In my analogy, there is no law that says someone has to buy the widow's used car
    - But in Boaz's day, the Law did require a kinsman redeemer to act once he has been identified

- So when this relative commits to the purchase, he has assumed the legal identity of kinsman redeemer for Naomi's family
  - Once that legal identity attaches, it can't be revoked
  - To become the kinsman redeemer means assuming all the legal obligations that accompany the role
  - In fact, the presence of the elders at this meeting is a result of the fact that there was a Law at work here
  - Remember this is the time of judges, so Law was adjudicated through judges and elders
- And the Law required the kinsman redeemer to redeem the land should Naomi sell it
  - And in the presence of these elders, excited by the prospect of acquiring more land, the brother enthusiastically responds, I will redeem it!
  - That brings me to the second difference between my analogy of the used car and the story of Ruth
- Boaz's offer came with a catch

**Ruth 4:5** 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."

- Boaz reminds the relative if he's going to assume responsibility as kinsman redeemer for Naomi, then he must be prepared to fulfill the role in all respects
  - Not only must he redeem the land
  - But he must also be prepared to redeem the widow in Naomi's house, speaking of Ruth
- This would like me telling my brother-in-law that I forgot to mention that there's a catch:
  - If you buy the widow's used car, then you will also need to marry the widow
  - I'm sure that would diminish his interest in the deal significantly

- And that's what Boaz was expecting as well
- As you may remember, the levirate marriage law required that a redeemer marry the widow and raise the first son as the child of the deceased

**Deut. 25:5** "When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.

**Deut. 25:6** "It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

- In such a case, the child born to that union was considered the legal offspring of the deceased, not of the new husband
  - That's how the name of the family continued
  - And that child also received the inheritance rights of all the property that had previously belonged to the deceased man
- In this way Boaz has compelled his relative into making a decision regarding his levirate marriage responsibilities
  - With the opportunity to buy land dangling in front of him, the relative jumped too quickly into becoming the redeemer
    - Now he was also legally responsible to act as the redeemer for Naomi's family as well
    - He probably knew that redeeming Naomi was included in the deal, but he also knew she was past childbearing years
    - So he probably had no fear of taking on a levirate marriage in her case
  - But evidently he hadn't heard about Ruth, or perhaps considered her situation as a widow
    - So he didn't anticipate having to marry her
    - Had he suspected what was coming, he might deferred on his decision, claiming he needed time to decide
    - Then he could have waited years or even decades until Ruth was past childbearing years

- At that point, he could agree to be redeemer but decline to marry Ruth on the basis that she couldn't be redeemed (i.e., she couldn't bear children)
- Now the relative is trapped by his own words
  - If this man is to be the redeemer, he must commit to taking Ruth as wife and raising up a child to be the deceased's son
  - He can't say he will wait and think about because he's already committed to acting as kinsman redeemer
  - And he can't take the land without also taking Ruth
- Boaz has played this so well
  - He put forth the opportunity to purchase the land first to gain the man's commitment
    - Then he introduced Ruth into the deal knowing it will likely end the man's interest
    - The prospect of a cheap bargain on land is one thing
    - But entering into a marriage you didn't see coming was another
  - Predictably, the man declines the opportunity

**Ruth 4:6** 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."

- The man changes his mind and says he cannot be the kinsman redeemer after all
- He says he cannot redeem the land because it would jeopardize his own inheritance
- If this man uses some of his wealth to purchase the land from Naomi and then later he father's a child for Naomi's family, that child would receive Naomi's property back as his inheritance
  - The relative who purchased the land from Naomi would lose it without payment since it now belonged to the son
  - The redeemer's own wealth would have gone into purchasing the property and would never be returned to his family

- In that sense, the man was jeopardizing his family's inheritance by, in effect, transferring his wealth to Naomi's family
  - The man's love for his own wealth exceeded his love for Naomi's family, and so he relinquishes the right to be kinsman redeemer
  - The man simply could not redeem the land nor could he redeem the family of Naomi
- Many of you can probably see new parallels emerging for our "second story" of Christ and the Church and Israel
  - Next time we meet we will consider those parallels and move forward to see how the story ends
    - Already we can see a picture of Christ acting to redeem His Bride
    - Acting without requirement but out of love
    - Acting according to the Law
    - And making a payment that another could not make
  - As we examine that question, we must also consider who is this closer relative who could not redeem Ruth?
    - This closer relative is also represented in our second story
    - And next week we will unveil this identity