

FBC POWELL, 12-10-17 AM NOTES
"The Bridegroom, the Bride, the Mother-in-Law, and the Baby"
Ruth 4:1-22
4 in Series, "A Surprising Branch on Jesus' Family Tree"

Psalms 30:5b (NASB) "Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy *comes* in the morning."

Question 27: What do you mean by the providence of God?

Answer: The almighty and everywhere present power of God; whereby, as it were by His hand, He upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things come, not by chance, but by his fatherly hand.

Question 28: What advantage is it to us to know that God has created, and by His providence does still uphold all things?

Answer: That we may be patient in adversity; thankful in prosperity; and that in all things, which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, that nothing shall separate us from His love; since all creatures are so in His hand, that without His will they cannot so much as move.
—Heidelberg Catechism (1563)

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 (NASB) ⁵When 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. ⁶It 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. ⁷But if the man does not desire to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to establish a name for his brother in Israel; he is not willing to perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.' ⁸Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak to him. And *if* he persists and says, 'I do not desire to take her,' ⁹then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, 'Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' ¹⁰In Israel his name shall be called, 'The house of him whose sandal is removed.'"

Leviticus 25:23-28 (NASB) ²³The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are *but* aliens and sojourners with Me. ²⁴Thus for every piece of your property, you are to provide for the redemption of the land. ²⁵If 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. ²⁶Or in case a man has no kinsman, but so recovers his means as to find sufficient for its redemption, ²⁷then he shall calculate the years since its sale and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and so return to his property. ²⁸'But if he has not found sufficient means to get it back for himself, then what he has sold shall remain in the hands of its purchaser until the year of jubilee; but at the jubilee it shall revert, that he may return to his property.'"

I. The Bridegroom (VV. 1-10)

Ruth 3:18 (NASB) "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.'"

Ephesians 1:7 (NASB) "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace."

Philippians 2:7-8 (NASB) ⁷but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. ⁸Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NASB) “¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ.”

John 10:17-18a (NASB) “¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. ¹⁸ No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.”

II. The Bride (vv. 11-12)

Psalms 127:3 (NASB) “Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward.”

III. Naomi (vv. 13-16)

Ruth 1:21 (NASB) “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?”

“The book of Ruth was written to help us see the signposts of grace in our lives—the ones that are visible. It is also written to help us trust God’s grace when the clouds are so thick that we can’t see the road, let alone the signs on the side. Again and again in this book, God is at work in the setbacks of Naomi. When she lost her husband and sons, God gave her Ruth. When she could think of no kinsman to raise up offspring for the family, God gave her Boaz. When barren Ruth married Boaz, God gave the child. The life of the godly is not a straight line to glory, but God sees that they get there.”

—John Piper

IV. The Baby (vv. 17-22)

Sermon 4: The Bridegroom, the Bride, the Mother in Law, and the Baby

Ruth 4:1-22

The book of Ruth begins with three funerals and ends with a marriage and the birth of a baby. This book begins with sorrow and sadness and ends as Psalms 30:5b describes, “Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy *comes* in the morning.”

By way of review, allow me to remind you of the main characters in this narrative. Forgive me for doing so much review and repetition, but those who were unable to be here any, or all of the first three messages need to understand some of the customs and directions that God gave His people in order to understand chapter 4 of Ruth.

A man named Elimelech along with his wife Naomi and their two sons left the Israelite town of Bethlehem because there was a famine there. They settled in the pagan land of Moab. The Moabites were perpetual enemies of Israel. There is no doubt that Elimelech and Naomi were out of the will of the Lord in this move. Rather than trusting God for provision, they went their own way and it didn't work out so well. The begins with two sinners who have missed a great opportunity to trust God to provide in the land which God had given to Israel. Another action that was outside the will of God is that both sons married Moabite women.

Eventually Elimelech died and then both sons died. In a state of deep grief and probably guilt for ever coming to Moab in the first place, Naomi decides to go back home. As she readied for the fifty-mile trip back to Bethlehem, to her surprise, one of her deceased son's widows tells Naomi she is going back with her. This was no doubt shocking to Naomi. The Moabites were hated enemies of Israel who were known for worshipping the false God Moloch. A part of Moloch worship included offering children as a sacrifice to this demonic idol. Ruth however had turned from the demonic "god" Moloch to the one true God, the God of Israel, the God who created all that is, the God of Scripture. Ruth gives a very clear profession of faith in Ruth 1:16 and shows her love for her mother in law by caring for her even when it means living in a foreign land.

When Naomi and Ruth get back to Bethlehem, they find a place to stay but they had nothing and no means of support. The property that Naomi and Elimelech had owned had been sold when they left Bethlehem ten years earlier. Their accommodations were no doubt minimal in quality. Fortunately, it was at the time of the grain harvest and to avoid starvation, Ruth took advantage of a Jewish law that allowed the poor to glean behind the paid workers of the owner of the grain field to get enough grain to survive. This would be a good time to introduce one of the main themes of the book of Ruth – the providence of God. To help us better understand what is meant by the providence of God, allow me to share a wonderful description of it from the over 400-year-old Heidelberg Catechism (1563). A catechism is a format for teaching doctrine that involves asking a question and then providing the answer.

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Question 28: What advantage is it to us to know that God has created, and by His providence does still uphold all things?

Answer: That we may be patient in adversity; thankful in prosperity; and that in all things, which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, that nothing shall separate us from His love; since all creatures are so in His hand, that without His will they cannot so much as move.

That over 400-year-old catechism got it. This is the theme of the book of Ruth – the providence of God! By the providence of God Ruth ended up in a field owned by a wealthy, godly man named Boaz. Boaz is a very important character in this historical drama that we call the book of Ruth. Boaz was a near relative of Naomi's husband and he had heard about the kindness of this Moabite woman to Naomi. Boaz is kind to Ruth and allows her to gather grain not from what was left, but from the first cut, to gather grain with the employees of Boaz. In addition, Boaz gave her more grain (she was loaded down with grain) to take to her mother in law Naomi.

When Naomi hears where Ruth had been gathering grain, she is ecstatic! She explains to Ruth the laws and customs of their land that Ruth was evidently not aware of. When a husband died without having children, his unmarried brother was to marry the widowed sister in law and the first child of that union would legally count for being the deceased brother's child. If there was no eligible brother to marry the widow, a near relative was to carry out this law that was called the law of levirate marriage (Latin for "husband's brother").

We went over the reasons for and more details of this practice called "Levirate marriage" in the last message. In addition to the brother or near relative taking the deceased brother's wife, there was also the law of the kinsman redeemer. This went alongside the practice of levirate marriage. Not only was the qualified brother or near relative to marry the deceased brother's widow and raise the first child as the deceased brother's, he could also buy back any property that his brother or near relative had sold. You can read more in depth about the levirate and kinsman redeemer's responsibilities in Leviticus 25:23-28 and in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. First look at Deuteronomy 25:5-10:

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. 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. But if the man does not desire to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, "My husband's brother refuses to establish a name for his brother in Israel; he is not willing to perform the duty of a husband's brother to me." Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak to him. And *if* he persists and says, "I do not desire to take her," then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, "Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house." In Israel his name shall be called, "The house of him whose sandal is removed."

Leviticus 25:23-28:

The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are *but* aliens and sojourners with Me. Thus for every piece of your property, you are to provide for the redemption of the land. 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. Or in case a man has no kinsman, but so recovers his means as to find sufficient for its redemption, then he shall calculate the years since its sale and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and so return to his property. But if he has not found sufficient means to get it back for himself, then what he has sold shall remain in the hands of its purchaser until the year of jubilee; but at the jubilee it shall revert, that he may return to his property.

Here is why Naomi got so excited. Boaz was a near relative – and since there were no other brothers to fulfill the Levirate law, Naomi thought that Boaz could marry Ruth and buy back the property that Elimelech had sold. It is doubtful that Ruth even knew about this practice. Naomi, knowing that since Boaz was older than Ruth that he would never propose to her because of the age difference, came up with a plan to show Boaz that Ruth was very interested in him. The plan

worked except for one thing – there was another relative that was a closer relative to Ruth’s deceased husband than Boaz. The drama begins! We are now ready to look at chapter 4.

I. The Bridegroom (vv. 1-10)

The last verse of Ruth 3 refers to what Naomi knows that Boaz will do quickly. 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.’” Naomi was correct, as we see in Ruth 4:1-10.

The key word in this passage is “redeem.” It means to set free by paying a price. This ancient law sheds so much light on spiritual redemption that we find in the New Testament. We are told in Ephesians 1:7, speaking of Jesus, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.” What a picture and reminder this kinsman redeemer is of our Savior who has redeemed us from the slave market of sin. The redemption price was not silver or gold, but His own blood!

There were three qualifications that a kinsman redeemer had to meet.

First, the kinsman redeemer had to be a near relative. The nearest relative had the first opportunity.

Second, the kinsman redeemer had to have the ability to purchase back the property.

Third, the kinsman redeemer had to be willing to do it.

Again, we see a beautiful picture of Christ. Praise His name, He meets all three qualifications! He became our kinsman when the One who was the eternal God the Son took on flesh and became one of us without ceasing to be deity. Philippians 2:7-8: “but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

He truly is our kinsman. Our kinsman redeemer also met the second requirement. He had the purchase price – His precious blood. 1 Peter 1:18-19: “knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ.”

Our kinsman redeemer also met the third qualification. He was willing. He said in John 10:17-18a: “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.” What a beautiful picture in the Old Testament of a glorious New Testament truth!

When Boaz confronts this nearest relative, we learn a lot about how legal matters were handled in the time of the Judges, over 1,000 years before the birth of Christ. In ancient times the city gate was much like today’s courthouse. It was where the town’s official business was handled in the presence of the city elders. Boaz gathered ten men together to serve as witnesses. He then called the nearer kinsman to the city gate for official business. Now it all comes together. First, Boaz dealt with the property. I can imagine that his heart was beating pretty fast. The nearest kinsman says “yes”; he was willing to purchase the property. Boaz’ heart must have been grieved, but he simply moved on to the next item. He reminded the man that to get the property, he must also take the widow, Ruth to be his wife. We are not told the specific why the closer kinsman did not want to marry Ruth. Perhaps he was married already or perhaps he was widowed and did not want to share His children’s inheritance with a child that would legally be

Ruth's deceased husband's child. Whatever the reason, he takes himself out of the picture. What a sigh of relief Boaz must have experienced!

What is this with taking the shoe off in verse 7? It is thought that it was the other kinsman saying the property would belong to Boaz and he would never walk on or try to take possession of the land. He was giving up all claim to the land and to his right to marry Ruth which was a requirement to have the land.

II. The Bride (vv. 11-12)

The "city council" seems overjoyed with how this has turned out. This sort of reminds us of a formal toast to the couple. The expressed desire for this couple is twofold. They are first expressing their desire for a fruitful relationship. By fruitful, I am speaking of many children. This "toast" is saying "may you have many children." The mention of Rachel and Leah refer to their fruitful womb that bore eight sons to Jacob who became the heads of eight of the tribes of Israel. The use of the word *Ephrathah* (it means "fruitful") is indicating the desire of the people of Bethlehem that the children of Ruth and Boaz bring honor to their town. That desire was certainly fulfilled when the Messiah, the Savior, Jesus was born in Bethlehem!

In Old Testament times a family of many children was considered blessed; it was something to be thankful to God for. That has changed drastically in our culture. Often children are killed before they are ever born! Sadly, many couples just do not want children because of their own selfishness. They don't understand the truth of Psalms 127:3: "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward." So, the toast for Boaz and Ruth is that would have many kids.

III. The Mother in Law – Naomi (vv. 13-16)

After many dark and sad times in the book of Ruth, these last ten verses are quite a contrast. Now, there is joy, hope, and fulfillment. It is interesting to note that in these last ten verses of the book of Ruth, Boaz and Ruth aren't the main characters. It is Naomi and the new baby, Obed. The book of Ruth began with the losses of Naomi and her bitter circumstances that seem to some extent to have made her a bitter woman. Now, we find a woman filled with joy. The women of the Bethlehem rejoice with her. They praise the Lord for what He has done in Naomi's life. They recognize that it is the Lord that sent the kinsman redeemer (Boaz) to her. It was the Lord that gave her a daughter in law (Ruth) whose love they describe as better than seven sons.

Contrast this blessing with what Naomi says as she first came to Bethlehem as a discouraged hopeless bitter woman: Ruth 1:21: "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?" Now she is full. What a picture of God's mercy and grace. Remember that Naomi and her husband were in rebellion against the Lord when they went to the land of Moab. It may be that you are living in rebellion and feel that it's too late to come back to the Lord. I hold Naomi up to you as proof that it is not so. Our God is the God of second chances, third chances – forget counting them! Yes, there are earthly consequences, but all through the Old Testament, we see men and women like Naomi who have failed, who have not trusted God and yet when they came to Him in repentance, God used them mightily.

John Piper has a good word along this same line of truth.

The book of Ruth was written to help us see the signposts of grace in our lives – the ones that are visible. It is also written to help us trust God's grace when the

clouds are so thick that we can't see the road, let alone the signs on the side. Again and again in this book, God is at work in the setbacks of Naomi. When she lost her husband and sons, God gave her Ruth. When she could think of no kinsman to raise up offspring for the family, God gave her Boaz. When barren Ruth married Boaz, God gave the child. The life of the godly is not a straight line to glory, but God sees that they get there.

[John Piper, *A Sweet and Bitter Providence*, pages 105-106]

In verse 16, we see the former bitter woman with the baby of Ruth and Boaz on her lap as she loves and cares for him. What a picture of God's amazing grace.

IV. The Baby (vv. 17-22)

The name *Obed* means servant. What a blessing this baby was and would be in his descendants serving the Lord and blessing the world. He blessed Israel, being the grandfather of King David, Israel's greatest King. David was a man of many flaws, but also a man of great repentance, who was the ancestor of the Messiah. In fact, one of the titles of Jesus was "Son of David." Not only was Obed a blessing to Israel, he was a blessing to the world. There are indeed some surprising branches in Jesus' family tree! God chose to use Obed, a descendent of a Moabite to be in the lineage of Christ.

Conclusion

I am more thankful with each passing year for the sovereignty and the providence of God. God is in control. However chaotic things may be in our lives or in our nation, God is in control. Even through sinful decisions by leaders and authorities, God is sovereign and will providentially work through even evil people to accomplish His purposes. The book of Ruth is an illustration of that very truth. Never lose hope; never give in to fear or bitterness; Our God is on this sovereign throne and there is no panic in Heaven – only plans, plans that will be carried out by a sovereign all powerful God who is gracious to His people.