



"Only in obedience can we discover the great joy of the will of God."

—Sinclair Ferguson

11-May-12

Christ as Redeemer

As we count down the fifty days to the Feast of Pentecost, we have been considering the book of Ruth's Boaz as a type of Christ, first as a provider and then as a righteous judge. Ruth herself typifies the Christian, called out of [this world](#) to begin a new life in preparation for eternal life as part of the Bride of Christ in God's Kingdom. The spring harvest setting of the book securely plants the imagery and the lessons within the period of sanctification—the time of our converted, physical lives—that the weeks between the [Wavesheaf offering](#) and Pentecost represent.

Of course, one of the primary titles of [Jesus Christ](#) is Savior; He saved us from our sins by taking their penalty—death—upon Himself, paying the price for our rebellion against [God](#) in His flesh. So, as the Bible's language so often puts it, we have been redeemed by His blood shed in our behalf ([Ephesians 1:7](#); [Colossians 1:14](#); [Hebrews 9:12](#); [Revelation 5:9](#)). The idea of redemption is that of "buying back," of paying the cost—normally a steep one—to restore someone or something to a former condition or ownership. Just as a person would redeem a treasured item from a pawnshop or a benefactor would redeem a kidnap victim from his captors, so Christ redeems sinners from the death penalty they have brought upon themselves

through their transgressions. He achieved this through the sacrifice of His own priceless life.

In the final chapter of Ruth, the author shows Boaz cheerfully taking up the responsibility to be Ruth's kinsman-redeemer. In ancient Israel, the law allowed for the nearest male relative to buy the land of a deceased property owner to keep the holding within the family (see [Leviticus 25:23-24](#); [Deuteronomy 25:5-10](#)). However, there was an important caveat: The kinsman-redeemer also had the responsibility to take his relative's childless widow as his wife, and their firstborn son would inherit the redeemed land as if he were the actual son of the dead man. If the redeemer already had children, the redeemed land would not pass to them.

This caveat comes into play in Ruth's case. The redeemer had to be willing to take responsibility for *everything* that his dead kinsman had left behind; he had to pay for it all. In the narrative of Ruth, the nearer kinsman was not willing. For the virtuous Ruth ([Ruth 3:11](#)), however, Boaz was more than willing to buy back the land (it had likely been mortgaged during the famine mentioned in [Ruth 1:1](#)), to pay off any of Naomi's other debts, if any, and to take the young Moabitess as his wife and raise their son as Elimelech's heir. To him, she was the pearl of great price that he would have spent all his wealth to possess (see [Matthew 13:45-46](#)). Likewise, for His Bride, Christ gave all that He had, His perfect, sinless life, paying for the sins of the whole world ([I John 2:2](#)).

Because of her knowledge of Boaz' character, Naomi sets the tone that underlies the entire process of Ruth's redemption: "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day" ([Ruth 3:18](#)). Naomi had had experience with Boaz before she had left for Moab with her husband and sons. She knew that he was a decisive, energetic, determined individual who would not deviate from his purpose once he fixed upon it. As the saying goes, he would move heaven and earth to redeem Ruth.

Naomi's declaration about Boaz is similar to what the Bible says about God: Once He gives the word, it is as good as done. As [Isaiah 46:11](#) declares, "Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it." Like Boaz, Christ has relentless, dogged determination to save us

and prepare us for His Kingdom. It is His foremost desire, and He is on the job night and day "to present [us] holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight" ([Colossians 1:22](#)). Just as Boaz had said, "I will perform the duty for you, as the LORD lives!" so Christ will finish His work in us. Paul writes in Hebrew 10:23, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." God prophesies in [Isaiah 62:1](#), 4-5:

For Zion's sake I will not hold My [peace](#), and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. . . . You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzibah [My Delight Is in Her], and your land Beulah [Married]; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. . . . And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

[Ruth 4:1-12](#) presents a step-by-step record describing how Boaz went about securing Ruth's redemption. For our purposes, it is not necessary to consider each element of the ancient redemption process, as shown in Ruth (although it makes an edifying study). We should note, however, that Boaz is not only eager and determined, but he is carefully, even stringently, lawful. Everything is done by the book. He makes sure all the required procedures are followed and leaves nothing out.

For instance, the transaction is conducted in the city gate of Bethlehem where judgments were to be made. He gathers ten witnesses to observe and, if necessary, to testify later about what he did. He allows the near kinsman every opportunity to do his legal duty in redeeming the property. He hides none of the pertinent facts from anyone, presenting all of the relevant details so that everyone clearly understands what is happening. Even his short speech to the townspeople as the process ends sounds like a contract:

You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, from the hand of Naomi. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut

off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate. You are witnesses this day. ([Ruth 4:9-10](#))

In the same way, Christ works within the boundaries He and the Father have established, so that no one will be able to accuse God of being unjust or unfair or playing fast and loose in any way with what is right. Every price will be fully paid, every legal requirement will be fulfilled, and every involved party will be satisfied with the outcome. Because He loves us, He redeems us lawfully so that there will never be any question as to our status before Him. Everyone will know that we belong to Him. God Himself declares in [Isaiah 1:27](#), "Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and her penitents with righteousness."

One final detail is worth pointing out as we consider the meaning of Pentecost. Boaz and Ruth marry and produce a son, Obed. *Obed* means "servant" or "worshipper." In spiritual terms, the product of Christ and a converted Christian is a servant and worshipper of God, the goal of God's harvest of firstfruits—a new creation in the [image of God](#). Is that not a beautiful image?

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The True Savior of the World!](#)

by Martin G. Collins

Various world leaders have been heralded as "the savior of the world," yet these pretenders fall far short of the real Savior. Because He experienced the suffering of the human being, He is able to be a perfect High Priest for us, sympathizing and empathizing with our weaknesses. God the Father sent Jesus as the Savior of the world to heal the sick, to comfort the broken-hearted, and to liberate the captives, suggesting the end-time re-gathering of Israel's captives. Jesus Christ kept God's Law perfectly, fulfilling the law perfectly in order that He could make a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, enabling the forgiveness of our sins (the pollution, guilt, and penalty of our

sins) and our sanctification, perfection, and purification, continually making intercession for us as High Priest, conforming our physical bodies to His glorious spiritual body.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Branch](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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