

A Redeemer is Born

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Let's go back to the Old Testament to the first part of the old part of the book. I was going to say the Gospel of Ruth, it really is. The book of Ruth where the Gospel is powerfully foretold. The book of Ruth 4. Would you turn there? The book of Ruth 4. If you get to Joshua, then you go on through Judges, then you get over there to Ruth and go over to chapter 4. We'll begin in verse 13.

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. 14 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. 15 May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." 16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse. 17 The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David. 18 Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron, 19 and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab, 20 and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon, 21 and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed, 22 and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.

And you know who was born of David, Jesus.

"A Redeemer is Born." That's what we are going to call this exposition this morning. A man by the name Elimelech lived in Bethlehem of Judea but Bethlehem was experiencing a famine and in weakness of faith, Elimelech took his wife, Naomi, his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, and he leaves Bethlehem. He travels outside of Israel to a pagan place called Moab looking for a better life and there they resided. There his boys came of marriageable age and they married two Moabite women. But soon the better life that Elimelech was looking for in a foreign land turned out not to be better. They actually didn't find life, they found death. First Elimelech dies and then both of his sons, they die, and that left Naomi, Elimelech's wife, a widow, and both of her daughters-in-law are now widows. So now Naomi is there by herself with her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth.

Naomi hears from someone, I think someone probably just passing through Moab, that there is bread in Bethlehem; that the famine has been lifted. Naomi, destitute, doesn't know what to do so she decides, "I'm returning back home." So she leaves Moab and returns to Israel, even to Bethlehem. Before she leaves, she urges her two Moabite daughters-in-law to stay in Moab. She tells them, "You're young and you'll find another husband and you can have a good life here. Because I'm old, I can't bear sons to be your husbands, so you two girls should stay here." In tears, Orpah remains in Moab but Ruth does not. Ruth insists that she stay with Naomi. Naomi is now elderly and beyond marrying age and in this day and time without a husband or at least a male son, you were basically destitute as a lady. Ruth 1:16-18, "But Ruth said, 'Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me.' When she," that's Naomi, "saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her." I believe this is a powerful and clear testimony that Ruth had been converted to become a Jehovah worshiper. She has left the pagan idolatry of Moab. She's come to embrace the God of Elimelech, who is now deceased, and to Naomi, whom she is with.

Naomi journeys back with Ruth to Bethlehem. She finds herself there elderly, broke, without a husband and without a son. She realizes she will have to begin selling her husband's land that he had inherited from his forefathers. Now you remember, each tribe in Israel was given by God a portion of the land and within each tribe, each family was given a portion of that. It wasn't just land to these folks, it was sacred. It was precious. It was everything. And in ancient Israel, the worst case for a woman was to grow old without a male child to continue to possess the land and to continue his father's name in Israel, and that's where Naomi is, no husband, no son. So she finds herself in this destitute financial position and basically without hope. Ruth 1:20-21. As the women are speaking to Naomi upon her return, "She said to them, 'Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara,'" which means bitter, "'for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?'"

To try to give them some support to have just enough to live on, Ruth, the daughter-in-law, sets herself out to go glean in the harvest fields. It was ordinance in Israel that after the harvest was taken, the poorest of the poor were to be allowed to glean in the fields to gather together what scraps of grain they might find to provide food for themselves, but in the providence of Almighty God, Ruth happens upon the field of a man by the name of Boaz. Boaz was a relative of her deceased father-in-law, Elimelech. Boaz finds an interest in this young lady, Ruth. His heart goes out to her. Boaz begins to instruct his men in the harvest that they're to look out for her and to help protect her. I mean, a woman by herself in these days was vulnerable to a lot of evil. He tells his men, "Make sure she drinks of the water pots. And by the way, when you're gleaning the harvest, throw some grain down on purpose so when Ruth comes behind you, she'll have a lot to take back."

We need to talk for just a moment now about the ordinance or the statute in ancient Israel called the kinsman redeemer. The kinsman redeemer. In ancient Israel, there was a statute that if a woman is left without a husband or a male child, then the closest relative to her deceased husband must marry her, take her as a wife, and raise up a son to take the dead husband's name and, therefore, that son would possess the deceased husband's land carry forth his name in Israel, thus redeeming the name and redeeming the family from loss in Israel. The son who would be born to this nearest relative as he takes this widow as his wife, would be considered the legal heir of her former dead husband's land and all of his possessions, so in effect by raising up a son who will bear the deceased man's name and possess the deceased man's land, his name and the land is redeemed back to its proper lineage. To the ancient Israelite, to lose your name in Israel and to lose your property was to lose your place in God's kingdom and especially in the promised messianic kingdom. They believed a Savior was coming, he would destroy their enemies of Israel and reclaim the land and usher in an era of peace and joy and love and prosperity. A reflection on this doctrine is seen in Deuteronomy 25:6 where it says, "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." Then 1 Kings 21:3, to show you how important it was to maintain the land and the family name because God gave it to your family, "But Naboth said to Ahab, 'The LORD forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers.'" So the statute of the kinsman redeemer, the law of the kinsman redeemer preserved one's family line and the family's divinely appointed inheritance in Israel.

Now back to the story line. Boaz begins to fall in love with this young widow, Ruth, who has journeyed back from Moab with Naomi who is a Jew, and he takes Ruth to be his wife, and then Ruth bears a son, Obed, who will now reclaim Naomi's dead husband's name and his inheritance among God's people.

Look, if you will, to verse 14 of our text, "Then the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel.'" They're all beginning to marvel over how God has taken care of this situation. Obed, the baby born to Boaz and Ruth, is now a redeemer himself. Now in the idea of Jewish law, the man who took the widow and bore a son to bear the deceased man's name, that man who took that woman was considered a redeemer, but now we see that the baby born is in fact, he is a redeemer.

You know, the book of Ruth begins with a funeral and it ends with a wedding. It begins with death but it ends with birth. The book of Ruth illustrates the great providence of God. Think about this family, they've faced famine, they've faced death, now Ruth and Naomi face this loneliness, this exile and this poverty, but then by divine providence gleaning in the field, scraping for whatever she could find, Ruth finds favor in this wealthy godly man, Boaz, he happens to be a relative of the deceased father-in-law, he takes Ruth to be his wife because he has the law of the kinsman redeemer, he assumes all the debts and responsibilities of Naomi and deceased Elimelech. So he purchases this bride, secures everything, restores everything, everything is redeemed back through Boaz and this baby named Obed. God had a perfect plan through it all.

Can I just stop right here and exhort you, child of God, are you in troubled times? Are you struggling with difficult days? I want to tell you God has a plan and God has a Redeemer. It could not have been darker for Naomi and Ruth. It could not have been more bleak. It could not have been more destitute. You don't understand what a lady by herself faced in this kind of culture in this day, but God had a plan and God had a redeemer.

So we see a wonderful portrait, a wonderful prophecy of Christ our Redeemer, especially in the birth of Obed. Here is Ruth, a non-Jew, God uses her faithfulness to glean in the field to bring her in connection with Boaz, a relative of her deceased father-in-law, they produce a son, Obed, who produces a son, Jess, who produces a son, David, who eventually produces a son, Jesus. Do you believe in the divine inspiration of Scripture? Who could make this up? In a hundred million years, who could make this up and write it down? Only God could do this. So we see in the birth of this son, Ruth's son, Obed, a glorious and beautiful type of Christ, particularly in Christ's birth.

Let's look at it together. I. First of all, note he was born in the city of Bethlehem. You might say village of Bethlehem because if you listed, as a matter of fact, when the Scripture lists the prominent cities of Judah, Bethlehem is usually left off. It just didn't make the list. There was nothing significant about it. Now think about it, Ruth is from Moab. Ruth is not from Bethlehem but Boaz, her husband, was from Bethlehem. It sounds like someone else, does it not? Mary was not from Bethlehem but Joseph, her husband, was from Bethlehem. The sovereignty of God. A portrait of Christ.

Luke 2:4-7, "Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger," or a feed trough, "because there was no room for them in the inn." This is what the prophet in Micah had foretold long ago, Micah 5:2, "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me." Ruth, a Moabitess, is somehow turned in faith and begins to embrace the God of Naomi and she agrees to come back, doesn't agree, she insists she comes back with her mother-in-law to Bethlehem. She becomes this loyal and faithful daughter. We don't see grumbling and griping or complaining. She probably could have stayed in Moab and found a good life. She comes back to Bethlehem and she's gleaning in the fields, but there gleaning in the field, she just happens to glean in the field of wealthy Boaz. She had no idea but he was a relative of her deceased father-in-law. It makes him a good kinsman redeemer. And there Boaz begins to notice her. He wasn't the first in line to be the kinsman redeemer. Another man was a closer relative but he would not agree to be the kinsman redeemer so Boaz said, "I will do it. Others fail to redeem, I will step up to the plate and I will get the job done." It sounds like somebody else I know who is called a Redeemer, Jesus Christ. He steps up. He takes on the role. He takes the responsibility. He pays for it all and secures his bride. All of these events coming together. Now Ruth has a child. He takes the name

of the deceased father-in-law to redeem the name and redeem the land back to that family line and to that lineage. Miracle upon miracle upon miracle.

Well, Jesus' birth was indeed a miracle, was it not? III. At his birth, others proclaimed his greatness. At his birth others proclaimed his greatness. The ladies of the community are in awe. It's as if they sensed something is happening here. God's doing a special work. There is greatness in this. Look at verse 14, Ruth 4, "Then the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel.'" They're not only just saying that, they're stating they see that this must be what God's doing. Greatness is connected with this child. Isn't that true of Jesus when he was born? What greatness was proclaimed about him.

Now the world didn't see it, the religious authorities in Jerusalem did not discern it, the leading authorities of the land missed it, oh but there were some who did not. Luke 2:8-11, "In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night." Can you imagine the pastoral quiet, solemn stillness of a night, those shepherds out there, maybe just hearing a sheep or a lamb every now and then, and then, and then, kaboom! A band of holy angels appears. Terror-struck.

Verse 9, "And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened." Do you remember the story? There was a guy, one of these televangelists on tv and he said every morning Jesus comes in and stands beside him and talks to him while he's shaving. I like what John MacArthur said, he said, "I want to know, did you keep shaving?" This is just an angel of the Lord and these men are scared to death. It's as if all of heaven says, "We know what's happening. We know what's about to take place. We know what God is doing and we can't hold it in." And they choose these lowly shepherds to announce it to.

"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid,' this isn't bad news, this is good news today, "for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people," Jews and Gentiles, "for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." A great one. A great one has been born. Greatness proclaimed at his birth. Later on when Joseph and Mary take Jesus to the temple, a godly man, Simeon, who had been told by the Lord that he would see the promise of the Messiah, Simeon holds Jesus and he said, "He's a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel." Greatness proclaimed at his birth. Well, that was true of Ruth and Boaz's little boy, Obed. They proclaimed his greatness at his birth for that was a foreshadowing, a type, a picture, of the greatness proclaimed at Jesus' birth.

IV. He restores what sin has taken away. He restores what sin has taken away. We're not told explicitly in the narrative but for a Jewish man to leave holy Israel and go to pagan Moab to find help and to find hope, it's a lack of faith. It's a breach. It's backsliding. It's sin and what happened? What was the result? My friend, the result of Elimelech's lack of faith, the result of Elimelech's backsliding, the result of Elimelech's sin is the same result you and I experience today, if we walk in and cohabit with and prolong ourselves without repentance in sin and in backsliding, and that is the wages of sin is death. The Bible says

Elimelech dies in Moab. His son Mahlon dies, Ruth's husband. His son Chilion dies. Naomi and Ruth left alone, travel back to Israel alone, to Bethlehem alone. She has nothing and she knows that, "I don't know how this is going to work out." She knew the doctrine of the kinsman redeemer but she's too old to have a child so she disqualifies. She has no hope. Sin has taken everything away, impoverished and in destitution, but is it not true that sin has left every one of us impoverished? Sin has left every one of us in a destitute state? We're all Moabites in a foreign country and in a foreign land.

What happened to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden when they sinned? They were driven out, the Bible says. They lost it all. Sin takes it all away. Ephesians 2:12 describing our state, our impoverished and destitute state in sin, Ephesians 2:12 says, "remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel," or God's people, "and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Ephesians 2:1 said we were dead in trespasses and in sins. What a destitute and desperate and hopeless place but John 10:10 reminds us, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

When little Obed was born, I mean, when Boaz married Ruth, I mean, their hearts began to rise. Their hope began to be kindled afresh. But when the baby was born and it's a boy, the name is restored, the lineage is settled, provision for Naomi even into her old age is now secured. Everything is given back through the baby being born and I'm telling you, child of God, I'm telling you, world, when Jesus was born he restores everything and more that sin takes away. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

How much it had to be by the Spirit of God in the hearts and minds of the remnant of Israel who knew this story. They had to see with faith forward to the coming Savior who would be born of a virgin and he would be the one, he's the means whereby everything that's lost is restored. Do you know something? You can own the whole world and have nothing until the Savior restores you. These ladies had nothing but they got it back through the baby, Obed, being born.

Jesus brings us forgiveness. Now listen, he brings us the forgiveness of God. Now just stop right there. Don't move past that fast. God forgives me. Listen, he doesn't just forgive you for what you've done, he forgives you for what you are. He forgives you for what you've done, what you are doing, and what you might will do as a sinner. Jesus gives you back everything sin takes away.

There's a powerful phrase in here, look at verse 15. As these ladies are prophesying with joy about this wonderful gift that's come to Naomi through her daughter-in-law, the former Moabitess who married Boaz and now a baby has been born, "May he also be to you," that's Obed, the little baby, "May he be to you a restorer of life." Who brings us the new birth? Jesus. Through the provision of Jesus, we can have the new birth. We can be born again. Life can be restored to us. The life of God can be restored to man. We were not meant to live our lives spiritually empty but to have spiritual life, but sin took it away. Jesus restores the life sin takes away. The forgiveness of God. Now that we have new life

because of Jesus, there is now fellowship with God and obviously, and also a future with God. Naomi knows now, now, now there's a future for my family name in Israel because a boy has been born to carry my deceased husband's name and reclaim his inheritance in the Promised Land.

V. He brought security when it was needed the most. He brought security when it was needed the most. You couldn't pick a more desperate situation and a more desperate time than this time when Naomi and Ruth get back to Bethlehem and Ruth is gleaning in fields and they're just wondering, "Will we eat today? Will we eat today?" Naomi needed a provider for her and a protector for her in her old age and now as a widow she needed someone who would genuinely care for her when she could not care for herself. Well, you see, God was working all that out way back in Moab when Naomi decided to leave Moab and go back to Bethlehem. God was working that out because he changed the heart of her daughter-in-law Ruth to say, "Don't ask me to leave you. Wherever you go, I'm going. Wherever you stay, I'm staying. Your God is now my God. Your people are my people and wherever you die, I'm going to die." Listen to me, child of God, I don't know what you're facing or what you're going through but God did something a long time ago to fix something. You haven't seen the fix yet but it's coming. You listen to me, it's coming.

He brings the security we need just when we need it the most. You say, "Brother Jeff, I wish it would hurry up. It's not here yet." You don't need it quite yet. You need to repent a little bit more, something that's between you and God. You need to humble yourself a little bit more and draw closer to God. He's doing something in you before he brings the solution for you but he's bringing it.

Naomi and Ruth needed it so desperately. Think about how Christ, how this pictures Christ. He is our provision. He is our protection when we need it the most. Let's just think forward. Do you understand there's a day approaching when we will utterly be unable to stand alone? There's a day approaching when someone must go before us and advocate on our behalf or we will utterly and certainly perish? There's a day coming when we will be totally and absolutely dependent upon another to survive. Listen to me, strong man, you will not be strong at the judgment bar of God. If another does not come, if another does not step up, if another does not bring you security, in that moment you're lost.

People are so afraid of death. Brothers and sisters, friend, listen to me this morning, death is not your problem, God's your problem. Death is a problem because it is at that point that you stand before God. The Bible says but we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Do you remember the story I heard the night I was driving my car through Columbia, Tennessee as a college freshman? I turned on the radio. I was a lost college freshman. I turned on the radio and a Presbyterian minister was sharing a story. Do you remember that story? The Presbyterian minister told the story of a man who was the very best man that ever lived on the face of the earth. I mean, the best guy. He worked harder at pleasing God than anybody else. God sent an angel down to that man and said, "Tell that

man because he's worked harder than anybody else on earth at being righteous, that he gets to come up to heaven for a day and just enjoy the glories and the blessings and the love of heaven for a day." The angel took the man and went up through the heavens, the atmospheric heavens, the terrestrial heavens where the stars are, and then they came to the abode of God. They got outside the gates of heaven and the man grabbed the angel and said, "Stop!" The angels said, "What's wrong?" The man couldn't speak for a moment and he looked at God sitting on his throne in heaven and flowing out from God was holiness and righteousness and truth and love and joy and goodness and perfection, and the man put his head down and he just wept. He said, "I can never deserve to be in his presence. Never." While he was weeping, Jesus Christ walked over to the man and put his arm around him and said, "Father, this one is mine." And when Jesus said that, the gates opened and he was able to rush into heaven and enjoy that glorious beyond description love, joy, peace, holy oneness with the Almighty God.

That's what Jesus does for us. He gives us security at that moment when we meet God. As a matter of fact, that's just an illustration of the story. When you give your last breath here, figuratively speaking, your next breath will be with Jesus standing before you saying, "Welcome home. I've secured you a place right here." Just as this little baby born to Ruth and Boaz, his name is Obed, he secured the family's place in Israel. Jesus has secured our place in heaven. Hold my bugles and let me shout a while. Think about it. It's secure. It's not maybe so. It's not might. It's secure by Jesus. Sinners get to go home to be with God.

VI. The last one, no, I have seven. VI. He produced prominent offspring. The ladies say here, prominent offspring, "may his name become famous in Israel." That means he will produce many many offspring and carry on the name and the name will be prominent both in number and in character in Israel. Does this not speak of Jesus? Has Jesus not produced many offspring both in number and in character? You know, every one of Jesus' offspring will be presented before the Triune holy God blameless and holy before him. There will be a great number of Jesus' offspring and they'll be of great character because they will bear his righteousness.

Isaiah 53:10 going through 54:1, "But the LORD," that speaks of the Father, "was pleased To crush Him," that's Jesus, "putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring," he's going to have offspring and you're one of those, I'm one of those. "He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied." In other words, when Jesus dies, he satisfies and everything he accomplishes and procuring a great prominent many children. "My Servant, will justify," in verse 11, "My servant will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great," that speaks of a great number, "And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many," there it is again, "And interceded for the transgressors." Now watch this verse here and tell me if it doesn't take you back to Ruth, if it doesn't take you back to Naomi, if it doesn't take you back to our narrative. Chapter 54, verse 1, "Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no

child; Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed; For the sons of the desolate one will be more numerous Than the sons of the married woman,' says the LORD." Naomi and Ruth were the desolate and yet through a miracle of provision by this blessed redeemer baby, Obed, the descendants will be greater than the descendants of all others because ultimately of their lineage Jesse will be born, David will be born, and Jesus will be born.

VII. He removes the shame caused by our sin. A woman's wealth and a woman's respect in ancient Israel depended upon her bearing a male child to carry out or carry forth the husband's name in Israel. God's people have this land and they're waiting on the Messiah to turn to this land and it was considered a curse if a woman could not carry on the name of the family through bearing a male child. But Naomi is too old. She has no son. She has no daughter of her own, she has this daughter-in-law. But miracle of miracles, the daughter-in-law meets Boaz, bears a son, and Naomi's shame is removed.

Now think about Ruth's shame. Ruth, a common pagan woman from the country of Moab, a worshiper of false gods and idols, by providence she becomes the wife of Mahlon, a Jew, a Jehovah-worshiper, who happened to come to Moab looking for a better life because his father was in rebellion and lacked faith and in backsliding left Israel and went to Moab. Elimelech dies and then Chilion dies and Mahlon has died and now this woman, this Moabite woman is left alone with her mother-in-law, Naomi. She pledges to stay with Naomi. In desperation they travel back to Bethlehem. There she accrues great debt along with Naomi as they begin to borrow against the family land to try to support themselves. Ruth goes out and gleans in the crop fields to try to keep from starving to death and there she meets a man named Boaz who just happens to be a kinsman to her deceased father-in-law. He sees her, he falls in love with her, he performs the legal obligations of the kinsman redeemer. He takes Ruth to be his wife. He takes responsibility for all of Ruth and Naomi's debts and now Ruth bears a son, Obed, the son from whose lineage comes David, from whose lineage comes the promised Messiah, Jesus. This Ruth, this former pagan Moabite idol-worshiper becomes the tribe mother that produces the line from which is born Jesus Christ. Talk about a reversal of fortunes. Ruth's shame is removed.

What a redemption this is for Ruth. She's actually listed in the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, a pagan, idol-worshiping Moabite who was converted. She goes from Moabite shame to church Hall of Fame. Isn't that what Jesus does for all of us? Does he not give us beauty for ashes? We were all Moabites in this world, strangers to God, without God and without hope in this world, yet Jesus takes us as we are and in love and in forgiveness he cleanses us, he gives us his own righteousness, he makes us eternal members of his own glorious tribe. His righteousness is imparted to us. Citizenship is granted to us. We're adopted into his very family. All shame is abolished all because a Redeemer was born and his name is Jesus.