

# RUTH 3:1 – 4:22

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## IV. Ruth Proposes Marriage to Boaz (3:1-18)

### A. The proposal (3:1-15)

1. Naomi indicates by a rhetorical question that she should take steps to find a husband for Ruth, someone who could provide Ruth some security and protection. She then identifies Boaz as their relative (perhaps meaning close relative), which suggests that in Naomi's mind he was the one who should become Ruth's husband.

a. Notice that Naomi here says nothing about continuing Elimelech and Mahlon's line of descent. Though that will be significant for Boaz, Naomi's focus is on securing a husband for Ruth. Her sense of duty in that regard probably has grown in light of Ruth's great loyalty to her.

b. Block comments (p. 681), "It seems that in this patricentric environment, concerns involving inheritance and the place and reputation of the family within the family history were primarily male concerns. Women in general and widows in particular were more anxious about life for the living in the present."

2. Naomi has a plan for encouraging Boaz to assume what she perceives to be his responsibility, presumably not realizing that he was not the nearest kinsman-redeemer. She calls Ruth's attention to the fact Boaz will be spending the night on the threshing floor winnowing barley and then instructs her on what to do.

a. She tells Ruth to bathe, to apply perfume, and to put on her cloak (presumably to keep warm) and go down to the threshing floor. It is possible, by analogy to 2 Sam. 12:20, that Naomi is telling Ruth to end her period of mourning and resume normal life. Block states (p. 684), "We know too little about how long widows would customarily wear their mourning clothes, but it may be that Naomi is now telling Ruth the time has come to doff her 'garments of widowhood' (Gen. 38:14,19) and let Boaz know that she is ready to return to normal life, including marriage, if that should become possible."

b. Naomi tells Ruth not to reveal her presence until after Boaz had finished eating and drinking and lain down for the night. She adds that Ruth is to observe where he lies down and then, presumably when he has fallen asleep, uncover his feet (or legs) and lie down herself. Naomi said Boaz would tell her what to do after that.

(1) This obviously was some kind of symbolic gesture that Boaz was expected to understand. Given Ruth's marriage proposal in v. 9, it may be that

lying at Boaz's feet symbolized that proposal by presenting herself as one humbly seeking his protection.

(2) Waiting until Boaz had finished his meal, finished eating and drinking, probably was designed to increase the likelihood that he would be in a good mood, that he would be feeling content from the meal. Likewise, uncovering his feet may have been designed to allow Ruth to speak to Boaz in private, after everyone else had left the threshing floor or was asleep, without having to risk any negative feelings by having awakened him herself (because the cold would gradually awaken him).

(3) Perhaps Naomi wanted to keep the exchange discreet to minimize embarrassment in the event the proposal was misinterpreted or rejected.

c. Notice how Naomi is willing to act in light of her sense of God's providential maneuvering. Hubbard states (p. 199):

A significant theological point emerges here. Earlier Naomi had wished for these same things (1:8-9). Here human means (i.e., Naomi's plan) carry out something previously understood to be Yahweh's providence. In response to providentially given opportunity, Naomi began to answer her own prayer! Thus she models one way in which divine and human actions work together: believers are not to wait passively for events to happen; rather, they must seize the initiative when an opportunity presents itself. They assume that God presents the opportunity. In Naomi's case, any success presumably would be part of Yahweh's "full payment" of Ruth (cf. 2:12). If so, then, theologically Yahweh acts *in* Naomi's acts. That is, what Naomi does constitutes at the same time God's acts. Her acts execute God's plans.

3. As the dutiful daughter-in-law she was, Ruth says simply (v. 5) that she will do all that Naomi has asked her to do. The following verse (v. 6) summarizes that she did indeed do just that.

4. Verse 7 reports Ruth sneaking up on Boaz after he had eaten his meal and fallen asleep and uncovering his feet (or legs). With Hubbard (p. 210), Block (p. 689-690), and others, I think the meaning of v. 8 is not that Boaz was shaking from fear at midnight, as though he was startled by some unexplained phenomenon, but that he was *shivering* from the cold. (Remember Naomi had instructed Ruth to take her cloak.) He then turned over and was surprised to find a woman lying at his feet, a woman he could not recognize in the darkness.

5. Rather than seeking to take sexual advantage of the situation, Boaz asked Ruth who she was, and Ruth answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer."

a. The word Ruth uses here for "servant" (*'āmâ*), which is different from the word in her self-deprecating statement in 2:13 (*šiphâ*), indicates she is eligible for marriage.

b. The request for Boaz to spread his wings over her is a clear request that he marry her.

(1) Block states (p. 691), "[W]ithout equivocation, Ruth requests that Boaz marry her. The idiom she used may be puzzling to the modern reader, but there was no question about its meaning in the Israelite context in which it was given."

(2) In 2:12 Boaz prayed for Yahweh, under whose wings Ruth had come for refuge, to grant Ruth a full reward for her loving kindness to Naomi. Ruth is here essentially asking Boaz to answer his own prayer. His marrying her would be Yahweh's provision of protection for her and his full reward for her kindness. Hubbard comments (p. 212), "Theologically, God worked here not by direct intervention but within righteous human acts." He adds (fn. 35), "In this case, the 'righteous human act' was Boaz's execution of his duty as *gō'ēl*. This suggests something further: God works through human obedience to his legal instructions."

c. Ruth bases her request on the fact Boaz is a kinsman-redeemer.

(1) This raises a difficult question. If Boaz was legally obligated to marry Ruth as part of his kinsman-redeemer duties, why risk the nighttime rendezvous on the threshing floor rather than simply bring his duty to his attention?<sup>1</sup>

(a) As I noted earlier, I suspect Naomi's view of the kinsman-redeemer's duty was debatable. Perhaps Naomi was emboldened to have Ruth assert it because she recognized that God had providentially brought Ruth into contact with Boaz and thus suspected that Boaz would accept the alleged responsibility. Indeed, Naomi's instruction to Ruth to do whatever Boaz would tell her to do seems to assume that he would respond favorably.

(b) Naomi probably had the matter raised in private to minimize embarrassment in the event she was wrong, in the event Boaz rejected the

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<sup>1</sup> Bush states (p. 169):

It is also not possible that Ruth is here using the term *גאל* in a technical sense referring to a legal responsibility of the *גאל* to perform the duty of levirate marriage. Apart from the difficult question of whether the legal responsibility of *גאל*, 'redemption,' included the duty of levirate marriage, assuming such a legal responsibility on Boaz's part, to which Ruth now refers, again renders the story incredible and unintelligible. If such a responsibility existed, why would Naomi . . . have sent Ruth on her risky and provocative excursion to the threshing floor?

proposal. By raising it in private, the parties would have the option of keeping the matter between themselves.

(2) Naomi's view of Boaz's duty is why Ruth was willing to be so forward in asking Boaz to marry her. In the absence of such a duty, the request of a Moabite servant girl to marry an Israelite man of wealth and stature would have been unthinkable effrontery. Being a foreigner, Ruth probably was unaware that Naomi's view of the kinsman-redeemer's duties was debatable. Naomi sent Ruth on the mission because she thought God would bring her success and arranged it in such a way that the fallout could be limited if she were wrong in that assessment.

(3) Some are convinced that Ruth in 3:9 raised the kinsman-redeemer duty on her own and that Naomi had nothing to do with that aspect of the encounter, but that seems contrary to the summary statement in v. 6 that Ruth did everything Naomi had commanded her. That emphasizes her compliance with Naomi's instructions not her striking out on her own. Moreover, Ruth would have been dependent on Naomi for knowledge of Israelite law and custom regarding kinsman-redeemers. Bush states (p. 169):

When Ruth does more than dutifully obey the instructions Naomi gave her that she should lie down at Boaz's legs and that he would tell her what to do, she is neither changing those instructions nor violating them but simply putting into words what Naomi voiced in her opening statement in vv 1-2: "Must I not seek for you home and husband . . . ? So then, is not Boaz . . . a relative of ours?"

d. The tension at this point in the story, as I see it, is whether Boaz will embrace that view of the kinsman-redeemer's duty, seeing it as a proper expression of the family-guardian principle inherent in the kinsman-redeemer role, or whether he will refuse to help, and perhaps even take umbrage at the request, by insisting on a narrower interpretation of his responsibility. Based on what has already been revealed about Yahweh's providential involvement and Boaz's character, one is not completely surprised by his response.

6. Boaz reacts very positively to Ruth's proposal. Rather than chastising her for trying to impose on him a duty he did not owe, he in v. 10 invokes a blessing on her and praises her for taking her devotion to Naomi so far as to seek to marry him for the family's sake rather than to pursue young men, whether for love or security (whether poor or rich). (Note Boaz's humility in comparing himself unfavorably to others as a marriage prospect.) He says that this showing of *hesed*, this showing of family loyalty and devotion, was even greater than her original showing in committing herself to Naomi.

7. Boaz tells Ruth in v. 11 not to fear as he will do *all* she asked, perhaps hinting that her request involves more than merely marriage. In saying he will do so because (for) all the townspeople know she is a worthy woman, Boaz seems to be reassuring her that no one would challenge the propriety of him marrying her in his

capacity as kinsman-redeemer, despite her being a Moabite, because her stellar reputation had removed whatever incentive her being a Moabite may have provided for such a challenge. She had proven her character to the people, and therefore no one would be looking for an excuse to use the fact she was a Moabite against her.

8. Verse 12 raises a potential stumbling block to Boaz's fulfilling his intention to marry Ruth.

a. He acknowledges that he is indeed a kinsman-redeemer, the implication being (if I am on the right track) that he accepts the validity of Ruth's claim and thus the validity of her view of his duty. He adds, however, that there is another kinsman-redeemer who is prior to him by virtue of being a closer relative to Elimelech.

b. Presumably Naomi was unaware that this other kinsman-redeemer had priority when she sent Ruth to Boaz. Perhaps the rules for determining priority were complex and less well known as one moved further from the immediate circle of the deceased, or perhaps Boaz or the other kinsman-redeemer were related to Elimelech differently than Naomi knew or remembered.

9. Boaz tells her in v. 13 to spend the remainder of the night at the threshing floor because "the dead of the night was no time for a young woman to be out alone" (Hubbard, 218). He also tells her that he will bring the matter of her "redemption" to a resolution in the morning and assures her with an oath that he will redeem her if the prior kinsman-redeemer refuses to do so.

a. To "redeem" her presumably means not simply to marry her but to marry her in the capacity of a kinsman-redeemer so that the first child would have some kind of legal tie to the deceased and his property. As indicated in chapter 4, redemption by the kinsman-redeemer includes a transaction involving Elimelech's property.

b. Boaz's integrity is evident in his conduct. He wants to marry Ruth, but rather than violate protocol to do so, he will settle things in the proper manner and leave the outcome to God.

10. Ruth awakens before there was enough light to recognize someone, presumably because she was concerned about how it would appear if she was seen leaving the threshing floor. Indeed, Boaz was thinking that very thing. With Hubbard (p. 220, fn. 3), Bush (p. 177-178), and NET, it makes more sense to understand "And he said, 'Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor'" as meaning he said it *to himself*, he thought it. That explains why it says "the woman" rather than to "you."

11. Boaz loads Ruth up with six measures of barley grain, probably meaning six seahs, which would weigh somewhere between 58 and 95 pounds (Hubbard, 222). Then she returns to the town (or he does, depending on a textual issue).

## B. Ruth reports to Naomi (3:16-18)

1. When Ruth returns, Naomi asks how things went. She tells Naomi all about what Boaz did for her, including generously providing her with the large load of grain she was carrying, and she adds that Boaz said when giving her the grain that she could not go back *empty-handed* to Naomi. This is another signal for Naomi of God's provision, recalling her earlier complaint that she had returned *empty*. And God was not finished filling her cup.

2. Naomi tells Ruth to wait to see how things will play out, convinced that Boaz will pursue the matter to a conclusion that day. The reader is left in suspense as to how things will end up.

## V. Widow Naomi Has a Baby (4:1-17)

### A. Report of the legal process (4:1-12)

#### 1. Boaz convenes a legal assembly (4:1-2)

a. Boaz goes to the city gate that morning because it was something like a small town square where people would congregate and was the area commonly used for conducting legal business. The other kinsman-redeemer Boaz had mentioned "just happened" ("And behold") to pass by at that time, and Boaz called him over.

b. The author does not reveal the other man's identity. He instead refers to him in v. 1b with a Hebrew wordplay that seems to mean something like "Mr. So-and-So."

(1) Though most modern English versions preserve the sense of anonymity in the phrase by translating it "friend," Block states (p. 706), "The rendering 'Mr. So-and-So,' found in the NJPS [New Jewish Publication Society Version], certainly captures the sense better than the NIV's 'my friend,' but our 'Hey you' also works in the present context."

(2) Perhaps the author kept this person anonymous because he acted selfishly in comparison to Boaz and thus was not thought worthy of mention. Certainly his identity was not necessary for the story.

c. Boaz then gathered together ten of the city's elders, men who were part of the local community's governing body. Presumably ten was a sufficient number to serve as witnesses for the kind of transaction he had in mind.

#### 2. Boaz negotiates with the nearer redeemer (4:3-8)

a. In v. 3 Boaz tells the other redeemer that Naomi is "selling" the field of Elimelech, their mutual relative. This is the first mention of any family land, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to be confident about what is going on here. It seems clear that Naomi has some kind of interest in Elimelech's field that is of no practical value to her in terms of easing her difficult circumstances, but the nature of that interest is elusive.

b. It is possible, perhaps even likely, that prior to being driven to Moab Elimelech had been pressured by poverty to "sell" his field to someone outside the clan, economic circumstances being so difficult that no clan member was then able to preempt the sale so as to keep it in the family. By "sell" I mean sell the right to possess and use the property and draw the profits it produces until the year of Jubilee when it would revert to him or his family. Israelites could not sell a permanent right to hold land to anyone outside the clan. Block states (p. 710):

It seems most reasonable that moving to Moab had been a last resort for Elimelech. Before he would embark on such a drastic . . . course of action, he would have attempted every other alternative, including selling the land to an outsider (cf. Lev 25:25-30). Obviously the poverty continued; and after the money from the sale was used up, he seems to have been faced with two choices: sell himself into slavery (cf. Lev 25:47-55) or move to a place where food was available. In moving to Moab he chose the lesser of two evils.

c. It seems that Naomi, as Elimelech's widow, inherited from him a right to possess and use the property until she married again or died, at which time that right would revert to her husband's clan in the normal order of inheritance (See Bush, 202-204, 214-215). She would not have inherited the property itself, only a temporary interest in it, otherwise the property would leave the clan should the widow marry outside the clan.

d. But since Naomi's inherited right of use presumably had already been transferred to someone else, it meant that she had only a right to redeem the property back from that purchaser, which she, of course, was in no position to do. So the right was essentially useless to her, which explains why she and Ruth were reduced to scavenging for food despite having the right.

e. When Boaz tells the other redeemer that Naomi is "selling" the field of Elimelech, he probably means (and would have been understood to mean) that she was transferring or disposing of her right to buy back the field from the current possessor. (Bush translates the relevant part of v. 3: "Naomi . . . is hereby surrendering her right to the field of our brother Elimelech.") She is passing her right of redemption to Elimelech's nearest kinsman-redeemer, which he presumably must exercise or pass to the next one in line.

f. Boaz in v. 4 tells the other kinsman-redeemer to acquire the right of redemption that Naomi is surrendering. Bush remarks (p. 213), "[I]t does not seem beyond the range of probability at all that, in the context of a widow's right of usufruct of her husband's estate, these verbs [sell and buy] have shed their component of compensation and mean 'to dispose of, surrender (the rights to)' and 'acquire, accept (the rights to),' with the context making clear what rights are meant" (see also Block, 712).

g. Acquiring the right apparently carries the duty of exercising it, at least when someone next in the redemption line wants to do so. Thus, Boaz tells him to say whether or not he will redeem the property because if he will not then Boaz will. Note that the actual redemption of the property from the third person is not reported; in Bush's words (p. 215), "it takes place offstage, so to speak."

h. The nearer redeemer says he will redeem the property, and then Boaz informs him in v. 5 that doing so carries with it the obligation of marrying Ruth in order to have children by her so as to perpetuate Elimelech's name on the family land, to perpetuate his lineage in association with that land.

(1) Boaz presents as a legal fact the broad view of the kinsman-redeemer's duty that he accepts, the view that a kinsman-redeemer who was not the brother of the deceased male not only had a duty to redeem property of the deceased male that had been sold but also had a duty to perpetuate the existence of the deceased male on that redeemed property by continuing his lineage through a levirate-like marriage to the deceased male's widowed Moabite daughter-in-law where the deceased male's widow was alive but beyond child-bearing age.

(2) This makes it difficult for the other kinsman-redeemer to argue against that broad view, even if he were inclined to do so, because he would thereby appear uncharitable or ungracious by comparison. (The broad view of the duty apparently had sufficient legal basis that, though it may have been debatable, the other redeemer's acquiescence removed it as an issue in the mind of the elders who were present.) With that avenue closed, the only question is whether he will embrace the duty as presented.

i. The other kinsman-redeemer declines to assume the responsibility of redemption as stated by Boaz.

(1) The public stipulation that redemption involved marrying Ruth changed the equation because Ruth was young enough to bear children. Without any descendants for Elimelech, the transaction was financially easy on the redeemer. The amount he expended to redeem the field and care for the widow would be offset by the value and produce of the field itself and, in the end, the property would become part of his family inheritance by virtue of his being the nearest relative (and hence the kinsman-redeemer).



(2) But any child sired through Ruth would be Elimelech's descendant and thus would inherit Elimelech's field, presumably when he or she became an adult. (As Beattie states, quoted in Bush [p. 231], "after property had been sold and redeemed by a member of the seller's family, the original seller and his heirs retained some rights to the property.") There was no guarantee that in the time available the redeemer could earn enough off the field to cover the new expenses and recoup the redemption price, and thus the prospect of not having the property become part of his estate created a risk that the transaction would diminish his own estate.

(3) Boaz's announced desire in v. 4 to assume (and carry out) the right of redemption makes it easier for the nearer redeemer to decline the right of redemption. His doing so under those circumstances would not work to the disadvantage of anyone and would allow Boaz to have what he wanted. The refusal perhaps could even be spun as an act of kindness toward Boaz. The nearer redeemer could claim that Boaz's announcement about the obligation to marry Ruth revealed his desire to marry her, which prompted the redeemer to concoct a financial excuse for declining so as to open the door for Boaz without making him feel indebted. I do not believe that is the author's view of the nearer redeemer's motives (he left him anonymous for a reason); I am saying the availability of this possible defense of his action may have made it socially easier for him to decline.

j. The relinquishment by the nearer redeemer of the right and obligation to redeem Elimelech's field and marry Ruth was accomplished by him telling Boaz to "acquire (the right) for yourself" (Bush, 237) and removing his sandal and giving it to Boaz.

(1) Block comments (p. 720):

[T]he court proceedings were not about redeeming land but transferring the right to redeem it. [Footnote 47: As in v. 4, in vv. 9 and 10 the verb *קָנָה* does not mean "to buy" but "to acquire."] Through this action Boaz's status is changed from being a *gō'el* to being the *gō'el (haggō'el)*. . . . [T]he actual redemption of the land still lay in the future and would involve negotiations between Boaz and the person who currently held Elimelech's estate.

(2) This custom existed back when the events occurred but was unfamiliar to those living at the time the story was written.

### 3. Legal assembly ratifies the agreement and blesses Boaz (4:9-12)

a. Boaz publicly calls on the elders and people gathered at the gate to witness the symbolic act of transfer. They confirm their role as witnesses of the transaction and then pronounce a blessing on Boaz.

b. They pray that Ruth may be as fertile as Rachel and Leah, that Boaz may prosper (RSV, NKJV, NET) in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, and that Boaz's family line would have a prominence like that of Perez's line, which had given rise to a number of clans of Judah including Boaz's clan living in Bethlehem.

c. Notice the recognition "that the offspring of Boaz's union with Ruth not only will belong to Naomi (v. 17), and so continue the family line of Elimelech, but will in a genuine sense also belong to Boaz" (Bush, 247). The child is reckoned as being in the lineage of both Elimelech (4:5, 10, 14-17) and Boaz (4:12, 17-22), presumably in different senses or for different purposes, but the details of those senses or purposes are lost to us. This same phenomenon is evident in Genesis 38, "which implicitly reckons Tamar's twins to her first husband, Er, while all OT genealogies and Matt. 1:3 list them as Judah's sons" (Hubbard, 62, fn. 55).

#### 4. A son is born to Ruth and Boaz (4:13-17)

a. Boaz and Ruth marry, the Lord grants Ruth conception or pregnancy, and she gives birth to a son. Recall that she had not had a child during her (probably) ten years of marriage to Mahlon. God begins to fulfill the prayer of the witnesses in vv. 11-12. He blesses Ruth with a son, and this son will indeed be significant in Israel.

b. The women of Bethlehem praise God for his kindness toward Naomi. They exclaim that he has not left her without a "redeemer," meaning that in the birth of this child God has given Naomi someone who will provide security for her, one who, in the words of v. 15, will be a restorer of life and a nourisher of her old age. In other words, "redeemer" is used here in a nontechnical sense of one who provides rest and security rather than in the technical legal sense in which it was used earlier.

c. The women say in v. 15 that this son shall be a restorer of life and a nourisher of her old age *because* ("for") her daughter-in-law who loves her, who is more to her than seven sons, is the one who gave birth to this child.

(1) The child would not necessarily be the kind of caretaker they envision if he had been born to someone who was not as committed to Naomi's welfare as is Ruth. But because Ruth is the child's mother and Ruth's commitment to Naomi's welfare is such that she is a greater blessing to Naomi than would be seven sons, this child will be taught likewise to love Naomi and thus will be a blessing, comfort, and provider in her old age.

(2) Indeed, Ruth's intention in that regard is reflected in v. 16 which says that the once empty Naomi laid the child in her bosom, meaning held the child to her chest in fond embrace, and became his "nurse," meaning his caregiver or nanny. As Bush states (p. 259), "Hence, it is quite clear that the word is used to mean 'nurse' in the sense of the one who takes care of or looks after a child." Thus, NET translates it "caregiver" and NIV and TNIV say "cared for him." Ruth shared her son

with Naomi in ways other daughters-in-law would not so as to build within that child the kind of commitment for Naomi that Ruth herself had. Now that's loving somebody!

d. Given the special caregiver relationship Naomi was to have with the child, the women exclaimed, "A son has been born to Naomi," meaning one has been born who will be a de facto son to Naomi and will care for her as such. Accordingly, they named him Obed.

(1) Block states (p. 732):

Obed, "one who serves," is a hypocoristic (abbreviated version) of Obadiah, "servant of Yahweh" . . . or Abdiel, "a servant of God." By dropping the appellation for God, however, this name is rendered ambiguous. Is the boy viewed as a servant of God or as a servant of Naomi? If the former applies, then he represents an agent of God born to Naomi to take away the bitterness she accuses God of having imposed on her in 1:20-21 and to redeem the estate of her husband. If the latter applies, then his service to Naomi must be more direct. This son is her redeemer, the one who has come to serve her by restoring her life and offering her security in her old age.

(2) The women neighbors probably named the child in the sense their exclamation "A son has been born to Naomi" was the basis for the name formally given to him by his parents. "They" (the women) named him indirectly. Bush states (p. 261):

What he means by his blatant statement "they [fem pl] named him," so utterly in conflict with the fact known to all that the parents (usually the mother) named the child, is that these women "named" him by providing the explanation for his name with their glad cry "A son is born to Naomi." An analogous situation is provided by the naming of Perez in Gen 38:27-29. There, as the infant is born, the midwife exclaims, "What a breach you have made!" (v. 27c), and the narrator then relates that the child was named Perez, "breach" (v. 27d). If it had been literally appropriate in this setting, the narrator could just as well have said, "The midwife gave him a name, saying "What a breach you have made," for it is this statement that provides the explanation for the name.

e. The last statement before the formal genealogy is that Obed was the father of Jesse, the father of David. Block remarks (p. 732):

The story of Ruth ends on a surprising but climactic interpretive note. In the mind of the narrator, the historical significance of the birth of Obed does not lie in the resolution he brings to the personal crises of the characters in this book. Nor does he derive his significance from valorous deeds either of mercy or power. Neither the present narrator nor any other

Old Testament author writes any stories about him. On the contrary, the birth of Obed has historical significance because he lives on and achieves his significance through the lives of his son Jesse and particularly his grandson David. Through David the blessing of the male witnesses to the court proceedings (4:11) is fulfilled; Boaz's name is "called out" in Bethlehem. And through David the prayer of the female witnesses to the birth of Obed is fulfilled; Obed's name is "called out" in Israel. Indeed, to this day their names and the names of Naomi and Ruth are "called out" all over the world as their story is read. In the providence of God the genuine piety of all the major characters is rewarded, and the divine plan for Israel and her kings is fulfilled.

VI. The Genealogy of Perez (4:18-22) – I will close our study with another lengthy quote from Daniel Block (p. 736-737):

This book and this genealogy demonstrate that in the dark days of the judges the chosen line is preserved not by heroic exploits by deliverers or kings but by the good hand of God, who rewards good people with a fullness beyond all imagination. These characters could not know what long-range fruit their compassionate and loyal conduct toward each other would bear. But the narrator knows. With this genealogy he declares the faithfulness of God in preserving the family that would bear the royal seed in troubled times and in rewarding the genuine godliness of his people. If only the rest of the nation had demonstrated such covenant faithfulness at the same time! In this genealogy the name of Boaz and Obed are indeed proclaimed far beyond Bethlehem and Israel, to the ends of the earth.

But the narrator could not know what implications the piety of these characters would have on generations of his own people that would come after him. If only he could have known that in the glorious providence of God the *hesed* of Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi would have laid the groundwork for the history of salvation that extends far beyond his own time and place. For as the genealogy of Matthew 1 indicates, one greater than David comes from the loins of Boaz. In the dark days of the judges the foundation is laid for the line that would produce the Savior, the Messiah, the Redeemer of a lost and destitute humanity.