

Abiding Fruit

Informing the Mind & Inflaming the Heart

Vol. 2 No. 31

April 22, 2007

You Are A Redeemer Ruth 3:9

The story of Ruth in the Bible is one of the most loved. It demonstrates the grace of God through providence and through redemption. We see the hand of God in sending Naomi, with her husband, and their two sons into the land of Moab because of the famine in their territory – Bethlehem of Judah (1:1). How significant the name of Bethlehem is to us. After a ten year period in Moab, Elimelech (Naomi's husband) died and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, who had married Moabite women (Orpah and Ruth), also died (1:2 -5). We see the incredible dedication and loyalty of Ruth to her mother-in-law, Naomi, in being willing to leave her own people and go back to Bethlehem with Naomi (1:6 – 18). The beautiful confession of going and lodging, of taking to herself a new identity and of commitment to the living and true God and of being willing to die in a new land, is a remarkable statement of faith (see vv. 16, 17).

Along with Esther, Ruth is the only other women to have a book in the Bible named after her. It is interesting to note that Esther (a Hebrew exile) married a Gentile, and that Ruth (a Moabite exile) married a Hebrew. The inclusion of Ruth into the family of Naomi and ultimately as the wife of Boaz, is a beautiful picture of the Bride of Christ, the Church, wooed and won by the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is important for us to remember that during the days of Ruth, the condition of the nation of Israel was very poor. Judges would be raised up by God to defend and lead the people. Apostasy from God was the prevalent condition of the nation. Spiritual insight and revival was something that occurred very infrequently due to the rebellion of the people. The book of Judges ends with great corruption and civil turmoil. In the midst of these dark conditions shines the beauty of Ruth. She is a picture of strong faith in the midst of depressing and uncertain days. These are the days we live in, but do we exercise strong resilient faith in God or are we pessimistic about everything?

In the midst of irresponsibility, Ruth is responsible in her living. In the midst of darkness, she shines in her purity. In the midst of distrust and rebellion against God, she maintains complete dependence in the covenant-keeping God she has come to know and love. These lessons are monumental, vital and necessary for Christians today. Our postmodern world imposes its philosophy on us daily. Only faith in a covenant-keeping God will see us safe to our heavenly harbor (our new country of which we are citizens presently).

Ruth is a book that is deep in its theological scope. There are the various names used of God – “LORD” (*Yahweh*) is mentioned 17 times; “God” (*Elohim*) 3 times, and “Almighty” (*sadday*) twice. *Yahweh* stressed the providential activity of God in the nation as their covenant-keeping God. The word *hesed* speaks of loyal love (see 1:8; 2:20; 3:10). We see Boaz accepting the responsibility of being a kinsman-redeemer, even though there was one closer than he was (3:12; 4:1 – 10). It is significant how Boaz leads the other kinsman-redeemer along in acknowledging his responsibilities to Naomi, and only at the end, when the man is willing to accept these responsibilities, does Boaz reveal to him his additional responsibility of taking Ruth also as a wife, which the kinsman-redeemer is unwilling to do (4:1 – 10). Thus Boaz is free to pursue the responsibility himself.

The idea of redemption expressed through the words, *redeem, redeemer, redemption* and *kinsman-redeemer* is expressed 20 times in Ruth. Redemption is the purchasing of something by paying a ransom. The ransom sets the object or person free. Ruth was set free by Boaz, thus entitling Boaz to marry her. We have been set free through our redemption purchased by our Lord Jesus Christ, and the result of our redemption is the forgiveness of our sins (col. 1:13, 14).

We see Boaz recognizing Ruth's great qualities (2:11, 12) in taking care of Naomi, of her being willing to leave her own people and land. Perhaps in this initial recognition the seed is planted in the mind of Boaz, that here is a woman of exceptional spiritual quality. He goes the extra mile in dealing with her and providing for her (2: 14 – 23). It is at Naomi's suggestion that Ruth is recommended to go and lay at the feet of Boaz and uncover his feet (3:1 – 9). This was not as some have suggested a desire for an immoral sexual relationship, but rather was a ceremonial act that invited either acceptance or rejection. If Boaz were to reject Ruth, since it was dark, then no one would know of the rejection. Naomi is confident in both of the characters of Boaz and Ruth to do the right thing.

Ruth's complete confidence in Naomi is seen in her willingness to be possibly rejected by Boaz. It is here in Ruth 3:9 that she lays claim to the promise of redemption by telling Boaz when he awakens, that he is a redeemer. Her desire for a redeemer is expressed in the words, "*I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant.*" This is a desire for security through marriage. Boaz previously invoked the blessing of God upon Ruth by asking that Yahweh bless her because she had come under His wings and had found refuge in the God of Israel. Now, Ruth invokes the same request of Boaz. The use of the word for *wings* can also refer to the *corners of a garment*. Being covered by a garment suggests possession and protection. This is what Ruth is seeking through Boaz as her redeemer.

By drawing his attention to the fact (which he no doubt was aware of), that he was a redeemer, Ruth seeks his protection, possession and blessing. The logical way to express these things is through marriage. Marriage would incorporate Ruth completely into Israel (Ruth 4:11, 12). Is there not here in Ruth, a clear picture of what our Lord Jesus has done for us? He is our Redeemer. We are married to Him. We belong to Him. He possesses us, protects us and blesses us. The people who witness the redemption of Ruth by Boaz call upon God for Him to bless Ruth through numerous and distinguished descendents (4:11, 12). Through the union of Boaz and Ruth came Israel's greatest King, David, and through the line of David, came the King of kings, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:1, 5, 16).

For Naomi, wonderful blessing was hers. With no sons of her own, with no husband of her own, God provided for her a redeemer through Boaz who would ensure that her name and line would continue, and the son who was born to Boaz and Ruth would be a restorer of life to her and a nourisher in her old age (4:15). This is why she is able to nurse the son of Ruth who is also acknowledged as her son. The son was called Obed, and he was the father of Jesse who was the father of David who was from Bethlehem.

For Ruth, the blessings of God are seen in His providential care and His redeeming bounty. She left all she had with nothing which is how we are to leave our sins. Sin is a famine filled country. Let us get out of it and into the land that God has for us. We must never forget that we are a redeemed people. We are in the hands of God by His redeeming love. His life is our life. He has married us to Himself in covenant-keeping fashion. We must live our lives in the light of this relationship taking care to ensure that we continue in the life of Christ who is our Redeemer, Restorer and Nourisher. Let us say with Ruth, to our Savior, "You are our Redeemer, we are your people, and where you go we will follow." Let us labor to bring forth spiritual children who will be a blessing in the generations to come. We have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:19). What a Boaz! What a Redeemer!

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