

Ruth 3-4 – “A Marriage Made in Heaven”

Summary Statement:

In Ruth 3-4 redemptive love is on full display as the story of Ruth and Boaz come to a completion with Boaz receiving Ruth as his wife. And we see how God was so wonderfully at work in bringing them together and bringing about a greater blessing than could have been imagined.

Outline:

1. Preparation for Redemption – 3:1–5
2. Petition for Redemption – 3:6–11
3. Patience in Redemption – 3:12–18
4. Payment of Redemption – 4:1–12
5. Promise of Redemption – 4:13–22

1. Preparation for Redemption – 3:1-5

3:1-3 - *Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? ² Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. ³ Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.*

The drama of this story is unfolding and it's building. We begin to see things pick up where this relationship between Boaz and Ruth becomes a romance. And here's Naomi working as a matchmaker.

- We've seen the providential hand of God at work moving things together to accomplish His will, well now we see the paternal hand of Naomi pushing and guiding in a way that she sees appropriate.

And Naomi is doing so because she sees the obvious right in front of her. Ruth needs some security.

- This word **security** is literally *rest*. It's what Naomi wanted for her daughter in laws from the get-go (Ruth 1:9).
- It's what us husbands should be providing for our wives – rest not war. Security instead of uncertainty. Make sure your wives are cared for and at rest.

Naomi also sees that there's an obvious perfect match in Boaz. He's **our relative** she says. More on that in a moment.

Naomi sees the perfect opportunity for Ruth to approach Boaz.

- This story has centered around the Barley harvest. And now that all the grain is collected, it's time to thresh. This is where the sheaves of barley would be brought to the threshing floor and oxen would trample it and break apart the stalks and chaff from the grain.
- The threshing floor would usually be on a high place, up a mountain where the wind would blow with greater force. Then with the winnowing fork (fan – Matthew 3:12) they would pick up all the stalks and throw it in the air where the wind would blow the loose chaff and straw away while the grain fell back to the ground.
- This was usually a joyous time where people would feast together around the threshing floor as they celebrated their harvest and livelihood.

So while there's this joyous occasion, Naomi suggests it's a good time to put on the charm and for Ruth to make her move.

But first, there's some wise counsel given to Ruth:

- **Wash yourself** – take a bath. Clean yourself up a little. In this day you didn't have the luxury of hopping in a shower whenever you needed it. You sometimes could go months without having a full bath. Naomi is thinking, Ruth you may be a catch, but right now all you're catching is flies. Wash up.
- **Anoint yourself** – put on a little perfume and give some fragrance that's more compelling than repelling.
- **Put on your best garment** – Naomi is pulling out all the stops. She's giving Ruth the best chance for Boaz to be unable to say no. If you've stopped doing these things in your relationship, consider Naomi's words. Too many times we think once we've landed our mate we can just stop trying. But put some effort into dating your spouse. Wash yourself, put on something nice, bring out the Drakkar noir, and cause your spouse to be swept off their feet again.
- **Do not make yourself known to the man** – Don't just launch yourself at the guy (especially when he's eating and drinking). Give him some space. Play it cool. Wait for the right time, which in this case is going to be in the middle of the night when Ruth creeps up on him in his sleep (3:8). Maybe pick a better time than that.

3:4-5 - *Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do.*”⁵ And she said to her, “All that you say to me I will do.”

Now this all sounds a little strange to us. What kind of sick game is this? Uncover his feet? Some scholars have tried to make the case that Ruth was trying to offer herself sexually to Boaz. That is not in line at all with what we see in this story. Besides, she uncovered his feet and there's not a lot that can happen with that.

- These weren't instructions to act seductively, but rather to act submissively.
- To sit at the feet of someone was to take a position of humility.

2. Petition for Redemption – 3:6–11

3:6-7 - *So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her.* ⁷ And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

Boaz has been enjoying the fruit of his labours. It's been an exciting time of harvest. And after all the grain was collected together, they would sleep there at the threshing floor to safeguard all their goods. People would sleep all around the pile of grain, with their feet going out from it like spokes of a tire. And it's here that Ruth comes in, incognito, and lays down at the feet of Boaz and uncovers his feet.

- She's hoping he won't get cold feet in marrying her.
- She does this to awaken him slowly and not freak him out, though it didn't really work.

3:8 - *Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet.*

Boaz does get a little cold feet, it causes him to wake up and see that there is a woman lying at his feet. Every single man's dream right there.

- Listen, you may think your situation is hopeless. That your destined to be a bachelor to the rapture. But God is at work doing things beyond what we see. That's the book of Ruth! So be praying for your future spouse and trust the Lord. And if you wake up with one sitting in your bedroom, then really pray. Maybe try 911 too.

3:9 - And he said, “Who are you?” So she answered, “I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative.”

Here Ruth basically proposes to Boaz. **Take your maidservant under your wing**, was basically saying, *I want you to be a covering to me*. It can also be translated: *“Spread the corner of your garment over your maidservant.”* Ruth is not holding back. There are some very culturally powerful words being spoken here.

- God used the same language when speaking to Israel as His wife in **Ezekiel 16:8**, *“When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine,” says the Lord God.*
- “Even to the present day, when a Jew marries a woman, *he throws the skirt or end of his talith over her*, to signify that he has taken her under his protection.” (Adam Clarke as quoted by Guzik)

Ruth has nothing to lose here. She lays it on pretty heavy. And can I just say, ladies, sometimes we need you to voice what you’re feeling. Ruth didn’t just lie there and wait for Boaz to figure it all out. She was direct: **you are a close relative! You’re the guy for me!**

- This is what this story is revolving around, at least from a thematic standpoint.
- Boaz was the *go’el* – the kinsman-redeemer. He was the one that could take Ruth out of a hopeless, sad state and give her hope. He was the one to bring about restoration and life.

The role of the *go’el* or kinsman-redeemer was:

1. To buy a fellow Israelite (a relative) out of slavery (Leviticus 25:48).
 2. To avenge a slain family member, making sure the murderer answers to the crime (Numbers 35:19).
 3. To buy back land that was sold by a family member (Leviticus 25:25).
 4. To marry a brother’s wife who was left widowed and childless and have a child with her to carry on the family name (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).
- They needed to safeguard the persons, the property, and the posterity of the family.

3:10-11 - *Then he said, “Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. ¹¹ And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman.*

Boaz is over the moon blessed and right away, being the guy that Boaz is, he brings the Lord into it keeping Him at the center of all this. Ruth's *chesed* love (**kindness**) is once again seen, first it was to Naomi, and now it's to Boaz. This is that unmerited grace and love.

And we see why Boaz was a little slow in approaching Ruth with this proposal – he thought he was too old. He thought Ruth was out of his league. But now he's ecstatic that she saw something in him where she wants to settle down with him.

But things are about to take a suspenseful turn. There is a closer relative!

3. Patience in Redemption – 3:12-18

3:12-13 - *Now it is true that I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. ¹³ Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be that if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you—good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the Lord lives! Lie down until morning.*

Boaz is aware that there's an even closer relative. If he was willing to fulfill his duty, then Ruth would be taken care of and all would be good. If not, Boaz is ready and willing. This is really demonstrating the love of Boaz. His heart is for the care and blessing of Ruth. He's not thinking of a way to get Ruth all for himself, he's patient and willing to go through the right legal steps for her. This is true love. Love that is not selfish but selfless.

3:14 - *So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another. Then he said, “Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.”*

Again, true love is being demonstrated in that Boaz is protecting Ruth, and not just physically, but her reputation as well. He's making sure nobody sees her and suspects the worse. Nor is he trying to make a move on her in case it's their last night together. They're both being led by a selfless love and a mutual respect.

3:15-18 - *Also he said, “Bring the shawl that is on you and hold it.” And when she held it, he measured six ephahs of barley, and laid it on her. Then she went into the city. ¹⁶ When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, “Is that you, my daughter?” Then she told her all that the man had done for her. ¹⁷ And she said, “These six ephahs of barley he gave me; for he said to me, ‘Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.’ ” ¹⁸ Then she said, “Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day.”*

Just as Boaz continues to bless and pour out favour and provision on Ruth, so too, our greater than Boaz – Jesus, pours out His goodness and favour on us. What a joy to live for and serve Jesus. Stay close to Him and you will be blessed.

- That word ephah is in italics, meaning it's not in the original text. Most likely it's not 6 ephahs as it would have been unmanageable to carry in a shawl. Most likely the author meant 6 seahs, which was 1/3 of an ephah.

The man will not rest until...

So too, our Redeemer always lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). He is pleading for us and preparing us to come into the fullness of the Lord (Philippians 1:6).

4. Purchase of Redemption – 4:1-12

4:1-2 - *Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, “Come aside, friend, sit down here.” So he came aside and sat down. ² And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down.*

The gate of a city is the place where the elders and honored of the city sat. This is where business was done or where court was held.

- It's interesting when Boaz says, ***come aside, friend***... this word for friend is an odd Hebrew word meaning *so and so*.
- Boaz obviously knew his name, but because this man will choose not to carry on a family name, his name will not be recorded or remembered.

4:3-6 - *Then he said to the close relative, “Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. ⁴ And I thought to inform you, saying, ‘Buy it back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem*

it, redeem it; but if you will not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am next after you.’ ” And he said, “I will redeem it.” ⁵ Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance.” ⁶ And the close relative said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it.”

So as they chat and Boaz gives him the story, this man is ready to step in and redeem the property. But then when he hears there's a widow involved, he has a change of heart. He's willing to buy Naomi's land, but he's not willing to take Ruth's hand. Why? Perhaps he saw that taking on a wife and having more children would then affect the property he does have in the way it would be divided up in an inheritance. So this unnamed relative turns it down. But this opens the way for our hero in the story – Boaz!

4:7-8 - *Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging, to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was a confirmation in Israel. ⁸ Therefore the close relative said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself.” So he took off his sandal.*

This is following with the Levirate marriage laws mentioned in Deuteronomy 25. It's not linked to the tribe of Levi, Levirate is taken from the Latin word *lēvir*, which means 'husband's brother'.

- **Deuteronomy 25:5-10**, *“If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. ⁶ And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. ⁷ But if the man does not want to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate to the elders, and say, ‘My husband's brother refuses to raise up a name to his brother in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother.’ ⁸ Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him. But if he stands firm and says, ‘I do not want to take her,’ ⁹ then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say, ‘So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother's*

house.’¹⁰ And his name shall be called in Israel, ‘The house of him who had his sandal removed.’”

Interesting stuff. Now because this man wasn’t just saying no because he didn’t want to help (most likely he already had a wife and kids, and bringing home another wife may have posed some problems), and because there was another redeemer waiting in the wings (Boaz), this man is spared Ruth spitting a big loogie in his face.

4:9-12 - *And Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech’s, and all that was Chilion’s and Mahlon’s, from the hand of Naomi.¹⁰ Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate. You are witnesses this day.”¹¹ And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said, “We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.¹² May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the Lord will give you from this young woman.”*

Everybody that was witnessing all this chimed in and said, we are witnesses. Way to go Boaz is what they’re thinking. May your offspring be great (boy if they only knew). They want Boaz and Ruth to be like **Rachel and Leah** who bore the 12 sons of Jacob – the 12 tribes of Israel.

- And may you be **famous in Bethlehem**. It’s amazing how God is orchestrating all this. Boaz is a picture of our redeemer – Jesus Christ. Jesus would come from the line of Ruth and Boaz and would be born in Bethlehem. It’s what has made Bethlehem famous today.

Perez was also born by one who was left a widow – Tamar. She was also a Gentile and will be included in the genealogy of Jesus.

5. Promise of Redemption – 4:13-22

4:13-16 - *So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son.¹⁴ Then the*

women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel! ¹⁵ And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him.” ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him.

Naomi did not actually begin to nurse this child. She’s old at this time. She didn’t become this child’s mom. It just means that she supported the child as this child will be a great support to Naomi and a **nourisher of her old age**.

4:17-22 - Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, “There is a son born to Naomi.” And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David. ¹⁸ Now this is the genealogy of Perez: Perez begot Hezron; ¹⁹ Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; ²⁰ Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon; ²¹ Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed; ²² Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.
Obed = servant/serving.

This is an amazing story of Ruth and Boaz. Two people from different sides of the track. Yet God wove their lives together and from them came David, who will be the hope Israel has been looking for. But ultimately it points us to our greater than David – Jesus Christ, the son of David.

- God used quite the family line to bring us to the Messiah. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab! A harlot. Not only did Boaz marry a Gentile, he was born to a Gentile.
- But I’m glad God chose things this way. Why? Because it gives us hope. We’re not out of place no matter how much you may feel it. If God did a great work like this through these people, He can do it through you and me!

Points to Ponder:

1. Rest is Found in the Redeemer.

Just as Ruth found security under the covering of Boaz, we find our true rest in Jesus Christ. Stop striving in your own strength – trust the One who provides eternal rest for your soul.

2. Redemption Comes at a Cost.

Boaz willingly paid the price to redeem Ruth. Our greater Redeemer, Jesus,

paid an even greater price – His own blood – to redeem us from sin. Have you embraced the redemption He offers?

3. Your story is still being written.

Ruth and Boaz could not have known that their marriage would lead to David, and ultimately to Christ. Your obedience today may be part of a much bigger plan tomorrow. Walk faithfully, even when you can't see the full picture. God is at work!