

Full Circle
Ruth 4:7-22
August 29, 2018

Introduction

Last week, we ended with the verses where Boaz gave the closer relative than Boaz one last opportunity to redeem Naomi and Ruth. To this point as far as we know, the closer relative had yet to do anything for the two widows.

Look at Ruth 4:3-6. In verse 3, Boaz is speaking.

³ Then he said to the redeemer, “Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. ⁴ So I thought I would tell you of it and say, ‘Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.’ If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you^[a] will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you.” And he said, “I will redeem it.”

⁵ Then Boaz said, “The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth^[b] the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.” ⁶ Then the redeemer said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.”

[Naomi] was a widow, her sons were dead, and she was beyond childbearing years. To purchase the field from her would then mean that the land would become the property of the kinsman without any fear of it being bought back ... by any of Naomi’s descendants. This kinsman, therefore, could add to his present possessions with no legal way of Naomi ever recovering the land.¹ [With Ruth in the picture, buying the land], this is a far less attractive proposition [to this relative].... The man would be required to marry Ruth, and the income derived from the land would not go directly to [his] estate. Moreover, his own estate possibly would have to be divided with Ruth’s children.²

¹ “Preface,” in *Ruth: A Story of God’s Grace: An Expository Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 101.

² Stephen Dray, *Judges and Ruth*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1997), 153.

In tonight's verses, we will see that Boaz has a much different view of redeeming Ruth and Naomi. Boaz gladly takes the opportunity to redeem them.

Here are Ruth 4:7 through the end of the book.

⁷ Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. ⁸ So when the redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself," he drew off his sandal. ⁹ Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. ¹⁰ Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day."

¹¹ Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, ¹² and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the Lord will give you by this young woman."

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and 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 redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! ¹⁵ He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. ¹⁷ And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

¹⁸ Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, ¹⁹ Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, ²⁰ Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, ²¹ Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, ²² Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

The Significant Gestures

We will break tonight's passage into three sections. In Ruth 4:7-12, we see the significant gestures—the significant gestures.

Remember that the other relative just has refused to be the redeemer when we come to these verses. Here are verses 7-10 again.

⁷ Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. ⁸ So when the redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself,” he drew off his sandal. ⁹ Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. ¹⁰ Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day.”

We see the first significant gesture when verse seven explains an ancient custom. Its use already may have faded away by the time Ruth was written. Otherwise, the explanation would have been unnecessary. Even with the explanation, nobody can be completely sure about the significance of removing the shoe.

However, the shoe may be a sign of power, authority and ownership. For example, in Deuteronomy 11:24, God says to Israel, ‘Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours.’ ‘This may perhaps refer to the practice of gaining formal title to a land by walking through it’ (cf. Josh. 1:3; 14:9). Thus, when the [relative] takes off his sandal and passes it to Boaz, he is yielding and transferring his land rights to Boaz. In this regard, the gesture is a sign, or symbol, of an agreement.³ By the symbolic act of taking off his shoe, and handing it to his friend, ... he freely gave up his right to walk on the soil, in favor of the person who ... acquired [it].”⁴

The elders were more gracious to the relative who refused to redeem Ruth than they were required to be. Listen to Deuteronomy 25:7-10. Those verses describe the normal procedure used when someone refused to act as the redeemer.

³ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 122.

⁴ “Preface,” in *Ruth: A Story of God’s Grace: An Expository Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 111.

Deuteronomy 25:7-10 say:

⁷ And if the man does not wish 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 perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.'

⁸ Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he persists, saying, 'I do not wish to take her,' ⁹ then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' ¹⁰ And the name of his house shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal pulled off.'

[The elders here in Ruth] permit the unnamed kinsman to take off his shoe and give it to Boaz without summoning Ruth to their meeting and having her humiliate him before the residents of the city.⁵

Were they guilty of improper compromise? ... They were not. In the presence of righteousness, the conduct of the unrighteous is exposed. Before men of integrity, a person whose actions are prompted by ulterior motives stands rebuked. His shame ... arises from within himself. His own heart condemns him. Only where righteousness is not practiced consistently by those in positions of responsibility is it necessary to insist on "the letter of the law."⁶

Verses nine and ten have the obvious contrast between Boaz and the other relative. These verses have the second significant gesture in this first section. In verses nine and ten, Boaz summarizes all that he will do for Ruth and Naomi. He reminds the elders and the other people present that they are witnesses to the transaction.

⁵ "Preface," in *Ruth: A Story of God's Grace: An Expository Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 109–110.

⁶ "Preface," in *Ruth: A Story of God's Grace: An Expository Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 110.

In the future, if [Boaz's] claims to the rights to Elimelech's land or his claim to Ruth are ever questioned, [he will] be able to produce the sandal, [and] he also will appeal to this host of witnesses that has observed him gain this right through legal process.... Boaz's speech divides into two parts: a summary of his own role and the legal transaction on the one hand and an explanation of his motivation in seeking the status of [kinsman-redeemer] with respect to the estate of Elimelech on the other. From the narrator's perspective, the twofold reference to "today" highlights Boaz's promptness in fulfilling his promise to Ruth in 3:13 and in the fulfillment of Naomi's words in 3:18.⁷

Verse 3:13 recorded what Boaz said to Ruth on the threshing floor when she asked Boaz to be the redeemer. Here is 3:13.

¹³ Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, as the Lord lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning."

Verse 3:18 had Naomi's assessment after Ruth told her what happened on the threshing floor.

¹⁸ She replied, "Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today."

In verses nine and ten, the writer emphasizes how Boaz fulfilled his promise to Ruth.

Verses 11 and 12 have the witnesses' reaction.

¹¹ Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, ¹² and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the Lord will give you by this young woman."

⁷ Daniel Isaac Block, *Judges, Ruth*, vol. 6, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 719.

The response of the community, in the original text, is merely one word: ‘Witnesses!’ It is as if they are all speaking this one word in unison. This underscores the unity of the people in their answer.⁸

The witnesses then pronounce a blessing on the marriage of Boaz and Ruth.

The opening part of the blessing is the hope that the Lord will cause Ruth to be *‘like Rachel and Leah’*. Rachel and Leah were sisters, the daughters of Laban (Gen. 29–30). ... Jacob had married both of them, and they, along with their concubines, gave birth to the twelve sons of Jacob. Of course, these twelve sons were the [start] of the twelve tribes of Israel.⁹

Rachel is mentioned before Leah although the latter is the older of the two. The reason ... is that Rachel was the beloved wife of Jacob. This is obvious from a text like Genesis 33:1–2, in which Jacob is about to face danger.... He places Rachel right at the rear of his people as they advance.¹⁰

The next part of the blessing calls for Boaz to *‘act worthily in Ephrathah.’* (This is another name for Bethlehem). The word used for *‘worthily’* ... has already been used for Boaz (2:1) and for Ruth (3:11). Thus, this blessing is calling for Boaz to continue to act with integrity and honor in a way that he has already demonstrated in his life. The people further proclaim that they hope that Boaz will *‘be renowned in Bethlehem’*. The text literally says, ‘May the name be called in Bethlehem’; in other words, may Boaz’s name become famous in the history of the town. The whole point here is that the people anticipate that Boaz’s life and actions will speak volumes to others. May Boaz have a good name and a good reputation!¹¹

Now that we have the benefit of history, was the people’s request answered positively?

⁸ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 124.

⁹ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 124–125.

¹⁰ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 125.

¹¹ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 125.

Verse 12 has the final part of blessing with the reference to Tamar, Perez, and Judah. This reference relates to the events recorded in Genesis 38.

Tamar was the wife of Judah's firstborn son. When that son died, the next two sons in line to redeem Tamar never did their duty as the kinsman redeemer. Tamar took matters into her own hands and tricked Judah into fathering twin sons by her after Tamar pretended to be prostitute.

[Although Ruth acted honorably where Tamar did not], ... many similarities [exist] between the stories of Tamar and Ruth. Both women are foreign. (Tamar is an Adullamite), and both resort to the levirate law to continue the lines of descent for their deceased husbands. And both perpetuate the family lines in the tribe of Judah. The people of Bethlehem are from that tribe and are largely descended through the line of Perez. Thus, the reference here is especially relevant to them.¹²

Before we leave this section of the passage, think about how extraordinary the townspeople's blessing on Boaz and Ruth is. Ruth started out as a lowly Moabite woman. Now the townspeople hope that she has a place in Israel like the places that Rachel and Leah occupy. That is another significant gesture in this section.

The Sovereign Gift

Let's pick up the Ruth narrative with the second section of tonight's passage. Verses 4:13-17 are where we see the sovereign gift—the sovereign gift.

Here are verses 13 and 14 first. The sovereign gift is a son for Boaz and Ruth.

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and 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 redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel!"

¹² John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 125–126.

The story of Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi concludes with a glorious resolution of a fundamental issue in the book: the filling of Naomi's emptiness and the birth of a son through whom the royal line of David will eventually appear. Unlike the formal court scene in the gate, the climax of the story occurs in the home of Boaz and Ruth at least nine months later.¹³

The first part of verse 13 implies that Boaz acted immediately to take Ruth and Naomi into his home. The second part is where the verse jumps at least nine months to document Obed's birth. Verse 13 makes it clear that Obed is a gift from God. That is why we can call him the sovereign gift. "[The wording] is the narrator's modest way of identifying a miracle; she who had been unable to bear a child for Mahlon has conceived for Boaz."¹⁴

After verse 13, Naomi takes center stage again. We see that things have come full circle for Naomi. She left Bethlehem full. She came back to Bethlehem empty, except for Ruth. And we know that initially, she was less than thrilled to have Ruth come back with her.

In reaction to the birth of [Ruth's] son, the women of Bethlehem pronounce a blessing on Naomi. This group, or chorus, first appeared in the story back in 1:19. There Naomi had just returned from Moab, and the women, perhaps with a vicious slur, had asked, 'Is this Naomi?' Things have changed indeed from that time to this!¹⁵

This blessing must be interpreted against the backdrop of Naomi's painful and bitter complaint about God in 1:20–21 for the grief she perceived him to have caused her. There is a recognition now that she whose life had been emptied by God has now experienced his filling.¹⁶

¹³ Daniel Isaac Block, *Judges, Ruth*, vol. 6, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 725.

¹⁴ Daniel Isaac Block, *Judges, Ruth*, vol. 6, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 726.

¹⁵ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 131.

¹⁶ Daniel Isaac Block, *Judges, Ruth*, vol. 6, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 726.

Why is Naomi the one being addressed here, and not Ruth? Ruth is now cared for because she is in the family of Boaz. Naomi, on the other hand, is in need of a grandson who will inherit and continue the line of Elimelech. Naomi's hope lies in the offspring of Ruth and Boaz; here is one who will be heir and take care of her in her old age.¹⁷

The birth of the child is not viewed as a solution to a longstanding legal problem but from a practical women's perspective as the solution to Naomi's insecurity. Although they do not use the word, they envision this [boy] providing for her the "rest [or] security" ... that she had tried to procure for her daughter-in-law (cf. 1:9; 3:1). The women are not concerned about the restoration of hereditary land to the clan of Elimelech or raising up a name for Mahlon. They are interested only in the well-being of this widow.¹⁸

The end of verse 14 says, "may his name be renowned in Israel." Here, the writer is speaking of Obed. "To call or mention a person's name in a place means to "to keep the name/fame alive," even after his death, and to perceive the person as living on in his descendants in the place named. In the previous context, the men at the gate had applied the prayer to Boaz, with the desire that his name would live on in Bethlehem. But these women expand the scope of the [Obed's] fame beyond the walls of their town to the nation of Israel as a whole.¹⁹

Did God grant that prayer request?

We have talked about how the women view Obed as the solution to Naomi's long-term wellbeing. We know that from verse 15. Look at that verse again. Speaking of Obed, the women say these words.

¹⁵ He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him."

¹⁷ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 131.

¹⁸ Daniel Isaac Block, *Judges, Ruth*, vol. 6, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 727.

¹⁹ Daniel Isaac Block, *Judges, Ruth*, vol. 6, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 728.

Ruth also receives the praise of the women of the village. On their return from Moab, Ruth had gone unnoticed. The women came out to greet Naomi, but Ruth was not made welcome. Now they say to Naomi that [God] has more than compensated her for the loss of Mahlon and Chilion (4:15b).²⁰

Ruth loves Naomi. In fact, in her action we observe one of the most dramatic demonstrations of the meaning of the Hebrew word for “love.” ... Modern definitions of love tend to view the word as an emotional term. In the Old Testament, love is fundamentally an expression of covenant commitment, the kind of devotion to which Ruth [articulated] in 1:16–17. But “love” is not demonstrated primarily in words; it is expressed in acts of ... placing the welfare of the other ahead of oneself.... More than anyone else in the history of Israel, Ruth embodies the fundamental principle of the nation’s ethic: “You shall love your God with all your heart” (Deut 6:5) “and your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18). In Leviticus 19:34, Moses instructs the Israelites to love the stranger as they love themselves. Ironically, it is this stranger from Moab who shows the Israelites what this means.²¹

Ruth is better for Naomi than seven sons. The reference to “seven sons” [reflects] the ancient Israelite view that the ideal family consisted of seven sons. This is an amazing affirmation of the character of Ruth. All Bethlehem knew she was a noble woman (3:11), but these women place her value above seven sons; [that is] extraordinary compensation for the two sons Naomi had lost!²²

Let’s move on to verse 16 now.

¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse.

²⁰ “Preface,” in *Ruth: A Story of God’s Grace: An Expository Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 121.

²¹ Daniel Isaac Block, *Judges, Ruth*, vol. 6, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 729.

²² Daniel Isaac Block, *Judges, Ruth*, vol. 6, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 729.

Naomi tenderly takes the child, and places him on her own lap. This is a symbolic gesture.... It is a symbol that Naomi views the child as her own in a manner of speaking. He is the heir of her husband's estate and the continuance of her husband's line—almost as though Naomi had produced the child herself.²³

The text then says that Naomi '*became his nurse*'. The Hebrew term for '*nurse*' often bears the sense of someone being one who takes care of another. It is used, for example, in 2 Kings 10:1–5 of those who are guardians of the royal household. Perhaps Naomi continues to live with Ruth and Boaz, and thus she takes on some responsibility for the care of the child.²⁴

We've been calling Obed by name throughout this section. However, verse 17 is where he gets his name.

¹⁷ And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

In Scripture, the father is normally the one who names children.... Sometimes, the mother does ... (1 Sam. 1:20). Why do the women name the child in this instance? The birth of the male heir has obviously become an event in which the whole town is involved! There has been much participation by the town in the marriage of Boaz and Ruth; many of the townspeople had been at the gate and had served as witnesses to the redemptive process. Now many of the women of Bethlehem fully participate in the naming of the child.²⁵

In Hebrew, [Obed] is a participle that literally means 'one serving'. A Hebrew participle indicates an ongoing, continuous action. The idea is that the child will provide aid to Naomi now and into the future. His birth preserves the line and inheritance of Elimelech, Naomi's deceased husband. In this sense, Obed '*has been born to Naomi*'.²⁶

²³ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 133.

²⁴ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 133.

²⁵ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 133–134.

²⁶ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 134.

Obed's service goes well beyond the immediate story of Ruth, Naomi and Boaz. The importance of Obed's lineage is emphasized as the author tells us that Obed will one day be the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David. ... Through Obed came the greatest king in the history of Israel; in that regard Obed is truly a servant of the kingdom! Thus, the storyline broadens. On one level, we are witnessing the history of Naomi, Ruth, Boaz and Obed. But there is a second, higher, tier to the account, and that is the story that leads to David, the man after God's own heart, and the work of God whose providence brought him to the throne of Israel. The royal line of Israel came through this unlikely pairing of Ruth and Boaz!²⁷

The Savior's Genealogy

We have seen the significant gestures and the sovereign gift. The Book of Ruth ends with the Savior's Genealogy—the Savior's Genealogy.

Here are verses 18-22.

¹⁸ Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, ¹⁹ Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, ²⁰ Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, ²¹ Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered ²² Obed, ²² Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

We know that through David's line will come the Messiah. We read the following in Luke's genealogy of Jesus: '... the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz' (Luke 3:31–32). We are to be struck by the way that this small story of Ruth and Boaz fits into the unfolding of God's revelational history. God's sovereignty and providence are at work.²⁸

²⁷ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 134.

²⁸ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 134–135.

The present section is a broader genealogy that traces the descent from seven generations before Obed and then concludes with David. Why does the author begin the genealogy with Perez? In Genesis 38, Perez was born to Judah in the affair with Tamar. It was to Judah that God had promised a royal line through the blessing that Jacob had given to his son... (Gen. 49:8–10).²⁹

The genealogy is selective. It does not list every generation or descendant from Perez to David. Most genealogies in the Bible are not exhaustive; they list only certain names and they are also highly structured. The genealogy in this passage lists ten names. The number ten in Hebrew culture often denotes completion and fulfillment (e.g., the ten plagues, the Ten Commandments, etc.). The idea of the structure before us is that the kingly promise to Judah reaches its climax and crescendo in the appearance of David, the great king of Israel from the tribe of Judah.³⁰

This genealogy is almost exactly what is recorded in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:3–6. The point of its inclusion is so that the reader should understand that the genealogy in Ruth actually finds its ultimate climax in the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Observe how the main characters have faded from the story. Boaz and Ruth are now out of the picture; theirs is not the main story. The emphasis now is the lineage that points to Christ. The coming of the Messiah is the end-all of the book of Ruth.³¹

Conclusion

The genealogy recorded here in the Book of Ruth really is almost exactly like what is recorded in Matthew, but Matthew adds one more thing. He reminds us who was Boaz's mother. Listen to Matthew 1:3-6.

³ and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵ and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of David the king.

²⁹ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 135.

³⁰ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 135–136.

³¹ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 136.

Boaz's mother was Rahab. Who was she?

Joshua 2:1 tells us that Rahab was the prostitute in Jericho who hid the two men sent to spy out the land. Remember what happened in Joshua 2:8-14.

⁸ Before the men lay down, she [Rahab] came up to them on the roof ⁹ and said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. ¹¹ And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. ¹² Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign ¹³ that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death." ¹⁴ And the men said to her, "Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the Lord gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."

Boaz's mother was a prostitute who herself was a convert to Judaism. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why he was more favorably inclined to treat Ruth well when he first met Ruth.

[Really reflect on] the women who appear in the genealogy of Jesus, as recorded by Matthew. Front and center there is Tamar, the Canaanite mother of Perez and Zerah (Matt. 1:3). Then there is Rahab, who didn't just dress up like a prostitute; she really was one! She too found a place in the ancestry of our Lord as she was rescued out of Jericho and brought into the covenant community (Matt. 1:5). Next there was Ruth who, for all her worthiness, was still the Moabitess, a despised foreigner. Finally, there was Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon and former wife of Uriah. That is quite a collection of family portraits!³²

³² Iain M. Duguid, *Esther and Ruth*, ed. Richard D. Phillips and Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 188.

Nor are the men in the family tree of Jesus any better. After all, it was Judah who slept with Tamar without any qualms, all the time thinking she was a prostitute. It was David who arranged for Bathsheba's seduction and Uriah's murder. In addition, in the list of Jesus' ancestors is Manasseh, the greatest idolater among the kings of Judah. Manasseh is the one whose sins were so great that from then on, the exile of God's people was a foregone conclusion. (See 2 Kings 21:10–15; 23:26–27). Together, these men and women make up a remarkable procession of the great unwashed. Why would the Lord Jesus, who could have chosen to be descended from anyone at all, choose to be descended from such a soiled line?³³

Matthew explains Jesus' ancestry in the next section of his Gospel. The angel told Joseph, "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). As Jesus himself put it, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). He came to rescue sinners, people like his own ancestors, people like us. When he came to seek and save that which was lost, he didn't come garbed in special protective clothing, like a scientist suited up to handle bubonic plague samples in a laboratory. At the beginning of his life, Jesus came into this world naked, unprotected, not separated from sinners but descended from a long line of them.³⁴

During his lifetime, [Jesus] was likewise surrounded by sinners. This was the way that people knew Jesus: as the friend of tax collectors and sinners (Matt. 11:19). If he kept shocking company while he was alive, Jesus also kept scandalous company when he died. He was flanked by two thieves at his crucifixion (Matt. 27:38). ... Jesus went out of this world the same way he had arrived, naked and unprotected.³⁵

That is how he would save sinners. He could not save them by staying at a safe distance from them, but only by coming alongside them and identifying with them. ... To save them, Jesus had to be their friend and ultimately perform the greatest act of friendship there is: laying down his life for them. Jesus gave up his life and went down into death, so that he might pay the price that their sins had earned.³⁶

³³ Iain M. Duguid, *Esther and Ruth*, ed. Richard D. Phillips and Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 188.

³⁴ Iain M. Duguid, *Esther and Ruth*, ed. Richard D. Phillips and Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 188.

³⁵ Iain M. Duguid, *Esther and Ruth*, ed. Richard D. Phillips and Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 188–189.

³⁶ Iain M. Duguid, *Esther and Ruth*, ed. Richard D. Phillips and Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 189.

Our sins have paid our admission price into eternal separation from God.... Another way to think of it is that we, with the wages of our sin, have purchased a travel ticket to hell. What Jesus did on the cross was to take that ticket right out of our hands. Instead, he gave us the ticket that he had earned by his righteous life, a ticket that will admit the bearer into God's presence.³⁷

The love of Jesus is thus far greater even than the love of Ruth for Naomi. He left his place in heaven, not just the greener fields of Moab. He left intimate fellowship with the Father for the pain of this fallen world. Jesus didn't merely risk his reputation for us; he bore being made of no reputation, despised and rejected by men. At the moment of his greatest pain and rejection on the cross, however, there was no nearer redeemer to rescue him.³⁸

[Jesus' love] was amazing love because it was shown not to the lovely but ... to sinners. In Jesus, God's love came to people like us, those who have repeatedly said and thought and done things that we ought not to have said or thought or done. Some of our sins are large and some relatively small, but each and every one of them would be enough to condemn us for all eternity.³⁹

God doesn't leave us as he found us.... Like Naomi, when we open our hearts to God, we will discover that he has already been at work in our lives, and he will continue to be at work in us until we are unrecognizably changed. The bitter Mara who returned to Bethlehem was transformed into a Naomi who could recognize God's hand of blessing at work. God's grace has enormous transforming power. Yet that grace works only in the lives of those whose eyes are opened to the desperateness of their need for salvation, who know that they can do nothing except cling to Christ.⁴⁰

³⁷ Iain M. Duguid, *Esther and Ruth*, ed. Richard D. Phillips and Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 189.

³⁸ Iain M. Duguid, *Esther and Ruth*, ed. Richard D. Phillips and Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 189.

³⁹ Iain M. Duguid, *Esther and Ruth*, ed. Richard D. Phillips and Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 189.

⁴⁰ Iain M. Duguid, *Esther and Ruth*, ed. Richard D. Phillips and Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 190–191.

[The Book of Ruth] is a story of the lives of a few characters in a short period of time and in a small geographical setting. And yet God uses them to accomplish much higher purposes. Indeed, they help to establish the line of the Messiah, the promised seed of the woman! This truth should be a good lesson to all Christians. All believers serve a greater purpose than merely what goes on in their immediate lives.⁴¹

The key is for us to abide in Christ. Remember Jesus' words in John 15:5.

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Next Week: Philemon Study Begins (with Tom Holland)

⁴¹ John Currid, *From Bitter to Sweet*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England; Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books, 2012), 137.