

How Boaz Is a Type of Christ

Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the Lord who has not withdrawn His kindness to the living and to the dead." Naomi said to her, "This man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeeming relatives." Then Ruth the Moabite said, "He even told me, 'You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.' " Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is better, my daughter, that you go with his young women, for in someone else's field you might be harmed." So she stayed close to the young women of Boaz to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law (Ruth 2:20-23).

A clue to the remainder of the story is revealed when Naomi informs Ruth that Boaz was, in fact, a relative somehow connected to them through her deceased husband, Elimelech (see also Ruth 2:1). Subsequently, Boaz was qualified to become a "redeemer" for the women if he so chose and if others concurred.

In the Old Testament, the redeemer was a relative who would literally redeem people and property. If someone sold themselves into slavery/servitude to pay off a debt, the redeemer was the family member who could purchase their freedom (Lev. 25:35–55). If a widow was in need, the redeemer would care for her (Ruth 4:4–10), and if someone was murdered, the redeemer would avenge the crime (Num. 35:9–34). If someone was going to lose land because of poverty, the redeemer was the family member who would save the land by paying off the debt (Lev. 25:23–34).

What's curious about Naomi's statement is that her words were true in the spirit, but not the letter, of the law. Boaz, in fact, had no legal obligation to Ruth because she wasn't a

blood relative like Naomi. Furthermore, Boaz wasn't the closest relative to Naomi; another man was technically the legal redeemer. But because Naomi loved Ruth so dearly, she considered her as a daughter and expected her to be treated as such. Furthermore, in her conversion, it seems that Ruth was no longer to be seen as anything less than a fully respected and cared-for member of God's people. In this, we see that sometimes we feel closer to people in God's family than we do to those in our own family.

With wise motherly counsel, Naomi encouraged Ruth to stay close to Boaz and his workers because he was a godly and safe man. So the women settled into a routine of sorts, and Ruth continued working as the harvest was coming to an end. By that time, the relationship of Boaz and Ruth seems to have cooled, as they weren't pursuing any sort of official romantic relationship. And, because it was almost harvest time, time was running out for any sort of fairytale ending. This set the stage for the next scene of the book, where the single woman "pulls a Ruth" on the threshing floor.

In closing, we see the themes of the hero of this section of Ruth ultimately illustrated in the hero of all of Scripture, Jesus Christ. As Spurgeon said, Jesus is "our glorious Boaz" who came to His earth to look upon us with love like Ruth and care for us like Boaz though He had no obligation to do so. Jesus is our *hesed*, and the lovingly gracious kindness of God was extended to us as a gift of God for our eternal life—much like the *hesed* that was given to sustain the life of Ruth. And, like Boaz, Jesus is our great Redeemer who died, paying our debt of sin, thereby redeeming us ... although he was in no way obligated to do so.

What observations can you make regarding Boaz and his relationships, specifically his relationship with God? His employees? The women he encountered? The marginalized? {eoa}

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-serving, people-loving, Bible-preaching pastor and the author of many books, including Spirit-Filled Jesus, which you can preorder here. He currently pastors The Trinity Church in Scottsdale, Arizona, with his family. For all of Pastor Mark Driscoll's Bible teaching, please visit or download the app.

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