



**BREAD IN BETHLEHEM SERIES: Part 5**  
**THE PROVIDENCE THAT PROVIDES FOR US**  
Kevin Presley

Welcome to Let the Bible Speak. Today, we come to the final lesson in our series “Bread in Bethlehem” from the Book of Ruth. We have followed a family as they left home to escape famine and learned about the tragedies and trials they suffered in that time. And now we have followed them home and seen them find a new start by the grace of God. These things did not simply happen. Whoever wrote, the book of Ruth, whether it be Samuel or some other scribe, did not merely record a beautiful story for us to read. They were writing to show us how God has taken the fabric of lives and events and woven them together into the tapestry of salvation. Ruth may have been an obscure Moabitess who was made famous in Bethlehem, but she became part of God’s great scheme of redemption.

Let’s read from the closing scene of this story, recorded in Ruth 4:9-13. ““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. 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." 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. 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." 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." When Naomi returned to Bethlehem with Ruth, because of all she had suffered, she felt that the hand of God was against her. But instead, God’s hand was UPON her and working THROUGH her situation to the good of us all.

Where we left off in the story of Ruth last week, she and Naomi have finally returned to the town of Bethlehem after all the turmoil and heartache they had experienced in the land of Moab. They are both widows and are destitute. The famine is over and there is finally a harvest underway, but Naomi and

Ruth have no fields to harvest. Naomi is bankrupt and her land has been sold. They were therefore at the mercy of neighbors and relatives who would allow them to go behind their workers and pick up the leftovers of barley from their fields. God's law required them to leave some in the corners and hard-to-reach places for the poor to come and glean. So, Ruth, goes out to do just that and happens to go to the field of a wealthy bachelor in Bethlehem, named Boaz. From her viewpoint, it was a coincidence, but from God's perspective, it was providence.

Boaz was a kind and gracious man who immediately noticed this young Moabite woman and was very generous with her. He not only allowed her to follow his workers and pick up what was left; he instructed them to leave extra for her and let her take all she wanted. He even fed her and sent her home that evening with extra provisions. This probably seemed to her as nothing more than her meeting a kind-hearted and generous neighbor but that night, when she told her mother-in-law Naomi what has happened, Naomi had other ideas. I can only imagine the relief that came over her face when Ruth told her that she had met Boaz and how he had treated her. It may have been the first time she had smiled in years. She knew Boaz because he was family. He was a close relative of her late husband, Elimelech. Not only that, but he was also wealthy, and he was eligible. And so, in her mind, a plan was immediately hatched.

As I began to explain last week, there were laws and traditions built into the Law of Moses that worked in Naomi's favor. Family rights and family trees were so important to God and to His people, the Israelites, that God incorporated into His law provisions to preserve the family and their family line and their property. There was for example, the Year of Jubilee, which came every 50 years and was basically a reset of property rights and possessions. Debts were cleared, indentured servants were freed, property was reclaimed and restored. That was once every half-century.

In the meantime, closely related to that practice, were two other laws known as the Law of the Kinsman-Redeemer and the Law of Levirate marriage. As the name suggests, the Law of the Kinsman-Redeemer said that a kinsman (or a relative) had the right to buy back property that was lost and to let the bankrupt family member repay the debt or reclaim their land under much more favorable terms. This person was called a Goel, which means a Redeemer. I pointed out that for one to be a kinsman-redeemer they had to meet three qualifications: they had to be legally worthy (that is they had to be a relative with the nearest of kin being first in line); they had to be wealthy enough to purchase the property; and they had to be willing to do so. No one could force this role upon them. If the nearest relative declined to buy the land, it went to the next, and then the next, and so forth, until someone redeemed the land. Now then, if the man whose land had been lost had died and he had no sons, the Law of Levirate marriage then applied and his brother (and this was apparently expanded to include others as time went by), this person was then to marry the deceased man's widow and have a son with her to ensure that the family line would continue. We'll see today one of the reasons that was important. But these two laws will now change Ruth and Naomi's lives.

Naomi told Ruth to go and get a bath, put on her best dress, get herself all fixed up and go back to see Boaz that evening. When he had finished his work and eaten his supper, he would lay down with that day's harvest to protect it and would sleep for the night. She told her to wait until he fell asleep and to quietly go and uncover his feet and lay down at his feet. What was that about? It was nothing sensual or erotic. It was a symbolic gesture. It was an appeal. The bible says in Ruth 3, beginning in the sixth verse: "So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her. 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. Now it happened at midnight that

the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet. 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." So, you see, this was a symbol of her seeking refuge and redemption from this man who was able to do what the law stipulated and redeem her family's estate. Not only that, but to be her husband and raise up the children that her and Naomi's son had not been able to have. Somewhere in all this Boaz came to love her and 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. 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." (Ruth 3:10-11).

There was a hitch in this plan though. Boaz told her that there was a man who was a closer relative to Elimelech than he was and by law, the right to redeem the property would go to him first. He said to wait until morning, and they would go to the city gate and get the matter all sorted out. So, the next morning, to the town gates he went (which is where business was transacted in that day), and he saw the man passing by. Boaz called him aside and then the bible says he gathered ten elders of the city to be witnesses and he had them all sit down, and he explained: "Now here's the deal... he told him of Ruth's plight and that she needs someone to redeem her land. That right falls to you first since you're more closely related to Elimelech. But if you don't want to redeem it (remember, the man had to be willing), then I'm next in line and I'll redeem it. The man was familiar with what it meant to be a goel and he gladly agreed to step in and redeem the land. But what he didn't anticipate was the need for a Levirate marriage. Boaz said, "wait, there's more to this. If you redeem the land, since her husband died without children, you'll have to marry Ruth too and raise up sons with her." Well, that threw a wrench in the whole deal because this man was apparently already married and had children and such an arrangement would unravel the inheritance he already had in place for his family and so, he had to decline. That meant that the right to redeem the land and marry Ruth now fell to Boaz and arrangement was made official. Boaz then bought back the property of Ruth and Naomi and took Ruth to be his bride and they apparently lived happily ever after.

That's a wonderful heart-warming story. It's an ancient Hallmark movie, I guess. But it's much more than that. It's the story of salvation in more ways than one. I want you to see how God's hand was on all of this. These events did not transpire by accident or happenstance. God was working first, for the good of His people then. He personally redeemed Ruth (along with Naomi) by bringing her to the field of Boaz and by the means He graciously provided in His law, providing for her in her great need. You see, God's law (especially in the Old Testament) sometimes doesn't seem to make much sense to us. We read the book of Leviticus and we think "how strange!" "Why would God tell His people to do this or that?" But friend, God had a purpose for all those things. We may not completely understand them since we are so far removed from that time and that culture, but God's word is always right, and His ways are always perfect and wise. "The law of the Lord is perfect..." the Psalmist said in Psalm 19:7.

His laws and His ways not only provided for and protected His people then, in one way or another, they foreshadowed or helped point His people to the ultimate fulfilling of His promises in Christ Jesus. The law pointed forward to Christ. The events that took place under the law are part of the great mosaic of salvation – Christ Jesus, the Lord. And the events of the book of Ruth are no different. Just as Ruth was lost and broken and an alien to the kingdom of God, so were we. We were bankrupted by sin. We did not know God and were aliens to His grace and to His kingdom. (Ephesians 2:12) Like Ruth, who was called to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law, when we hear the gospel, we are being called to redemption and a new life in Christ and in His kingdom. When we, like Ruth, respond to the gospel call in simple, trusting, obedient faith, we then follow Him. When we turn our back on the world and follow

Him in obedient faith, He redeems us with His precious blood. He becomes our Goel, our Kinsman-Redeemer. He is legally worthy. He laid aside His heavenly glory and wrapped Himself in a mortal robe of flesh and became One of us in order that he might be our Kinsman-Redeemer. Galatians 4:4, "When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law." There was one who was nearer of kin to us than He and that was Adam and those of his earthly race, but man was not able to redeem himself. All men are sinners and therefore cannot redeem his own race. There were ten witnesses that testified to God's people that they needed another redeemer, the Law which came upon trembling, smoking Mt. Sinai, that declared the sinfulness of man and his inability to redeem himself. (Galatians 3:10-19) So, Jesus agreed to come and redeem those who would trust and obey Him. He was ABLE to redeem us with the price of His precious ruby-red blood shed upon the cross. "And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,". (Revelation 5:9) And He was WILLING to redeem us. No one forced Him to suffer what He suffered on Calvary for us. ""I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd GIVES His life for the sheep...No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself..." (John 10:11, 18). Oh, how could we not love Him in return!

This isn't the end of the story. God's providence was not only working for them, but He was also working for us. In the story of Ruth, God was fulfilling promises that went back a LONG way. God's promise made in Genesis 3:15 to one day send a Redeemer to save the lost world was unfolded step by step until it was fulfilled in that little cradle in Bethlehem thousands of years later. God promised a savior would come from the seed of the woman, Eve. He then narrowed it to the family of Seth. He later channeled it through the line of Abraham, and then more specifically, his son, Isaac. Then of the sons of Isaac, Jacob was selected instead of Esau. And then out of all of Jacob's sons, God chose Judah. It would be from the line of Judah, that a king and a throne would be established over His people. That king would one day be David. David was then told in 2 Samuel 7:12 "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom." That's a promise given to David of Jesus, the Christ. Therefore, anyone who was in the direct lineage between Judah (in Genesis) and King David would be an ancestor of the promised Messiah – the Christ. Well, who was Boaz? He was the descendant of Salmon and Rahab (do you remember her? She was another Gentile who came to trust in God). Read the genealogy of King David in 1 Chronicles chapter 2. See how it starts with Jacob and then Judah, all the way down to David, the fleshly ancestor, and the kingly picture of Jesus Christ.

Now then, read what happened in Ruth 4:13 and 17, "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.... And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David." Do you see how God was at work? God chose to weave the grim story of an obscure pagan girl into the glorious story of His Son. Here is a formerly cursed Moabite becoming the great-grandmother of King David, and thus the ancestor of Jesus, the Christ, all because God provided her with a redeemer and through her story, He provided US with a redeemer. For just as she laid down at the feet of Boaz to take shelter under his wings so the prophet Malachi would later point his prophetic telescope into the future and say in Malachi 4:2 that one would arise for all of us "with healing in His wings." And 400 years later, Jesus Christ came stepping down the starry stairway of heaven and through a virgin's womb, who descended from Judah, and Boaz, and David, He entered time and space becoming a man and He became OUR Goel, our Kinsman-Redeemer. Have you come to trust in Him? Have you obeyed the gospel and become an heir to the redemption that He purchased at Calvary? I hope you'll follow Him in faith today and put Him on in baptism and become a child of the King.

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