

Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz 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. Then he said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. So I thought I would tell you of it and say, 'Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of 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 besides you to redeem it, and I come after you." And he said, "I will redeem it." Then Boaz said, "The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance." Then the redeemer said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. So when the redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself," he drew off his sandal. Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day." Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman."

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to

him.” Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighbourhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

(Ruth 4:1–22)

Introduction

Several years ago, Canadian illusionist Darcy Oake took the stage at *Britain’s Got Talent* (BGT). An empty bird cage stood behind his right shoulder as he introduced himself to the judges and audience. He began his audition by holding aloft a white feather and striking a match. Touching the lighted match to the feather, he transformed the feather into a live white dove. The audience was already spellbound, but that was only the beginning. As the slack-jawed judges looked on, Oake gently held the dove in two hands, then separated them to reveal a live white dove in each. Carefully placing the two birds in the empty cage, he pulled a white handkerchief from his pocket, which he promptly turned into a third white dove, before transforming yet another white feather into a fourth live dove.

He wrapped his audition with a few more outstanding illusions, leading David Walliams to conclude, “I think you might be the best magician we’ve ever seen on this show,” and Simon Cowell to agree that he was “without question” the best magician that BGT had seen.

The audition clip on BGT’s YouTube channel, which has garnered more than 92 million views, is titled “Darcy Oake’s Jaw Dropping Dove Illusion.” In his commentary on Ruth, Barry Webb suggests that Ruth 4 is something like an illusionist multiplying doves before an audience. After everything we’ve read so far, we come to this chapter expecting to find a redeemer. But as we read, a second redeemer materialises, then a third, and then a fourth – and even a fifth.

The word “redeem” or “redeemer” is all over this chapter. It occurs twelve times in these 22 verses and is applied to – or implied of – five separate individuals.

Redeemer Law

Before we look at the five redeemers, it will prove helpful from the outset to review the redeemer law and how it applied in this specific context.

According to Old Testament law, property owned by an Israelite always stayed within the tribe and clan of the landowner. Land was passed as an inheritance from father to son. If the landowner had no sons, land was passed to his daughters (Numbers 27:1–11). However, to ensure that land remained within the clan, daughters who inherited land had to marry within their own clan so that any heirs produced would be considered to be of the landowner's clan (Numbers 36:1–13).

If an Israelite fell into debt, he could sell his debt to a relative, who would settle it, but then obtain the right to use the landowner's property for financial gain. The seller could continue to work the land and provide for his family, but any profits would go to the purchaser in order to repay the debt that the purchaser had settled. The purchaser was known as a "redeemer."

At the Year of Jubilee, land rights reverted to the original owner and any debt still owed to the redeemer was cancelled. If the owner had died, land rights reverted to his heirs and so the land always stayed within the same clan.

In the event that a landowner sold the use of his land to a redeemer but *failed* to produce an heir, the redeemer could retain ownership of the land upon the death of the landowner. Since there was no heir to perpetuate the name of the landowner, ownership of the land fell to the redeemer. However, since land ownership, by God's design, was so important, every possible effort needed to be made to keep in the clan and tribe of the original landowner. This created an intriguing custom for childless widows of deceased landowners.

If the landowner died without an heir, his widow could sell land rights to a redeemer, but the redeemer would then take upon himself the responsibility of marrying the widow and producing offspring. The offspring were then considered heirs of the deceased so that the land would pass to those heirs and remain within the clan and tribe of the original landowner.

In the story before us, Naomi was the owner of a piece of land that had belonged to her husband, Elimelech. Not only had Naomi's husband died, but so had her sons. Since she had no biological daughters, there was no heir to inherit the land.

Naomi was evidently too old to have children (1:11–13). However, Ruth, widow of Elimelech and Naomi's son, Mahlon, was still of child-bearing age. Since her late husband

would have inherited the land upon the death of his father, Ruth also had an interest in the land. According to the redeemer law, then, a relative could purchase the land rights and marry Ruth with the goal of producing an heir who would receive the land as inheritance, thereby keeping it within Elimelech's clan and tribe. Purchase of the land rights, however, also came with the responsibility of providing and caring for the two widows.

It was a complex law, but it was all clearly laid out in various portions of the Pentateuch. It was very much an others-centred law, designed not so much to benefit the redeemer, but to benefit the one being redeemed.

Since Boaz was a relative of Elimelech, he was a potential redeemer. But there was a plot twist, because there was a closer relative who had the first right of redemption. Another man stood between Boaz and Ruth. Since Boaz was an honourable man, who knew the law of God, he was determined to act honourably to remove the obstacle before he could proceed with his agreed marriage to Ruth. Enter the first redeemer.

Redeemer Whatsisname

The first redeemer of which our text speaks is an unnamed individual. He remains unnamed because he is largely insignificant to the story. He is the uncredited extra in the unfolding drama.

Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz 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. Then he said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. So I thought I would tell you of it and say, Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of 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 besides you to redeem it, and I come after you." And he said, "I will redeem it." Then Boaz said, "The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance." Then the redeemer said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

(Ruth 4:1–6)

Chapter 3 closed with Naomi's conviction that Boaz would finalise the matter of redemption "today" (3:18). We saw previously that some seven weeks had passed between the events

of chapter 2 and chapter 3, but the events of chapter 4 unfolded on the very same day as those recorded in chapter 3.

This chapter opens with Boaz placing himself strategically at “the gate” of the city (v. 1). He did so because he was certain that the unnamed redeemer would pass through the gate on his way to the fields. But city gates also served an important function in the ancient Middle East.

City gates served as popular places for social gathering. They were often constructed in such a way that they provided shade from the heat, and residents often gathered at the gate to discuss current news and other events of interest. However, in some measure because of the social nature of the area, the city gate became the place where business was routinely transacted and legal disputes were settled. City elders would place themselves at the gate to mediate business and legal transactions. There were always witnesses present.

We saw, in chapter 3, that Ruth had approached Boaz and proposed marriage to him as “a redeemer” (3:9). Boaz was eager to serve as a redeemer, but he was determined to do everything by the book. He knew that the surest way to obtain God’s blessing was to do things God’s way.

There is, by the way, an important lesson for us here. If we want a life attended by God’s blessing, we had better be sure to live life God’s way. “God’s covenant blessing comes to the man or woman who employs the law of the Lord as his or her guide, and the wisdom of the Lord to direct his or her lifestyle” (Ferguson). Obedience to God’s law, when it is exercised out of love, is not legalism. Indeed, the Bible pronounces great blessing on the believer “whose delight is in the law of the LORD” and who “meditates” on that law “day and night” (Psalm 1:1–2ff). Those who acknowledge the Lord in all their ways can be assured that such obedience “will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones” (Proverbs 3:8).

As a church, we recently started preaching on Sunday nights through Proverbs, and we have strongly encouraged church members to make Proverbs a regular part of their devotional reading. Proverbs offers intensely practical wisdom, which is guided by God’s law. Living in light of God’s revelation can only invite God’s blessing.

As Boaz sat at the gate, the closer relative eventually arrived. Boaz refers to him as “friend.” The Hebrew phrase translated “friend” does not suggest an intimate relationship of any sort. The Hebrew phrase is *peloni almoni*, and it can best be rendered something like “so-and-so” or “such-and-such.” We’ll call this redeemer Mr. Whatsisname. The writer seems

A Tale of Five Redeemers

Ruth 4:1–22

Stuart Chase

to be deliberately using this word, almost as if he is highlighting that this man doesn't even deserve recognition. Nevertheless, he is a potential "redeemer" (v. 1) – the first of five.

Boaz knew exactly what he wanted. To get it, he had to be strategic without being deceptive. He began by painting the picture of a wonderful financial opportunity for Mr. Whatsisname – too good to be refused. Naomi was selling land rights to the property that had belonged to her husband. Mr. Whatsisname was first in line to redeem it, though Boaz was himself interested in the lucrative offer.

Mr. Whatsisname seems to have been something of an actuary. (An actuary is a person who never had the personality to become an accountant!) Actuarial work is all about statistical analysis and calculations of risks and premiums. Mr. Whatsisname, the actuary, quickly set to work. Naomi was a widow, too old to have children. If he purchased the land rights and she had no heir to inherit the property, the land would revert to his own family upon her death. What was not to like about this plan? "I will redeem it" (v. 4).

At this point, the reader's heart may drop. Is this how this great love story will end? Will the hero not get the girl? Fortunately, Boaz was prepared for this eventuality. There was further information to be added: The land came with a young widow of childbearing age. If he redeemed the land, he also got Ruth, and, with Ruth, the responsibility to sire an heir, who would ultimately inherit the land. The land purchase would bring with it the responsibility to provide for a new wife and a bitter mother-in-law, as well as any children born into the new union. Suddenly, this offer looked far less attractive than it had a few minutes earlier. "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

It may be helpful to observe that Mr. Whatsisname was, like Boaz, acting in accordance with the letter of God's law, though not so much within its. There was nothing unethical about his decision to pass on the redemption offer. But the difference between him and Boaz must not be missed. Boaz obeyed the law out of love for God and his neighbour, whereas Mr. Whatsisname obeyed thinking only of himself. It is perfectly possible to obey God for purely selfish reasons, but that is not the kind of obedience God is looking for.

What motivates your obedience to God? Are you motivated by fear – worried about the consequences if you stop? Are you motivated by benefits – what you get out of it? Or are you motivated by love – for God and for your neighbour? I'm not suggesting that the first two motivates are completely unacceptable, but surely the highest motivation for obedience should be love? "Love goes beyond the moral baseline of the law to self-sacrifice for the benefit of others. In addition to keeping the law so as not to harm others, love also includes seizing opportunities to promote the welfare of others, even at cost to oneself" (Ulrich).

Boaz was motivated by love—not so Mr. Whatsisname. When he realised that there was no real benefit for him in it, Mr. Whatsisname turned down the offer to redeem, while Boaz pushed ahead.

Redeemer Boaz

The second redeemer figure is Boaz himself. While the word “redeemer” is not applied to him in this chapter, it is applied to him in 3:12, and vv. 7–12 show us how he served as redeemer.

Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. So when the redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself,” he drew off his sandal. Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day.” Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman.”

(Ruth 4:7–12)

Verse 7 informs us of an ancient custom that governed transactions like this: “Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel.” The words “in former times” seem to suggest that this custom was already long forgotten by the time Ruth was written. It was still custom in Boaz’s day, however, and he was careful to follow it, in the sight of witnesses, to ensure that everything was above board.

As we have already noted, Boaz was moved by non-selfish motives to act as redeemer. He did all of this, not to enrich himself, but “to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place” (v. 10). He knew that it was God’s will that an Israelite name “not be cut off from among his brothers,” and so he moved, at great personal cost, to redeem

Naomi and Ruth. I have no doubt that his love for Ruth was an additional motivating factor, but the text seems to draw attention to his loyalty to God above his love for Ruth.

The blessing that the witnesses pronounced upon this redemption shows the high regard in which Ruth had come to be held. Remember that Ruth was a Moabite, and that Moabites ordinarily had no place in the assembly of God's people (Deuteronomy 23:2–4). It was clear to all, however, that she had embraced true faith in the living God, for the witnesses here compare her to "Rachel and Leah" (v. 11), matriarchs of the Israelite nation. Deuteronomy 23 further indicates that the offspring of a Moabite – particularly in the instance of a mixed marriage – may never enter the assembly of the Lord, but the witnesses here pronounce their blessing even upon the offspring: "May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, *because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman*" (v. 12). Both Ruth and her future offspring were considered to be firmly within God's covenant community.

We must not miss the manner by which Ruth was brought into covenant relationship: by the redemption of Boaz. Earlier, Boaz had spoken of Ruth coming to take refuge under Yahweh's wings (2:12), but it was through Yahweh's people that she found this refuge. God was the ultimate redeemer, but he used his people to redeem the one in need of redemption.

There is an important principle here: If you have been redeemed by God, he wants you to act redemptively in the lives of others. This is really the logic of the redeemer law: Because God had redeemed his people, he expected them to behave as redeemers to others. And he expects the same of us.

This is a part of what it means to "do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). If we have been redeemed, God wants us to act to redeem those who are oppressed. He is a God who is committed to doing "justice to the fatherless and oppressed" (Psalm 10:18; cf. 103:6; 146:7) and he works through his people. God condemns, in the strongest terms, those who "have oppressed the poor and the needy" – especially when the oppressors claim to be his people (Ezekiel 22:29). When Daniel called Nebuchadnezzar to repentance, he instructed him to "break off your sins by practising righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed" (Daniel 4:27). To "set at liberty those who are oppressed" is to behave in a way that is becoming of Christ (Luke 4:18).

Sometimes, we are so scared of being labelled social justice warriors, or of embracing a social gospel, that we neglect God's command to do justice. The gospel and social justice are not mutually exclusive. William Wilberforce was moved by a gospel-centred worldview to oppose the slave trade. And, by the way, Wilberforce was also a founding member of the

Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals! His gospel-centred worldview informed every aspect of his life and led him to pursue justice for all.

Boaz knew God's law, but he was not content that knowing the Bible was all he needed to do to honour God. He was willing to sacrifice in order to redeem Ruth, and God's richest blessings were pronounced upon him.

Redeemer Obed

The third redeemer is referenced in vv. 13–17:

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighbourhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

(Ruth 4:13–17)

Verse 13 encapsulates in a few words an extended period of time. Not only did Boaz marry Ruth ("she became his wife"), but they consummated the marriage ("he went in to her"), she fell pregnant ("the LORD gave her conception") and she delivered the baby ("she bore a son"). If we assume that this was a honeymoon baby, then this verse encompasses a period of nine months at the very least.

That timeline is important for identifying the third "redeemer" (v. 14) in this chapter. "This day" (v. 14) is not a reference to the wedding day, but to the day of the son's birth. It is therefore not Boaz, but the baby – the heir – who is here spoken of as a redeemer. Obed is the story's third redeemer, and Ruth had "given birth to him" (v. 15).

Naomi had returned to Bethlehem empty and bitter, but now she was full of joy, having received God's good gifts to her in Ruth, Boaz and Obed. Obed would be "a restorer of life and a nourisher of ... old age" to Naomi. She was a typical grandmother, whose face lit up at the arrival of her grandson.

But Obed was also a redeemer in the sense that he was an heir. Without an heir, the family name would have been lost in the mists of time. But now there was one who would inherit

the land and continue the family legacy. Life in chapter 1 – perhaps as little as a year ago – had seemed so empty, but now it was full. A redeemer had arrived.

Redeemer David

The fourth redeemer is not specifically called a redeemer, but readers familiar with the books of Judges and Ruth will immediately recognise his role as a redeemer:

Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

(Ruth 4:18–22)

Although the book of Ruth was only written in or after the time of David (as is evident by the mention of his name here), the events that it records occurred during the days of the judges (1:1). Judges emphasises that, because there was no righteous king in Israel, the people did whatever was right in their own eyes (Judges 17:6; 21:25). The books of Judges and Ruth cry out for a godly king, who would rule God's people rightly and redeem them from the trouble brought upon them through their own covenant disobedience.

The judges initially provided this redemption, but it was always short-lived. As the period of the judges unfolded, things went from bad to worse. Toward the end, even the judges, like Samson, did not pay particular allegiance to God. Levites became idolaters (Judges 17–18) and dissected body parts were mailed throughout the Promised Land (Judges 19). Civil war erupted and almost entirely wiped out one of the twelve tribes so that a plan, which essentially amounted to kidnapping and forced marriage, was devised in order to avoid such desolation (Judges 20–21). Things were going really well for the people who were doing whatever was right in their own eyes! When would it all end? When would a righteous king arise?

The answer lies in this closing genealogy. David was the righteous king that Judges and Ruth longed for. He was a man after God's own heart, who ruled Israel in covenant faithfulness and restored blessing to God's beleaguered and oppressed people. He was the royal redeemer that Israel had for so long waited for. He was the happily-ever-after – at least as far as the original readers of the book were concerned.

We must recognise that this genealogy is the climax of the book. Everything we've read has been bringing us to this point. The human writer's intention is to draw our attention to David. But to get to David, he must first detail everything that happened in the lives of Naomi and Ruth.

Of course, Naomi and Ruth didn't know all of this. They went through an incredibly difficult time with no idea that the righteous king they longed for was just a generation or two away. And there is an important lesson for us in that observation: "The explanation for much that takes place in our lives lies well beyond our own lives, and may be hidden from us all through our lives!" (Ferguson). From Naomi and Ruth's perspective, things seemed messy. But that's because God wasn't done yet.

God's plan is always bigger than you. Sometimes we can get so introspective, complaining of what a mess things in our lives seem to be, lamenting that nothing ever goes right, expecting God to fix everything here and now. We must remember that God has a far longer vision than we do! Often – I would even argue *usually* – we don't get to see the end, but God does, and he works all things to the end that he is seeking to accomplish. Ruth wants to teach us to trust God even when life is messy, because he knows what he is doing.

Redeemer Jesus

But, of course, readers familiar with the unfolding story of redemption in the Bible know that even David was not the real end of the story. He was simply a foreshadowing of a greater – an ultimate – Redeemer. Another Redeemer, not mentioned by name in this text and not known to the author of this book, would come as the descendant of David. He would be born in Bethlehem and would fully and finally save – redeem – his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus Christ is the ultimate Son of David (Matthew 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; etc.), who came to redeem a people to himself by his death and resurrection. If the human author wanted his readers to see David as the happily-ever-after, the Holy Spirit wants his people to see Christ in this story. "The events recorded in chapter 4 are the things to which everything up to this point has been leading. Everything in this chapter is designed by God the Holy Spirit to direct our hearts and minds to the Lord Jesus Christ and his great work of redemption" (Fortner).

The redemption that Christ accomplished for his people is the point of this story, and it is foreshadowed in this chapter in several ways.

First, the redemption we see here was a proper redemption. Boaz ensured that he followed every protocol according to the letter. He knew that there was a problem that could only be solved by the payment of the appointed price, and he paid everything exactly as it was called for.

Similarly, the redemption that Christ secured on the cross was a proper redemption. Sin is a violation of God’s law, which demands justice. Forgiveness—the fruit of redemption—demands satisfaction. God’s wrath needed to be assuaged. There was a price that needed to be paid in order for a people to be redeemed. In the redemption that Christ accomplished at Calvary, God did not simply overlook sin or sweep it under the carpet. He dealt with it properly. “Christ ... suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18). God required that a certain standard be met in those who would come to him (see Psalm 24:3–4). We all fall short of that standard because of our sin, but Christ met that standard on our behalf and took our penalty upon himself so that God’s justice would be satisfied in our redemption.

Second, the redemption we see in the text before us was a pleasurable redemption. It took some effort and cost for Boaz to redeem Ruth, but he did it, in part, because he loved her. He considered the prize to be worth the cost. Because he took pleasure in her, he was willing to do what was necessary in order to redeem her.

In similar vein, Christ “endured the cross, despising the shame,” not because it cost him nothing, but “for the joy that was set before him” (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus loved the people for whom he died, and he loved the Father who sent him as Redeemer. It cost him a great deal to redeem his people—indeed, it cost him his very life—but he was willing to pay the price because he was focused on what that price would secure.

Third, Boaz’s redemption was a particular redemption. He did not secure a general redemption for anyone who might want to come to him. “Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife” (v. 10). He set his sights on a particular woman and acted to redeem her as his bride. And he accomplished everything he intended to accomplish: “So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife” (v. 13).

Jesus, similarly, set his sights on a particular people and accomplished a particular redemption for them. He died for those whom the Father gave him and he will lose none of them (John 6:37–39). The doctrine of particular redemption or limited atonement has not always been popular, but the Bible teaches it. Christ gave himself for a particular people, and everyone for whom he died will come to him. This truth gives us great impetus in evangelism and missionary work. We know that God has given a people to his Son, and so, as we share the gospel, we can be confident that those whom the Father has given to the Son will respond in repentance and faith.

Fourth, the redemption pictured here was a praiseworthy redemption. As you read the account of the actual redemption (vv. 7–12), you will notice that Ruth, the title character, doesn’t feature a great deal. The writer focuses not on the redeemed, but on the redeemer.

Boaz gets the credit for the act of redemption. “May you [Boaz] act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem” (v. 11).

In the same way, we must realise that all the credit and all the glory and all the praise for the act of eternal redemption goes to the Redeemer, not to the redeemed. We don’t get the credit; God does. “Let us adore and publish the name of our dear Redeemer. Make him famous where you live for his sovereign purpose of grace, for his electing love, and for his adorable providence, for his immaculate mercy and for his great, effectual redemption of our souls by his precious blood” (Fortner).

Fifth, Boaz’s redemption of Ruth was a purposeful redemption. Yes, he acted out of love, but there was purpose to what he accomplished. “Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of this native place” (v. 10). There was a specific purpose, which Boaz stated to the witnesses at the city gate.

Similarly, Jesus’ redemption was purposeful. He “gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). We were saved, not *by* good works, but *for* good works (Ephesians 2:8–10). Yes, God acted out of love when he sent his only Son to die for us, but there was a purpose to our redemption. Those whom Christ redeems, he sets apart as his own possession and as those who are zealous for good works. We must recognise that our lives are to adorn the gospel by which we are saved. God redeemed us, and he expects us to live as those who have been redeemed.

Conclusion

Melody Green was born to Jewish parents and raised in the Jewish faith. In her early twenties, fresh on the heels of experimentation with drugs, she tinkered with Buddhism in Japan, but failed to find anything in it that was genuine. She met and married her husband, Keith, in 1972, and they continued the search together, until they stumble upon a Bible study in 1975 and were introduced to Redeemer Jesus.

Together, Keith and Melody Green started a ministry called Last Days Ministry, which reaches out to drug addicts and pregnant teens. As she threw herself fully into this ministry, Melody Green was inspired to write these words:

There is a Redeemer,
Jesus, God’s own Son.

A Tale of Five Redeemers

Ruth 4:1–22

Stuart Chase

Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
Holy One.

Thank you, O our Father,
for giving us your Son,
and leaving your Spirit till
the work on earth is done.

Thank God for our Redeemer, indeed.

AMEN