

Ruth
The Redeemer (Part 2)

Ruth 4:1-22

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Tonight, we finish our journey through the wonderful story of a Moabite widow by the name of Ruth, a woman who, through amazing displays of God's providence, God redeemed to Himself. He snatched her out of idolatry and brought her to Himself. Now, the drama of the Book of Ruth unfolds in a series of five acts. The first act we noted in the first 5 verses of this book, we entitled *The Far Country*. Ruth lived and her story unfolded during the dark period of the judges, the darkest period in Israel's history.

It actually began, as well, during a terrible famine with a disastrous choice of one Jewish man named Elimelech and his wife, Naomi. Elimelech, with the apparent agreement of his wife, decided to move his family (because of the famine) away from the land, the promised land, to Moab. Moab, a country nearby to the east; a land of Israel's enemies; a land filled with idol worship, with the worship of Chemosh, the false god of the Moabites; a god who demanded child sacrifice, one of the most wicked things that Satan ever devised. God hates it. He hated it then. And yet this man, whose name means "my God is king," moves his family into the middle of that idolatry. Verses 3 - 5 document the divine consequences of their rebellious choice. As a result of their sinful decision to move from Israel to a pagan land, within ten short years, a number of divine disasters befall them. Elimelech died unexpectedly. Mahlon and Chilion married idolatrous women. Both of those boys were then married for ten years without children. And at the end of those ten years, both of Naomi's boys died prematurely and unexpectedly. In the far country, just like it was with the nation of Israel, this family experienced God's chastening hand for their rebellion.

So, Naomi decides to return home, and act two is *The Journey Home*, the rest of chapter 1 in this little book. This second act details the remarkable story of Naomi's spiritual repentance, her return to the land, and her spiritual restoration. It also contains the truly remarkable story of Ruth's conversion. In this act Yahweh shows Himself to be a Savior in several ways: by

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restoring Israel from drought and famine to food; by restoring Naomi, one of His children, from sin to repentance; And by converting Ruth from idolatry to be a worshiper of the true God, the one true and living God, the God of Israel.

In act three, I've entitled it *Yahweh's Protection and Provision*. Both of these women had sought refuge in Yahweh under His wings. And chapter 2 tells the story of how God provides for His own. Naomi had repented and returned to her God. Ruth the Moabitess had eschewed her foreign gods, Chemosh, and she had come to worship the true God, to believe in Yahweh. And since both of these women had now sought refuge in Him, God took personal responsibility to care for them. They were under His wings. And God made it His mission to make sure that He cared for His own. And He did so by a remarkable providence, by bringing Ruth providentially to glean in the field of Naomi's close relative or kinsman-redeemer, a man named Boaz. The Hebrew puts it remarkably in chapter 2 when it says, "her chance chanced upon the field belonging to Boaz." The writer means to have this statement drip with irony. It seemed on the surface like chance and chance alone, but in reality, God was weaving the lives of these two people together for His own purposes, because God cares of His own.

That brings us to act four and the third chapter of this little book. I entitled it *A Bold Proposal*. Several weeks after Ruth had met Boaz in his fields, Naomi initiates an extraordinary plan. Naomi told Ruth that she should propose marriage to Boaz. Naomi based her bold plan on an obscure Old Testament passage about levirate marriage, because Naomi had decided (now that she was renewed in her repentance and her desire to follow Yahweh) she decided that however radical it may seem, she was going to follow whatever directions God had laid down in His Word for her care. And so, she discovered that this was His plan. Ruth followed Naomi's plan carefully, and at midnight there on the threshing floor, she proposed to Boaz. And amazingly, Boaz accepted her proposal of marriage. Notice 3:11. "Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all of my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence." At the same time, Boaz revealed to Ruth that there was a serious problem with Naomi's plan. Verse 12, "Now it is true [that] I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I." Boaz goes on to assure Ruth that he will leave no stone unturned to make sure she's cared for, and if it is humanly possible, he will marry her.

Now last time we studied Ruth together, we began to work our way through the final chapter of this magnificent story. And I entitled the fifth and final act *The Redeemer*. In this act, Yahweh shows that He is a redeemer by providing a redeemer for His people. At a temporal level, God redeems His people from the troubles and difficulties of this life. He does so in His time and according to His will. We see that in chapter 4. But at the same time in chapter 4, we're also reminded that at a spiritual and eternal level, God redeems His people. But He always does so through the one Redeemer He has appointed, His only Son, Jesus, the Messiah. So, chapter 4 is a rich story of redemption at several levels.

First of all, it is a story of a redeemer for Ruth, a redeemer for Ruth. We saw this in the first 12 verses of this little book, in 4: 1 - 12. Let me just walk you through what we discovered there. Notice first of all, verses 1 and 2. "Now Boaz went up to the gate" after that proposal of marriage at night. The next morning Boaz went to the gate where the business was done.

... [He] sat down there, and behold, the close relative [the kinsman-redeemer] of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, "Turn aside, friend, sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down. [And] he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down.

That's the legal setting. This was not a chance encounter. Business was done at the gate. There were rooms that were a part of the gate structure. I showed you those pictures last time. And in those rooms the business of town was done. This is clearly a business transaction. He asked for ten witnesses from the elders of the city. Now, you have not only the legal setting, but in verses 3 - 11, you have what amounts to a court transcript. These verses essentially read just like our modern court transcripts would. Notice verse 3.

Then he said to the closest relative, "Naomi ... has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. So I thought to 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 [you will]

not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am after you”” And he said, “I will redeem *it*.” Then Boaz said, [by the way, there’s this little problem] “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.” The closest relative said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, because I would [then] jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem *it* for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem *it*.”

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 *manner of attestation* in Israel. So the closest relative said to Boaz, “Buy *it* for yourself.” And he removed his sandal. 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. Moreover, 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 cut off from his brothers or from the court of his *birth* place; you are witnesses today.” All the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, “*We are* witnesses.”

That’s what transpired. That’s the deal that was struck, the arrangements that were made. And that’s followed in verses 11 and 12 by the people’s benediction. In response to all that had happened, the people and the ten elders break out in benediction; first of all, on Ruth. Notice verse 11. It says, “May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel.” May God grant you children. May there be those who come behind you and who represent you.

Secondly, a blessing on Boaz. “And may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem.” May your name be called, and may you reach a level of influence in the city. And then finally there’s a blessing, a benediction, pronounced on the descendants of Ruth and

Boaz in verse 12. “Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the Lord will give you by this young woman.” They prayed that God would allow the memory of Ruth and Boaz to survive in their descendants. And, of course, God would answer their prayer in an amazing way. Here we are 3,100 years later recounting their names, recalling their story. God amazingly answered their prayer. Clearly, in the text we studied last time, that we just walked through, Yahweh had provided a redeemer for Ruth.

Now that brings us up to where we left off last time. Tonight, we discover that through these remarkable circumstances, God not only provided a redeemer for Ruth, but He also provided a redeemer for Naomi. Look at verses 13 - 17. Let me read it, and then we’ll work our way through it.

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

Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse. 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.

Now notice, this story continues with a wedding, a conception, and a birth. Verse 13, “So Boaz took Ruth ... she became his wife ... he went into her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.” Here the author of this book has shrunk at least nine months of history into a single verse, from the day of their wedding until the birth of their son. The wedding is recorded this way in verse 13, and “so Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife.” The expression he “took Ruth” refers to the ancient wedding ceremony in which a man went to the home of his bride, and he took her back to his own home, “and she became his wife.” Verse 13

goes on to say, “and he went in to her.” Literally, the Hebrew text reads, “and he went to her.” This is a common Hebrew euphemism for sexual intimacy in marriage. It pictures the husband going into his wife’s tent or into her room for the consummation of the marriage.

Verse 13 goes on to say, “And the Lord enabled her [Yahweh enabled her] to conceive.” Now don’t miss the irony of this. Remember, this is the very same woman who had been married to Mahlon her husband for ten years without a child. Literally the text says, “Yahweh gave her conception.” That’s what the Hebrew says. Yahweh gave her conception. This had been the prayer, you remember, of the witnesses back in verses 11 and 12. And shortly after their marriage, little more than nine months after their marriage, apparently Yahweh has already answered. The writer of Ruth here reminds us of such an important truth, and that is that God is the one who opens the womb, who grants conception. He takes personal responsibility for life. And He still does. Even conception doesn’t happen outside of the control of the God of the universe.

Verse 13 goes to say, “And she gave birth to a son.” Notice, the Lord is also the one who allowed Ruth not only to conceive this child but to carry the child to full term. That too is under God’s sovereign control. Undoubtedly there are women here who, in God’s providence, lost children somewhere in the term of pregnancy. Understand that our God is in complete control of all of these things. He is good. He is wise. And for those of you who are in Christ, someday you will meet that child in the Lord’s presence. Don’t miss the fact that in God’s providence this child was a son. Not only did she conceive, but she had a son. Now that was really important in that culture, because it meant that he could carry on the family name.

And all of this, of course, was in answer to Boaz’ prayer. You remember back in 2:12? This was his prayer for Ruth. “May [Yahweh] reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.” That wasn’t just about that she would get enough grain to eat. That was about God filling her life with His goodness. And here God has done just that. Yahweh, under whose wings she had sought refuge, had lavished Ruth with His generosity and with His goodness. This is our God. This is who we serve.

Now, don't miss the remarkable progression that has taken place in Ruth's life over what appears to have been just a couple of months prior to their marriage and then the time of their marriage. Think about this. At first, we find her in 1:15, she is a Moabite idolater living in Moab. Then in 2:10, she is a foreigner living in the land of Israel, but one who had become a true worshiper of God. In 2:13, she refers to herself in her conversation with Boaz as the very lowest servant in his household. In 3:9, she graduates a little bit, and there on the threshing floor she refers to herself not as the lowest servant but as his maid. And that word would be used to refer to someone in the household who had full legal rights. Not a member of the family, but full legal rights. And now here in 4:13, by a remarkable string of divine providences and grace, she has become the wife of one of Bethlehem's greatest and noblest sons. God is gracious. God cares for His own.

Now after the wedding, the conception and birth, we're introduced in verse 14 to Naomi's redeemer. Remember, we're talking about a redeemer for Naomi, and here we meet him in verse 14. "Then the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed is [Yahweh] who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel.'" Now this is surprising, because so far all we've heard about is a redeemer for Ruth. But here's a redeemer for Naomi. Now, the narrator undoubtedly intends us to contrast this amazing blessing of verse 14 of chapter 4 with Naomi's cry of destitution back in chapter 1. You remember it? Go back to 1:20. When she came back into the land of Israel from Moab, she said to the women, these same women that are blessing her in chapter 4, she said, "Do not call me Naomi." Don't call me "pleasant," which is what that name means.

"Call me Mara [call me bitter], for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, but ... [Yahweh] has brought me back empty. Why do you call me ... [Pleasant], since ... [Yahweh] has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

She understood that she was bearing the weight of her sin. She was bearing the consequences of her choices. And she was extremely low. Go back now again to 4:14, and contrast what they say. The same God who had afflicted her is now raising her up. Contrast her heart wrenching words in chapter 1 with the words of the women here. "The women said to Naomi, 'Blessed is

... [Yahweh] who has not left you without a redeemer today.” Her neighbors, the women of Bethlehem, they bless God (that’s just another word for praising Yahweh), because He had not left her in that empty, chastened condition. Instead, as God so often does, He restored her. Because Yahweh is a redeemer, He had not left Naomi without that Hebrew word “goel”, the kinsman-redeemer. He had not left her without someone to represent her.

Notice, the women did not speak of Boaz serving as a kinsman-redeemer for Ruth (although that’s true); instead, they speak of this child as a kinsman-redeemer for Naomi. And they’re soon going to explain why. But notice, first they add in verse 14, “And may his name become famous in Israel.” Literally, “may his name be called in Israel.” Even after this child’s death, may people all over the nation of Israel still be calling his name. By the way, notice the contrast. In verse 11, it’s their prayer that Boaz’ name be called in Bethlehem, but it’s their prayer that this child’s name will be called in Israel. Again, God would answer their prayers in ways they could never ever have imagined. Isn’t that just like God?

So, look at Naomi’s redemption. Verse 15, “May he also be to you [ay this child, this kinsman-redeemer, be to you] a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.” Here the women explain that although this child is not Naomi’s kinsman-redeemer in the strictest, legal terms, it is their prayer that he will function that way practically for her. Notice how they want him to do this for her. “May he ... be to you a restorer of life.” In other words, through this child, Naomi, may you gain new hope for the future, new life. “And [may he be] a sustainer of your old age.” Literally, “may he sustain your gray hair.” A figure of speech for old age. May this child guarantee your future security and well-being even in your old age.

The implication in the Book of Ruth is that Boaz was not a young man. We often think of Ruth and Boaz as being the same age. That’s very unlikely. Chapter 3:10, remember, he speaks of her not choosing the young men. It’s possible that he was even the age of her father and mother. So, it is certainly likely, if that it was true, that Naomi would survive her new son-in-law, Boaz. This meant she couldn’t always depend on Boaz to care for her. But these women were convinced that this child, her grandchild, would care for Naomi.

Then they explain why this is their prayer for her. Notice verse 15 goes on, “For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.” This is our prayer because your daughter-in-law has given birth to this child. And notice how they refer to her. “Who loves you.” Boy, throughout this book we have seen profound evidences of Ruth’s love for Naomi. And that evidence did not go unnoticed by the people in their lives.

Notice, their next statement is truly amazing. “Your daughter-in-law ... is better to you than seven sons.” In a Jewish, male-dominated, agrarian culture, it was better to have sons than daughters, because they were able to do more work in the fields, and they were better able to protect you from harm. They could carry on the family name. So, in Jewish thinking, to have seven sons was considered to have the perfect family. In fact in chapter 2 of Samuel, 1 Samuel 2:5, in Hannah’s prayer, she says, “the barren gives birth to seven.” This was the perfect, the ideal family, seven sons. The irony here is that Naomi had mourned over the loss of her husband and her two sons, but Ruth, they say, has proven to be more valuable to Naomi than a perfect family, an ideal family of seven sons. Now that is a truly remarkable statement for Jewish women to say about a newcomer into their community, one who had come from Moab.

Notice Naomi’s response to the child. Verse 16, “Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap.” I wish you could get the sense of this Hebrew expression. The text has the idea of holding this child to her chest. It’s an expression that’s used in the Old Testament of both a wife holding her husband to her chest and holding her child to her chest. Don’t miss the drama, the human drama of this moment. Both Naomi’s husband and her sons had died. She had no one to hold to her chest. As far as she knew, that was the story of the rest of her life, but in God’s goodness to her, we watch her as she pulls this little child to her chest. Leon Morris writes:

For Naomi this child was special. She had expected a lonely old age when her husband and sons died. With none of those near to her left, her future had indeed looked bleak. Everything was now different. She belonged to a family once more. She was loved, and she had a recognized place. The baby in a sense symbolized it all.

Verse 16 goes on to say, “And [she] became his nurse.” Now some have misunderstood this expression to mean that Naomi ... adopted the child, or some cases they would even say became his wet nurse. There’s absolutely none of that implied in the Hebrew. It’s more like her becoming his nanny. Not in the formal sense of the parents not caring for the child. Instead, this is simply the joy of a grandmother who gets to be deeply involved in the life of her first grandchild.

Verse 17 says, “The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, ‘A son has been born to Naomi!’ [And] they named him Obed.” Now, if these women actually named this child, it would be the only instance in the Old Testament of that happening. More likely they were either suggesting a name that eventually Boaz and Ruth agreed to, or they were affirming the significance of the name that the parents had already given to this child. They named the boy Obed. The name means, in Hebrew, “the one who serves.” In light of the context, it’s very likely that they mean this child will serve Naomi. In her old age, he will serve her and be her sustainer.

There’re lessons all over this little book. Let me just point out a couple as we are moving our way through here. One, there’s a reminder here that Yahweh provides for His own even in old age. Don’t misunderstand, it’s right for us to plan for the future. We are commanded to be like the ant that works in summer because winter is coming. That’s wisdom.

But ultimately, our provision in old age doesn’t depend on our bank account or, thank God, on Social Security. Our God has promised to provide for His children. Often God provides for us as we age through the work of our hands. He gives us strength to continue to work to provide, Other times through the financial resources that He has allowed us to accumulate either through business success or through inheritance. Often God provides for us in old age through our children or our grandchildren or other family. In fact, in 1 Timothy 5, children and grandchildren are commanded to help care for their parents and grandparents. And on rare occasions, God uses the church to come alongside and help those who have neither family nor resources—again, 1 Timothy 5.

God hasn't promised us wealth in old age. But He has promised that He will always supply our daily bread and meet our basic needs. Read Matthew 6. Read those wonderful words of our Lord who says don't worry. Don't worry. So, work hard. Save wisely for the future. The wise man doesn't spend everything he gets. So, save, work hard, prepare, but don't worry. God provides for His people.

There's another lesson here, and that is (and I love this) God often restores life and joy after He's brought devastation and difficulty because of sin. Sometimes God allows some of the consequences of our sin to continue in our lives. We see that, obviously, in the life of a man like David. But when we repent, God always forgives, and He often restores and renews as well. To use the words of the prophet Joel, God can restore the years that the locust has eaten. Or as Isaiah says in Isaiah 61:3, He can give "a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning."

You know, in many ways this Book of Ruth is a call to repent. If, like Naomi, you have left God's ways, if you have chosen the way of the transgressor and found that it's hard, then return. If you feel the weight of God's chastening hand in your life like Elimelech and Naomi did, turn back to God. He always welcomes the prodigal. Our God forgives sins. Exodus 34:7, He says of Himself, I forgive "iniquity, transgression and sin." Psalm 32:5, David says, "I acknowledged my sin to You ... my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord [my acts of rebellion to Yahweh]'; and You forgave the guilt of my sin." Psalm 86:5, which is one of my favorites. "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in [steadfast love to] all who call upon You." Psalm 130:4, "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." Repent. Turn back. Turn back. Go home. He will have compassion. He will pardon. He will forgive. He will give joy for mourning. He will restore the joy of your salvation. And He often restores the years that the locust has eaten. God provided a redeemer for Naomi.

Thirdly, God provided a redeemer for Israel. Look at verse 17. "He is the father of Jesse, the father of David." The child of Boaz and Ruth was no ordinary child. He was the direct ancestor of David. In fact, he would become David's grandfather. You see, God here was at the same time providing a redeemer for the nation of Israel. Don't forget the historical context of Ruth. This story unfolds near the end of that disastrous period of the judges, the darkest in Israel's

history. For more than 300 years (think about that.) Three hundred years. Back to, in our context, the year 1700.

For 300 years the people of God were locked in devastating cycle after endless cycle of disobedience, followed by divine chastening, followed by repentance and deliverance. And what was the chief political characteristic of those dark days? Listen to Judges 17:6. “In those days there was no king in Israel; [and] every man did [that which] was right in his own eyes.” And oh, by the way, it wasn’t getting better; it was getting worse. But God would not, God could not, abandon His people. Remember, He abounds in “hesed”, that Hebrew word that means loving loyalty. God, once He enters into a relationship, never lets go. So, He was acting, even in this story, to raise up a human king for His people. By bringing Ruth and Boaz together in His providence, God was raising up a redeemer. Not just for them, but for the nation, a temporal, political redeemer for their time. A king who would be a man after His own heart. A king who would be Israel’s greatest: David.

Next to Moses, David is the most important character in the Old Testament. His story occupies the writers of 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Chronicles, and much of 1 and 2 Kings. He wrote alone more than half of the Psalms. He was at the epicenter of the promises about the coming Messiah. The writer of Ruth already knows David. He knows what’s happened. And he’s looking back and reflecting on how God, through His amazing providence, worked in the darkest days of Israel’s history to bring David to power to rescue His people.

But this chapter doesn’t end with God’s provision of a redeemer for Ruth, for Naomi, or even for Israel. Through His amazing providence in these three seemingly insignificant lives, Yahweh was also providing the Redeemer for mankind. Verses 18 - 22. Ruth ends in a very surprising way, with a genealogy. Now, there are not many things, honestly, that we can say about the individuals mentioned here, because little is revealed about these individuals in Scripture. They appear in a couple of genealogies. But it is important to note that this genealogy is intentionally selective. In other words, it’s incomplete. There are gaps in time and in generations, intentionally. It lists ten generations. But the time frame is from the time of Judah and his son (about 1800 years before Christ) to the time of David (who reigned to 971), almost 900 years.

The writer seems to be primarily concerned with symmetry, with the symmetry of ten generations. Five names belong to the 430 years of the sojourn in Egypt to the Exodus, and five names belong to the 476 years between the Exodus from Egypt and the death of David. So there's balance, there's symmetry.

Let's look at it briefly. Verse 18, "Now these are the generations of Perez." Perez was Judah's son, one of the 12 tribes. And to him, verse 18 says, "was born Hezron ... to Hezron was born Ram ... to Ram, [Amminadab]." Finally, we meet somebody that we know a little bit about. Amminadab was also the father of Aaron's wife, according to Exodus 6:23. It goes on to say, "And to [Amminadab] was born Nahshon." Nahshon, we know, was the brother-in-law of Aaron, and he was a leader during the time of the wilderness wanderings. It's all we know. Verse 20 goes on to say, "And to Nahshon, Salmon." Salmon was the husband of Rahab the harlot. "And to Salmon was born Boaz." By the way, there's a huge gap there, several generations. "And to Boaz, Obed, and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David." From Boaz to David, that appears to be exactly as it was. There're no gaps there, but in the previous names there are.

So why end this book with a genealogy, with a list of guys we know almost nothing about? I like what Morris writes.

Throughout the book and all its artless simplicity, there runs the note that God is supreme. He watches over people like Naomi and Ruth and Boaz and directs their paths. God works out His purpose generation after generation. [I love this.] Limited as we are to one lifetime, each of us sees so little of what happens. A genealogy is a striking way of bringing before us the continuity of God's purpose through the ages. The process of history is not haphazard. There is a purpose in it all, and the purpose is the purpose of God.

That's why end with a genealogy. God is at work in every generation to accomplish His purpose.

But there's another curiosity here. Why go back and connect David, the last name in the list, to Perez, the first name in the list? There's only one thing significant about this guy. Only one thing, and that was whose son he was. He was Judah's son. Why is that significant? Well, because in Genesis 3:15, God had promised that a Redeemer would come. That's all He told us. That He would be an unusual child, the seed of the woman, and He would crush the head of the serpent. We come to Genesis 12, and we learned that that promised Redeemer would come through one man, Abraham, and the nation that would come from his loins. Then we learn that descendant, that Redeemer, will come through Isaac, Jacob.

And then turn to Genesis 49, Genesis 49:8. Here's is Jacob's dying blessing on his sons. And he says to Judah, "Judah, your brothers [will] praise you; your hand [will] be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down to you." In other words, you're going to be a ruler. "Judah is a lion's whelp." And then notice what he says in verse 10. This is a prophecy about a future ruler that will come through Judah. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah." He's going to be the kingly tribe. "Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, [watch this] until Shiloh comes." "Shiloh" may be a name, as it's translated here, but it means "the one to whom it belongs."

Judah is going to continue to rule until the One comes to whom rule truly belongs. And notice this person. He's not going to just rule over the nation. "To him shall be the obedience of the peoples." This was a prophecy about the Messiah, and it prophesied that He would be a descendant of—guess who? Judah, and then through Perez. That's why the connection. Ruth traces Obed back to Perez because he was a son of Judah. And it was through the line of Judah that Israel's kings would come, but it was also through their line that Messiah would come.

You see, Yahweh has provided a Redeemer for us all. But the story of our Redeemer didn't begin in Matthew 1. It really began with a Trinitarian agreement in eternity past when God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit agreed to redeem man, and the Son volunteered. But it began in time in Genesis 3:15. But don't miss this. One of the key chapters in the great drama of our Redeemer is a most unlikely chapter. It's the little Book of Ruth. On the surface, it's an extraordinary story of redemption at a human level, but it is so much more. In Naomi, we see a story of divine chastening and restoration. In Boaz we see a story of divine blessing in one

who is faithful to his God. In Ruth (and I love this) we see a story of Sovereign grace. God, through the sin of one of His people, reaches into Moab and snatches an idolatrous woman to Himself, and she becomes a worshiper of the one true God. God has done the same for many of us. He snatched us out of a hopeless condition.

But Ruth also teaches us profound lessons about God's sovereignty and His providence. Remember, sovereignty is what God is. He rules over all things. Providence is what He does. It's when He uses His sovereignty, when He exerts sovereignty to cause the details of human life to accomplish His eternal purpose. It's what theologians call "the eternal decree." This is how it appears in the confessions:

God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass. [And yet, He does it] so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

In other words, God is so wise He can work through our decisions, through what happens in the world, to accomplish in the end His perfect plan, what He decided to do in eternity past. In His sovereign providence, God was at work in these three lives more than a thousand years before Christ to accomplish His saving purposes. I mean, think about all the seemingly insignificant events in Ruth in which God was completely in control and establishing His eternal purpose. Listen, this is no less true in your life and mine. But in the case of their lives, God was doing something that was at the very heart of His plan of the ages, His eternal plan of redemption. More than a thousand years before Jesus of Nazareth would be born, God was framing His family tree.

I want you to fast forward to the New Testament. Go to Matthew 1:2. See if you recognize anything as we work along here. Matthew 1:2,

Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob ... Jacob the father of

Judah and his brothers. Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez was the father of Hezron ... Hezron the father of Ram. Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon ... Nahshon the father of Salmon. Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, [and] Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David the king.

Do you see it? I said there's almost nothing known about these men. Their names just appear a couple of times in genealogies. One of them is at the end of Ruth. The other is in Matthew 1. And don't forget the context. Go back to verse 1. This is "the record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Do you see what the story of Ruth is really about? I love the way Daniel Block puts it. He says,

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 was laid for the line that would produce the Savior, the Messiah, the Redeemer of a lost and destitute humanity. Through the love story of Boaz and Ruth, God was providing us with a kinsman-redeemer.

Thirty-one hundred years ago in Bethlehem, God wove three lives together so that you could sit here tonight and be in Christ. What an amazing God we serve. There is a Redeemer, because 3,100 years ago Ruth was snatched from idolatry, and she perchance chanced upon the field of Boaz.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we stand in awe. We stand in awe of Your amazing providence. That You could so orchestrate history and individual lives, so that You're not doing just one thing in any given moment of time, You are doing so many things, and so many things across the generations that we could never imagine. We are truly humbled and in awe.

Father, help us to accept Your providence in our own lives. Help us to trust You.

And Father, thank You. Thank You that through this wonderful human drama 3,100 years ago, You were caring for each of them, but You were caring for us. You were providing for us a kinsman-redeemer, One who would stand for us. We thank You, O God, that You are a Redeemer, and that in Christ we have a Redeemer.

Help us to love Him, to serve Him, to follow Him.

And Lord, if there's someone here tonight who doesn't know Him, O God, use this drama to help them to see that You are seeking them in the very same way. And may they turn in repentance and faith.

We pray in Jesus name, amen.