

## Ruth & Boaz a story of Redemption

In its most general sense, salvation means deliverance.

The message of salvation is the good news that God has rescued us from sin and death through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now one particular kind of deliverance is Redemption.

The word itself comes from the market place – It's a commercial term used to describe salvation as a business transaction.

At its most basic, redemption is the purchase of something that has been lost – It is the securing of a release by the payment of a ransom.

In any redemption there are always 3 parts:

- **The property that is lost and needs to be redeemed**
- **The price that must be paid to redeem it**
- **And the person who is able and willing to serve as the redeemer**

Now one of the most beautiful stories of redemption is told in the book of Ruth.

The story begins in sadness – Through a series of tragic circumstances, Naomi and her daughter in law Ruth found themselves walking from Moab to Bethlehem.

They had both lost their husbands, which was not only a cause for great sorrow, but it also left them without food, land or protection.

Naomi had been away for more than a decade, and had suffered so much during those years that when she straggled back into town, people hardly recognised her:

**Ruth 1 : 19 - 20**

In those days the people still followed the biblical pattern for welfare – The poor, especially widows, orphans and aliens, were allowed to walk through the fields and gather whatever grain the harvesters left behind.

Ruth qualified on nearly every count: She was a poor widow, from Moab, and so said to Naomi:

**2 : 2 Let >>>>**

However Ruth was still in need of redemption:

- **She barely had enough food to survive and so was nearly destitute**
- **She had lost her husband and so was still in sorrow**
- **And she faced danger as a stranger living at the time of the Judges when “everyman did what was right in his own eyes”**

Naomi had good reason to fear what might happen to her while she was out in the fields:

**V 22**

All these difficulties meant that Ruth needed a redeemer – She was in economic, emotional, and social bondage.

And since she could not produce an heir on her own, there was no way she could redeem herself.

Ruth's impoverishment should remind us of humanity's spiritual condition, for we too are in need of a redeemer.

Humanity is in such intense spiritual bondage that we cannot escape from it by ourselves – We can only be released by a redeemer.

Thankfully, the message of salvation promises release from our sins.

In the NT the various words for “redemption” are all used in connection with the person and work of **THE** redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Jesus has released us from our slavery from sin:

**Rom 3 : 23 – 24**

In Jesus we have a Redeemer who provides exactly the redemption we need – Release from sin, guilt wrath, and death.

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The message of salvation is a message of redemption.

As we have said, there are 3 requirements for redemption. One is the property that is lost and needs to be redeemed – The second is someone to serve as the redeemer. And this is where Ruth's story really begins to get interesting.

In the providence of God, it happened that Ruth ended up in the field of the most eligible bachelor in Bethlehem – Boaz.

He was everything a young girl could want in a husband:

- **He was godly in his speech**
- **Obedient to God's word**
- **Generous in going beyond the letter of the law in providing Ruth with extra food and water**
- **He was pure in sexual conduct**
- **And to cap it all he was rich**

The most important thing of all, however, was that Boaz was related to Naomi, and therefore qualified to become Ruth's redeemer.

### **Ruth 2 : 20**

Redemption was always a family matter – The right and responsibility to redeem someone's land fell to a close relative, a kinsman-redeemer.

If an Israelite was in desperate financial straits he could sell his field or even himself into slavery – But the responsibility for redemption fell to his kinsman.

God intended that the ransom be paid by those who had the greatest personal interest in redemption – The man's own flesh and blood.

Now the fact the redeemer was always a kinsman gives us an important insight into redemption in Jesus Christ.

Like everything else in scripture, the book of Ruth has to be understood in relation to Christ's person and work.

And so what we see is: Boaz, living in Bethlehem is Ruth's kinsman redeemer and Jesus, born in Bethlehem is our kinsman redeemer.

The right and responsibility of redemption always rest on the shoulders of a kinsman – So in order to accomplish our redemption it was necessary for God the Eternal Son to become a man.

The price to redeem us from sin had to be paid by a man of flesh and blood, a member of the family of humanity.

Our redemption could never be accomplished by an angel, or a beast, or anything else except a perfect human being.

Redemption is one of the primary reasons why God the eternal Son became a man. Theologians call this the doctrine of the incarnation – It simply means that Jesus was both fully God and fully man.

He had human nature as well as divine nature – In His true deity He was very God of very God; and in His genuine humanity, He was a man among men.

The fullest explanation of the relationship between Christ's incarnation and our redemption is provided in:

### **Heb 2 : 11**

Here is the remarkable truth – Jesus calls us His brothers and sisters because He is made of the same stuff as we are.

His reason for becoming God incarnate is to secure our freedom from sin, death, and the Devil:

### **V 14 – 17**

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For Jesus to be our redeemer, it was necessary for Him to become our kinsman – To be not just God the Son, but also a son of David.

So Jesus was conceived of the H.S. and born of the virgin Mary

By His incarnation He became our blood brother, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. Because He was a real human being, He was able to purchase our true redemption – For redemption in Christ is kinsman redemption.

The third thing redemption requires is the purchase price – In addition to the property to be redeemed, and the person to redeem it, there is also the actual payment to be made.

It's at this point in Ruth's romantic adventure that there is an unexpected complication.

Naomi realised that Boaz was eligible to serve as kinsman redeemer and decided to do a little matchmaking:

### **Ruth 3 : 1 – 4**

Then when Boaz was asleep, Ruth crept up, uncovered his feet, and lay down beside him.

What she was really doing was asking Boaz to marry and redeem her – Not only was she proposing marriage, she was also asking Boaz to raise up an heir for Naomi's family, which would include buying Naomi's property.

### **V 8 – 9**

This was according to the custom of those days – If a man was willing to serve a redeemer, he would signal his intentions by spreading the corner of his blanket over the woman.

Boaz was more than willing to be the kinsman redeemer, but the complication was that he had a rival.

There was another man in town who was also eligible to redeem Naomi and Ruth. And Boaz says,

### **V 12 – 13**

Since this other man was an even closer relative than Boaz, he had first refusal – So the question becomes, 'Will Ruth get her man, or will another man get her first?'

When morning came Boaz went to the city gates to find the nearer kinsman:

### **4 : 1 – 4**

It must have sounded like a golden opportunity, especially as Boaz wanted to take advantage of it himself.

After an initial outlay of capital, the property would be his to manage, and eventually to pass on to his family – And so he was eager to redeem it.

The Hebrew says **"I, I will redeem it"** as if to show just how keen he was.

But then Boaz introduced a twist to the deal:

### **V 5**

The point was that on the day he bought the land, with all its assets, he would also inherit several liabilities.

He would become responsible for the maintenance of Naomi and Ruth – And more than that, he would be required to raise up an heir for them.

Boaz wanted to impress upon the other kinsman the high cost of redemption – For redemption always comes at a price, and in this case, the redeemer would be obligated to marry Ruth, a young woman almost certain to bear children.

As a result the field would never be his to keep, it would always belong to Ruth and her children – Instead of acquiring more property for himself, the redeemer would have to invest his own capital into someone else's estate.

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The kinsman had nothing to gain by becoming a redeemer – It was only an opportunity to make a sacrifice.

In the end, it was the high price of redemption that made the nearer kinsman unwilling to be the redeemer – And once he realised that redemption was out of his price range, he forfeited his right to redeem:

### V 6

Twice the man said, “I cannot redeem” but the reason he could not was because he would not – He was unwilling to endanger his estate.

The nearer kinsman’s refusal to redeem serves to emphasise, by way of contrast, the sacrifice of Boaz – He was able to redeem because he was a man of wealth.

But more than that, he was willing to redeem.

And as soon as the nearer kinsman threw down his sandal, Boaz made a public declaration of redemption:

### V 9 – 10

Boaz was willing to pay the full price of redemption.

It’s not hard to see that there are many similarities between the redemption Boaz provided for Ruth, and the redemption God provided in Jesus Christ.

- **In both cases there was property to be redeemed from its lost and sorry condition**
- **In both cases there was a person to redeem it, a close relative who was eligible to serve as the kinsman redeemer**
- **And in both cases, the redeemer was willing personally to underwrite the full cost of redemption**

In the NT the term “Redemption” is always used to emphasise the costliness of our salvation – There was a high and terrible price Jesus had to pay in order to purchase lost human beings from their bondage to sin:

### Mark 10 : 45

The word translated here as “ransom” is one of the Greek words for “redemption” – The price Jesus paid to redeem us was His very life.

Quite literally, it took a king’s ransom to set us free sin – The life of Jesus Christ, The King of Heaven and Earth.

The way Jesus described His saving work here is significant – He gave His life as a ransom **for** us.

In other words, Jesus died in our place, giving up His life as the substitute for our sins – God accepted the life of His Son as a payment on our behalf, a ransom in our place.

Just consider the costliness of the redemption Christ accomplished – For as costly as it was for Boaz to redeem Ruth, it cannot be compared with the price of the redemption in Jesus Christ.

Whereas Boaz endangered his estate, Jesus sacrificed His very body on the cross of Calvary – He died as a ransom to set us free from sin.

Boaz paid in the currency of the day – Jesus paid with His own life-blood – It was the perfect redemption, the purchase of blood.

### 1 Pet 1 : 18 – 19

Jesus is the only redeemer because no one else could or even would pay the full price of our redemption – No other religious faith has ever claimed that the One and only Supreme Deity shed His own blood to save His people.

## Ruth & Boaz a story of Redemption

Redemption requires the ultimate sacrifice, and Jesus:

- **Was willing to pay the price because He loves His people**
- **And He was able to pay it because he is God the Eternal Son, which makes His death of inestimable worth**

### **Ps 49 : 7 – 9**

What the Psalmist said is true – No mere man can redeem the life of another man – But Jesus is God as well as man, and therefore He was able to purchase men for God.

Theologians have sometimes wondered who it was God paid for our redemption. Some of the early church Fathers assumed that our ransom was paid to Satan, so that in effect redemption was a deal with the Devil.

“At the Cross”, they said, “God delivered Christ over to Satan in exchange for the souls the Evil One held captive”.

The obvious problem with this view is that God does not owe Satan anything. Rather than giving anything up to Satan, redemption is part of God’s plan for destroying Satan altogether.

The fact is that the Bible never tells us who, if anyone, received payment for our redemption – And if this seems hard to understand, we need to remember that analogies always have their limitations.

The Bible is content to mention the high price of our redemption without specifying who received it.

If anything, redemption is a price God pays to Himself in order to loose us from the bonds of sin – But the point is not so much who received the ransom, as the simple fact that Jesus was willing and able to pay it.

The grace of God did not come cheap – When Scripture says that “**we were bought with a price**”, it is good for us to remember what a costly price it was, and not to set Christ’s work at a discount.

If we are ever tempted to take salvation in Christ for granted, this can only be because we have somehow forgotten that we were “**bought with his own blood**”.

There is one last thing to be said about redemption – In the Bible Redemption is always a romance.

Since ‘redemption’ is the commercial term for salvation, it is easy to think of it as little more than a business transaction.

But as far as Boaz was concerned, redemption was far more than a rearrangement of his investment portfolio – It was a matter of the heart.

Once Ruth proposed marriage, Boaz behaved like a man suddenly and madly in love.

This was because Ruth’s kindness touched his heart.

### **Ruth 3**

As soon as Ruth asked Boaz to serve as her kinsman redeemer, he said:

#### **V 10**

What pleased Boaz was that Ruth did not marry for youth, or money, but only for covenant love.

Boaz responded to Ruth’s love with the romance of redemption – He did more than provide for her, he married her, and they entered into an unbreakable covenant of intimate relationship.

The love Boaz had for Ruth is made all the more remarkable by the fact she was a foreigner – The Bible repeatedly draws attention to the fact she was from Moab.

Now this is significant because Moabites were outside the covenant and thus explicitly excluded from entering God’s Tabernacle.

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But Ruth had sworn her allegiance to the God of Israel – When she decided to accompany Naomi on her return to Bethlehem she said:

**1 : 16 Don't >>>>**

When she arrived in Israel, Boaz welcomed her under the protective wings of God's providential care:

**2 : 12**

Their eventual marriage was one of the first signs that God loves Gentiles as well as Jews – Their multi-ethnic romance illustrates not only redemption but reconciliation as well.

The Bible then takes us right up to the threshold of their honeymoon chamber:

**4 : 13**

And then it takes us to the nursery, where their son was born:

**V 16**

This is all part of the romance of redemption – Boaz didn't simply write a cheque to pay the ransom and then go back to his own business.

No, when he agreed to be Ruth's redeemer, he undertook marital as well as financial obligations.

He went from the market place to conduct a business transaction, to the living room and share the rest of his life with her.

And it's the same with redemption in Jesus Christ.

The fact that Jesus was willing to pay the full ransom price to redeem us from our sins shows how much God loves us.

The Bible often compares the relationship between Jesus and His church to the relationship between a loving husband and a faithful wife:

The prophet Isaiah says **"as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you"** (62:5)

And in:

**Eph 5 : 31 – 32**

The Bible speaks in this way to help us understand how deeply, how tenderly, and how passionately Jesus loves us.

No-one can accept Jesus as Saviour without also loving Him as Spouse – To receive the message of Redemption is to be married to Christ – To become God's beloved possession.

For we are no longer our own, because we have been bought at a price:

**1 Cor 6 : 19 – 20**

Those of us who belong to God by redemption, must now live for Him, must now honour Him, must now glorify Him, and must now praise Him.

We no longer belong to ourselves, we belong body and soul to our Redeemer, and like every aspect of salvation, our redemption is not of our doing, but is all of God and for His glory.