

Ruth 4

Verses 1 - 6

Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the redeemer of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, “Come over here, friend, sit down here.” And he came over and sat down. ² Then he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down. ³ And he said to the redeemer, “Naomi, who has returned from the land of Moab, has to sell the plot of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. ⁴ So I thought that I would inform you, saying, ‘Buy *it* before those who are sitting *here*, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem *it*, redeem *it*; but if not, tell me so that I may know; for there is no one except you to redeem *it*, and I am 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 acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance.” ⁶ Then the redeemer said, “I cannot redeem *it* for myself, otherwise I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem *it* for yourself; you *may have* my right of redemption, since I cannot redeem *it*.”

¹ Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the redeemer of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, “Come over here, friend, sit down here.” And he came over and sat down. ² Then he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down.

In those days the city gate was the place where the city's business was conducted. It was the equivalent of the modern city hall.

Apparently, land transactions had to be witnessed by at least 10 elders.

Much later in Jewish history, this was the number of male Jews that was required in order to establish a synagogue.

³ And he said to the redeemer, “Naomi, who has returned from the land of Moab, has to sell the plot of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech.

Since Elimelech died and had no heir, Naomi owned the land and had the option to sell it to the nearest kinsman.

⁴ So I thought that I would inform you, saying, ‘Buy *it* before those who are sitting *here*, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem *it*, redeem *it*; but if not, tell me so that I may know; for there is no one except you to redeem *it*, and I am after you.’” And he said, “I will redeem *it*.”

The nearest relative decided to redeem it until Boaz explained the full terms of the sale.

⁵ Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance.”

Boaz reminded the nearest kinsman that if you buy the land you must also marry Ruth and give her a son. Was this true according to the law?

See Deut. 25:5-6

⁵ “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 have relations with her and take her to himself as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her. ⁶ It shall then be that the firstborn to whom she gives birth shall assume the name of his father’s deceased brother, so that his name will not be wiped out from Israel.

This law did not apply to Ruth because both brothers had died.

However, there was another law that did apply to Ruth.

See Num. 27:8-11

⁸ Further, you shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘If a man dies and has no son, then you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter. ⁹ And if he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. ¹⁰ If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father’s brothers. ¹¹ And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his nearest relative in his own family, and he shall take possession of it; and it shall be a statutory ordinance to the sons of Israel, just as the LORD has commanded Moses.’”

This law specifies who the nearest kinsman’s was if a man died without a son. There was a specific order to follow in making that determination.

However, this law does not say that the nearest male relative had to marry the widow and perform the duty of a husband’s brother but this may have been the intent or the accepted interpretation of this law.

⁶ Then the redeemer said, “**I cannot redeem *it* for myself, otherwise I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem *it* for yourself; you *may have* my right of redemption, since I cannot redeem *it*.**”

Since the nearest relative gave up his right to redeem the land, Boaz was next in line to redeem the land and take Ruth as a wife.

But how could this jeopardize his (the nearest kinsman’s) inheritance. The following is one possibility.

Boaz was a rich man and already had workers taking care of his land. He could do the same with this new property. The nearest kinsman may not have had the financial means to have workers oversee this new property and thereby both properties would have suffered some loss from his divided attention.

Before we continue on, this is a good time to revisit the issue about whether Boaz was married to another woman before he married Ruth.

See Deut. 25:5 again.

⁵ **“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 have relations with her and take her to himself as *his* wife, and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her.”**

A number of commentators have stated that because the brothers lived together this means they were not married. But that is not the case at all. The brother that died was married and he was “living with his brothers”.

They probably assume the brother would surely be unmarried because if a married brother had to marry his dead brother’s wife then this would make him a bigamist. However, this law was an exception to the general rule in order to keep the land within the family.

One can understand why most people want to believe that Boaz was a single man. The whole story of a young widow that had lost everything, but trusted in God and then meet a rich single man is romantic and very compelling.

But the text is silent about his marital status and we cannot say with any certainty that he was or wasn’t married at the time he married Ruth.

By the way, this exception to the law does not justify men marrying more than one woman for any other reason. Abraham and others broke the law by doing so.

Verses 7 – 12

⁷ Now this was *the custom* in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of *land* to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave *it* to another; and this was the *way of confirmation* in Israel. ⁸ So the redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy *it* for yourself.” And he removed his sandal. ⁹ Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. ¹⁰ Furthermore, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be eliminated from his brothers or from the court of his *birth* place; you are witnesses today.” ¹¹ And all the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, “*We are witnesses*. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem. ¹² Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the descendants whom the Lord will give you by this young woman.”

⁷ Now this was *the custom* in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of *land* to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave *it* to another; and this was the *way of confirmation* in Israel. ⁸ So the redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy *it* for yourself.” And he removed his sandal.

Here the drawing off of the sandal was in place of a written contract. We don't know for sure when this custom began but it ended before the time of Samuel (1105 to 970 BC). This is based on the assumption that Samuel wrote the book of Ruth.

The transfer of land by written records was practiced in the days of Jeremiah the Prophet (740 to 685 BC).

See Jeremiah 32:8-12

⁹ “So I bought the field which was in Anathoth from Hanamel my uncle's son, and I weighed out the silver for him, seventeen shekels of silver. ¹⁰ And I signed and sealed the deed, and called in witnesses, and weighed out the silver on the scales. ¹¹ Then I took the deeds of purchase, both the sealed copy containing the terms and conditions and the open copy; ¹² and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the sight of Hanamel my uncle's son and in the sight of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, in the sight of all the Jews who were sitting in the courtyard of the guard.

⁹ Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon.

Boaz had the contract (the shoe of the nearest kinsman) indicating he was the legal buyer of the land but it still required witnesses (the elders of the city).

¹⁰ Furthermore, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be eliminated from his brothers or from the court of his *birth* place; you are witnesses today.

Boaz was buying the land from Naomi, which included the obligation to take Ruth as his wife and raise up a son to carry on the family name of Elimelech.

¹² Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the descendants whom the Lord will give you by this young woman.”

Judah and Tamar, a non-Israelite, had a son named Perez. Boaz and Ruth, a Moabite, had a son named Obed.

Both of these sons became part of the genealogy that led to the Christ.

See Matt 1:3-5

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

Verses 13 - 15

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he had relations with her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. ¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. ¹⁵ May he also be to you one who restores life and sustains your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he had relations with her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

Children are a gift from the Lord. ☺

¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. ¹⁵ May he also be to you one who restores life and sustains your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”

The narrative returns to Naomi and her reversal of fortune. At one point in time she felt like God had taken everything away from her. Now she was blessed with a redeemer (a grandson named Obed) and had the love of Ruth which was better than 7 sons.

Life is full of trials but our faith in God and the love of fellow believers will sustain us until God comes to our rescue and restores our fortunes.

Verses 16 - 17

¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse. ¹⁷ And the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi!” So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

It was only natural that Naomi would be the infant's full-time nurse but it was unusual that the neighboring women came up with the boy's name. The name Obed means either worshipper or servant. Obed being called the son of Naomi was not unusual because it was common in the Old Testament for the term “son” to be used of grandsons and even great grandsons.

Verses 18 - 22

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

This genealogy gives us a good clue to the time frame of the Book of Ruth.

See chart 405

Ruth to David - 4 generations

| Person | Born | Died | Years |
|--------|------|------|-------|
| Ruth | 1130 | 1060 | 70 |
| Obed | 1100 | 1030 | 70 |
| Jesse | 1070 | 1000 | 70 |
| David | 1040 | 970 | 70 |

Ruth takes place around 1110 to 1100 BC

| | | |
|--------------|------|--------------|
| 1st marriage | 1110 | 20 years old |
| 2nd marriage | 1100 | 30 years old |

David lived for 70 years, so if we assume the 3 generations that lived before him, lived about the same number of years, then the time frame for the life of Ruth was about 1130 to 1060 BC.

If she got married the first time at 20 years of age and the second time to Boaz at the age of 30 then the time frame for the Book of Ruth was about 1110 to 1100 BC.