



The Redeemed Bride and the Lord of the Harvest

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| Chapter 4



4.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter in the book of Ruth, we see all the themes that we have drawn out, come together. We have seen how the account of Ruth is a prophetic picture of the story of the redeemed Bride and the Lord of the harvest, and how together they bring forth the kingdom. This is the chapter that contains it all. In this chapter Boaz redeems Ruth. In this chapter he takes her as his bride. In this chapter they bring forth a son who will be grand-father to the greatest king of Israel - David.

4.2 Today is the day!

Chapter 4 is best understood in the context of the closing verses of chapter 3, where Naomi states that Boaz will not rest but will settle the matter today. What was the matter that he needed to settle? Although he was a redeemer, there was another redeemer who had a claim on Ruth. Boaz was not going to allow such an unresolved issue to come between him and his bride to be. He would not allow a situation to continue where another had a rightful claim over her. Naomi was right in her assessment of Boaz, he did not rest until he had resolved the matter.

This is another way in which Boaz illustrates the nature of the Lord. God who did not rest until he had completed all his work in creation; God who always finishes what he starts. The Lord whose word does not return to him until it has accomplished all the purpose for which it had been sent. The Lord who will complete the good work he started in us. The jealous and zealous Lord, who will not share us with another and will not permit us to be servant to two masters. He does not rest until he resolves the matter.

Naomi said not only that he would not rest, but that he would accomplish the matter *today*.

God again set a certain day, calling it “Today,” This he did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”

HEBREWS 4:7 NIV

For he says, “In the time of my favor, I heard you, and in the day of salvation, I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.

2 CORINTHIANS 6:2 NIV

“Today” is God’s chosen day to deal with his people. God is never a procrastinator. He never puts things off to tomorrow. Whatever is in his heart to do, he wants to settle the matter today.

4.3 The Outheld Sandal

Not only does Boaz resolve the matter, he comes back with a visible sign that it has been resolved. He comes back with a sign in his hands that speaks to all that the matter is resolved. It speaks that no one else has any right over his bride but him, there is now no impediment, no hindrance and no barrier to stop her coming to him. The outheld sandal in his hand is a visible display of Ruth's redemption, and Boaz's victory over all opposition to his purpose for his bride. Visible signs are important in the scripture and the Lord uses several to communicate to us.

4.3.1 The curse on Satan

Some Christians have a preoccupation with Satan and the demonic, and see him behind every trial and every niggle in their lives. It is important to remember that right from the beginning, Satan has been the accursed, not the one with the power to go around cursing!

The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

GENESIS 3:14 ESV

When God dealt with Satan's deception in the garden, he didn't just defeat him, he took his feet! The sign of the snake crawling on its belly would be an eternal sign from that moment on that it was God's will that never again would his people be under the feet of Satan.

Being under the feet of someone is a motif in scripture of being under their authority. We know that it is the plan of God to bring all things under the feet of Christ. All things will find their rightful place under his authority, and every knee will bow and every tongue confess his Lordship. We also know that God is not willing to share his Lordship over this world, or over our lives with another. This is the first commandment.

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.

EXODUS 20:2 ESV

The taking of the other man's sandal is a similar statement to the taking of the serpent's feet. It shows that God has dealt with any other authority or power that tries or claims to have any authority or right over us. We are freed to belong

exclusively to him without anything from our past threatening to arise and dominate us again.

4.3.2 The rainbow in the sky

After God poured out his wrath upon a rebellious world in the form of a global flood, he put a visible sign in the sky for Noah and his descendants to see. From that moment on the rainbow became an eternal sign that God's wrath had been appeased and that never again would he wipe out life from the earth.

This is a promise that we can have absolute confidence in. Despite the pessimistic predictions of scientists on how the world will end by meteor strike, Ebola outbreak or supervolcanic eruption, we can have confidence that none of these will occur. God has said that never again will life be wiped out from the planet. His plan is to transform this world not to destroy it.

When Boaz returned with the sandal in his hand it was a sign that he would redeem not only Ruth, but all that belonged to Elimelech, so that his name would be preserved and not die out. The Lord's redemption of our life means that we are no longer under wrath and that he has a good purpose and destiny for our lives.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

JEREMIAH 29:11 ESV

4.3.3 The bronze snake in the wilderness

When the people grumbled against Moses in the wilderness, God sent fiery snakes into their midst which bit and caused many to die. When they cried out, Moses prayed for the people and the Lord gave him this response:

And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

NUMBERS 21:8-9 ESV

The snake lifted up was a sign, but more than a sign it had power to reverse the curse and bring life. Jesus said that this sign was also an example that pointed towards what he would do on the cross.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

JOHN 3:14-15 ESV

4.3.4 The ultimate example

Of course, the ultimate sign that God gives us is that of the cross itself. Jesus' outstretched nail-pierced hands speak of all that he has accomplished in our redemption. They say that God's wrath is appeased, and that never again will he require a sacrifice or punishment for our sin. They say that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. They speak of the grace, forgiveness and healing that are now ours as a free gift from God. They say that we have been purchased and redeemed at an immeasurable price, and that our lives are precious and valuable in his sight. They say that we have become his Bride and that there is now nothing that can separate us from his love. They say that there is not now, nor will there ever be another lord over our lives but him. They say, "The matter is resolved, today!"

Five bleeding wounds He bears, received on Calvary
They pour effectual prayers; they strongly plead for me
"Forgive him, O forgive," they cry "Nor let that ransomed sinner die!"
(Arise, My Soul, Arise by Charles Wesley)

4.4 The Significance of Moab

The sandal that Boaz returned with spoke of betrothal and adoption. Betrothal because there was now no barrier in the way for Ruth to become his bride, but also adoption because everything that was once part of Elimelech's family now belonged to Boaz. Whoever took the bride also inherited the dead man's family.

The same is true for what Christ has done for us. We have not just been redeemed as the bride, we have been adopted as sons. We who were once part of the dead man's family are now part of the risen man's family. The cross means that the sons of Adam can now become sons of God.

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

ROMANS 8:15 ESV

This also is something that can never be broken or revoked. Friends can come and go, but your family is always your family. The story of the prodigal son illustrates this fact; no matter what the younger son did, even when in his own eyes he no longer deserved to be considered a son, he could never cease being a son, and the father would always treat him as such.

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 8:38-39 ESV

| 4.5 A sign that speaks

So the outheld sandal communicates what the Lord speaks over your life. It says that it is for freedom that you have been set free. There is no power or authority that can hold you. No sickness, no infirmity and no debt that can keep you bound. There is no wrath left for your sin. You belong to the Lord and to him alone. He has bought you and you are his. You are not just servants but beloved sons, given a place of honour at his table of grace and favour. His face is turned towards you and never away.

It says that though you may face difficulty, challenge and trial, nothing shall overcome you. The Lord is with you through them all, and he will bring you through and out to a spacious place. When your faith has been refined, he will put you on display just as he put his rainbow in the sky, so that you might be part of the multicoloured display of his wisdom, and a sign of his unbreakable covenant of love to those who do not yet know him. He will bring you forth as part of his beautiful and glorious bride; the display of his glory and splendour into all the earth.

4.6 Unto us a child is born

For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

ISAIAH 9:5-7 ESV

These verses in Isaiah are a nice summary of this final chapter of Ruth. The boot of the opposing warrior is removed, and a child is born who will bring forth the kingdom.

The child who was born to Ruth represents the fruitfulness of God's kingdom plan in her life. It was God's will for her to take her place in bringing forth his kingdom on the earth. The way she was to do this was by bringing forth the king. It is possible to have the trappings of the kingdom without the presence of the king. But wherever the king is, there is the true expression of the kingdom. The kingdom is wherever the king is. The ultimate way we seek first the kingdom is to seek first the king.

Like Ruth, the church has a pivotal role to play in the kingdom plan for this world. And like Ruth the way we bring in the kingdom is to bring forth the king. We know that one day Jesus will return from heaven to establish his kingdom forever, but the kingdom has already begun, and indeed Jesus is waiting in heaven for his kingdom plan to be outworked upon the earth. So before the church can bring back the king she must first bring forth the king!

For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."

ACTS 2:34-35 ESV

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must

receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

ACTS 3:19-21 NIV

The scriptures make it clear that before the Father will reveal Christ from heaven, the church must first reveal Christ on earth. Jesus is coming back for a beautiful bride who has been transformed into his image and who represents his will on the earth as it is in heaven. Our focus cannot be just on the coming of the king and his kingdom from heaven, we have to realise that today we have a job to get on with bringing forth the kingdom of the king on earth.

Twice angelic messengers had to correct the disciples for having their focus of attention in the wrong place. The first time was at the empty tomb:

Behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.

LUKE 2:4B-6A ESV

We are not to think of Jesus as a past, dead, historic figure, but as a present, risen and living Lord. The second time was on the mount of ascension:

And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

ACTS 1:10-11 ESV

The angels confirmed that Jesus is coming back in glory from heaven, but also that the disciples were not to stand by staring into heaven to wait for it to happen. God's will is for heaven to come to earth, but he will not achieve this through spectators. Rather he is looking for those "violent men" who are those who will actively and forcefully advance his kingdom before he returns. The angels addressed the disciples as "Men of Galilee" refocusing them on their place and purpose on earth.

Christ will be revealed on the earth before he is revealed in the heavens, as we give ourselves actively to God's kingdom purpose to form Christ in us, both individually and corporately.



A great example of this is with the conductor of an orchestra. All through the performance the audience do not see his face, nor do they hear a single noise he makes. Yet when he turns round and is revealed, at the end of the piece, he is greeted with the praise of a rapturous applause. This is because, although they have not seen him, they have seen all the members of the orchestra that he has put on display. They have seen how they have responded to his subtle promptings. Each instrument quick to respond when beckoned, but just as quick to yield the focus of attention to another instrument when the conductor gestured elsewhere. They saw how they worked together, coordinated by his directions, without discord and without jealousy. So when he is revealed, they give him the praise and glory that he deserves through what they have seen of him through his people. This is how it is with the church and the Lord, we are on display as the demonstration of his nature and wisdom to the world, and to the heavenlies, so that he may receive glory on the day that he is revealed from heaven.

So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

EPHESIANS 3:10 ESV

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

1 PETER 2:12 ESV

4.7 The third generation

It is significant that Ruth does not directly give birth to the king. She doesn't even give birth to the father of the king. She brings forth the grandfather of the king. The kingdom would come, not in the first, nor the second, but in the third generation.

This is important, for when God described himself as, "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," these were not just three names, but three generations. He is a God of the three generations.

The third generation is also significant in the scriptures in God's redemptive plan.

"You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were a sojourner in his land. Children born to them in the third generation may enter the assembly of the Lord."

DEUTERONOMY 23:7-8 ESV

The Edomites, the sons of Esau, who had sold and scorned his inheritance, and the Egyptians, the sons of Ham, who was under his father's curse, could both be restored to the Lord in the third generation. The third generation thus speaks of God's redemption purpose, of inheritance and relationship restored and the curse lifted.

One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.

PSALM 145:4 ESV

It is important that we catch the significance of passing our inheritance in the Lord on to the third generation.

4.7.1 First generation

Some have only caught the significance of their own generation. It is good to believe in your own generation, to believe that we can be the generation to bring back the king. There is nothing wrong with thinking like this. But it is not good if this means we make no provision for the next generation. Many a move of God has died with the first generation because there was no impartation to the next generation to carry it on. If you want an example of the futility and tragedy of a move of God that only lasts one generation, you only need to turn back one



book in the bible from Ruth to the book of Judges. The people were continually oscillating from faith and unbelief, from victory and captivity, because although there were many moves of God, none of them lasted more than one generation.

4.7.2 Second generation

Those who have grasped the significance of the second generation have understood the importance of sons. This is part of the Elijah ministry of the church, to turn the hearts of fathers to sons, and sons to fathers. To anoint the Elishas who will take the move of God on into the next generation. This cannot be separated from the other great part of the Elijah ministry, to restore all things. For unless a move of God passes on to the next generation it will restore nothing, it is destined only to become another monument on the wayside.

This is the example of David. We are told he was a man who served the purpose of God in his generation. But he did this by also making preparations for the next generation. When he was told that he would not be the one to build the temple, he did not forget about it and dismiss it as someone else's problem, he made provision so that his son would have all that he needed to accomplish all that had been in his heart to do for the Lord that he did not get to achieve.

4.7.3 The third generation

The significance of the third generation is that a cycle of God's restoration process is complete. We have not just raised up sons, but released new fathers. This is the true heart of ministry. Not to gather a group of followers who may attain a portion of the ministry, but to release those who follow to go further than we have been, to help them on their way and in no way hold them back.

This was the heart that Jesus expressed to his disciples when he was to return to the father.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father."

JOHN 14:12 ESV

4.8 The Redeemed Bride and the Lord of the Harvest

God is calling us as his redeemed bride into a relationship with himself. A relationship that will transform us, and form Christ in us. A relationship that will equip us and release us to equip others, so that through all working together, Christ may be displayed to the world, and his great harvest reached and gathered for his glory.

This requires us to take our place. Not to try to take the place of another, nor to leave our own place empty thinking that someone else will fill the gap. We have each been called and chosen and assigned a place in his kingdom plan for this world. It is not a place in isolation, but a role joined and held together by those around who have been called too. No one person can do it all, but no one is superfluous either. God has chosen and arranged his people together on the world stage so that they might work together to reveal his glory and make his name known.

He has settled the matter today. There is nothing to hinder us from coming to him as his bride and fulfilling our part in his kingdom plan. We can learn from the determination of Ruth not to stop short of anything less than this great destiny for our lives.

“Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.”

RUTH 1:16-17 ESV
