

God's Redemption Plan

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[0 : 00] You'll find at the top a line made famous by someone, and I think probably most of you are too young to understand or to know where this line comes from, but I'll ask it anyway, and some of you might know, and you probably give your age away if you do.

But who's famous for that following line right at the top? I love it when a plan comes together. Anyone know? Oh, Arthur. A-team. Yeah, who in particular?

Arthur. Hannibal. Yes, that's right. So on the next slide, here you go. With soundtrack, hopefully. You only caught the last two seconds instead of the whatever.

Anyway, so most of you may not know, but Colonel John Hannibal Smith is the leader of the A-team, a rather popular TV show which I was sort of hooked on in the A-team.

Okay? So the A-team are a motley crew of innocent but wanted mercenaries, and they act as knights in shining armor to help people in distress, of course, for a tidy sum of money.

[1 : 16] But because they're always evading the law, right? They're fugitives. While at the same time trying to help bust the bad guys, they always end up having to devise wild schemes and plans to ensure success.

Now, this being Hollywood, they always succeed. And that's when, you know, Hannibal, right at the last scene, he'll light up his cigar and make his famous line, I love it when a plan comes together.

It always happens. Well, I'm not sure if God and Naomi are into cigars, but this week in Ruth, we finally come to the point where, for God and Naomi, the plan finally comes together.

It's been cooking or brewing, however you can call it, since chapter 2, and it's finally ready and done today. So what happens? Well, let's continue where we left off at the end of chapter 3.

And you might recall if you were here last week that Ruth had come to Boaz to ask for Boaz to redeem Naomi and Ruth, call into play the redemption laws in the Old Testament.

[2 : 25] And so Boaz said, look, there's another that I need to check with first. And so here in verse 1 of chapter 4, we read that Boaz went up to the town gate in the morning and sat down there just as the guardian redeemer, that's the other person he had mentioned, came along.

Boaz said, come over here, my friend, and sit down. And so he went over and sat down. Boaz took 10 of the elders of the town and said, sit here. And they did so.

Then he said to the guardian redeemer, Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Limelech. I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people.

If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you. And I am next in line.

I will redeem it, he said. So we have the opening gambit in this transaction. But one detail we pick up here is that it appears the land which Moab, it appears that the land which Naomi owned hasn't been sold yet.

[3 : 41] Remember last week we talked about how the redemption laws would work when the land had been sold and they needed to be bought back by a mix of kin. But it seems here that this is more like a preemptive redemption.

Perhaps Limelech, rather than selling the land, had just left the land unattended when he had gone to Moab. And on her return, Naomi still owned the land.

But because there's no one to work it, there's only Ruth and Naomi, they felt that they had to sell this land in order to support themselves. Now initially when this guardian redeemer hears of this, he's keen.

I'm not sure what he misunderstood, because it's clear that when you redeem the land under the law, you do it for the benefit of the original owner. Now maybe he thought that, you know, Naomi not having any descendants and things like that, if he just supported Naomi for a while, when she died, then the land would pass to him.

But either way, when we later see his change of heart, it becomes clear that all he had eyes for were the dollar signs that went with the land.

[4 : 57] Now Boaz informs him in the next verse that on the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.

Boaz here is reminding this other redeemer, who incidentally is not named, did you notice, what the cost of redemption is.

The land wasn't just owned by Naomi, she had a daughter-in-law, who is the widow of the heir. And so as part of the redemption, the liberate marriage laws, which we saw last week, applied.

And so what turned out initially to be a bargain investment, a great deal, is going to be costly. Not only did the redeemer have to invest money and workers to make the land productive, he also had a duty to produce an heir for Naomi, after which this heir will carry on the name of Elimelech and Marlon, not his.

So, verse 6, the guardian redeemer said, then I cannot redeem it, because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself.

[6 : 11] I cannot do it. More like I will not do it. But anyway, he says, I cannot do it. And so here's the rub for this man. It's too costly. But note this, that if it's going to be costly for this man, then actually it's going to be just as costly for Boaz as well.

Anyway, as we continue, we find here next, one of the rules of transactions in Israel. For it says, now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other.

This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel. So the guardian redeemer said to Boaz, Boaz, bite yourself, bite yourself. And he removed his sandal.

Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, today, you are witnesses that have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion, and Marlon. I've also acquired Ruth, the Moabite, Marlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown.

Today, you are witnesses. And so you see the contrast here, can't you? That on this, on the one hand, you have this man, unnamed, who's only too keen to whip off his sandals, you know, and get this deal done, to handball this obligation to Boaz.

[7 : 34] And on the other, we have Boaz, who's not only not reluctant to take it on, but instead he calls all the elders and the people to come to witness. Twice, he says, because there's no hint that he wants to dodge this duty.

He's actually keen and eager to fulfill it. But as I said, the redemption is costly. Everything that Boaz does in relation to the land and Ruth, will be done in and for the name of Marlon.

Boaz himself would get no official credit for it. So if they have a child together, and let's say they had birth certificates in those times, it would say, mother, Ruth, father, not Boaz, but Marlon.

But Marlon. And, you know, as you've read the story, you can tell, can't you, that Boaz really loved Ruth. And so just think that if they had a child together out of that marriage of love, and then for him not to be able to have that child recognized as his, I don't know how you feel, but I would be heartbroken.

That is the extent of Boaz's generosity. Can you see? So as I say in the first point, Boaz is portrayed and is a worthy redeemer.

[8 : 55] And as a result, Naomi, second point, is blessed by the redemption. If you remember back in chapter one, she wanted to be called Mara, which meant bitter.

Well, she is Mara no more as a result. And we can see, firstly, that from the blessing of the elders and the people, that Naomi is blessed through Ruth with a place in Boaz home now, and a future. Verse 11, then the elders and all the people at the gate said, we are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.

Through the offspring, the Lord gives you by this young woman. May your family be like that of Perez, whom Tema bore to Judah. Now, the focus here is actually the blessing is on Boaz as well, but it is a rather unusual blessing because even though, as we just saw that the result of redemption is that any offspring will bear Marlon's name.

Yet here, the blessing is for Boaz to be famous. It is as though notwithstanding the official records, people will focus on Boaz's generosity instead.

[10:10] They will honor him. They will remember him that this is the father of the son. And ongoing, the line that goes on beyond that.

Now, as for the names of the women in the blessing, well, Rachel and Leah are pretty straightforward. They are Jacob's two wives, who between them bore the sons who became the 12 tribes of Israel.

So this is a blessing of dynasty for Boaz through Ruth. As for Tema, well, her story is in Genesis chapter 38. It's a rather sordid story, but like Ruth, she too was an outsider, a Canaanite, not an Israelite.

But she too played a decisive part in continuing the line of Judah. So she was married to Judah's first son, Er, but God put him to death because he was wicked.

So Judah tells his second son, Onan, to sleep with Tema, with the purpose of continuing his brother's line. Same with the liberate laws that applied. But he too was wicked, didn't want to do it.

[11:15] So God put him to death as well. And finally, Judah himself withheld his third son from Tema, which then forced Tema to take things into her own hands and to sleep with Judah secretly while he was drunk and she was disguised without his knowledge.

But her determination to achieve what Judah fails to do himself, that is to continue the line, causes him to pronounce her as being more righteous than he is.

And out of this are born two twins to Tema. The older son is called Perez, who is likely the forefather of many of those who were present there that day, including Boaz.

Likewise, Ruth then is an outsider, just like Tema. But she has done what's righteous here and worked with Naomi to continue the line of the family.

And so as a result, Naomi, her future is secured. She's found a place through Ruth in Boaz's home. But related to that is the second blessing of a son.

[12:24] And as we look at the next verses, we see that even though, again, it's rather unusual, even though Boaz and Ruth are the parents, the focus now is on Naomi, who is fated as having a son.

So, reading on, Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The woman said to Naomi, Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian redeemer.

May he become famous throughout Israel. He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.

Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. The woman living there said, Naomi has a son. And they named him Obed.

He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. The irony, I guess, is inescapable, isn't it? Because back in chapter one, for ten years, Marlon and Ruth had been trying for a child without success.

[13:34] But now, here comes along an older man, Boaz, and without any trouble, Ruth conceives. You know, almost like a snap of the finger kind of thing. Why? It's there, isn't it?

Because the Lord enables her to conceive. This is yet another clear sign, the final sign of God's providence, isn't it? In this whole book. But as I said, it's Naomi that is portrayed as the mother here. The women pronounce her as blessed for having a son. And she's the one that takes Obed into her arms and cares for her, almost like a nursing mother.

She's given a new lease of life in her old age and loved by Ruth. So yes, she did mastermind this plan for Ruth. But really, God has been the ultimate mastermind, hasn't he?

It's as much God's plan of redemption, if not more so, as it is Naomi's. Except with God, he has a much bigger plan in mind, doesn't he?

[14:43] Naomi was merely trying to secure her own future. But God has the future of Israel and indeed the whole world in mind.

For right at the end, we read that Boaz is actually the great grandfather of David. Yes, that's right, King David, through whom the Redeemer of Israel and the world, the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, will come.

So the book, for a reason, ends with the genealogy of David. It says, this then is the family line of Perez. Perez was the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nashon, Nashon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.

And scholars have noted that this is the only book in the Bible that ends with a name. It's the name of David. Because even though Ruth is a great love story, and I know that's why you all love this story, especially the women perhaps, the genealogy indicates what Ruth is really about.

Were Boaz and Ruth not David's great-grandparents, we would not have the book of Ruth. We wouldn't be talking about them now. It doesn't matter how great this love story is going to be.

[16:16] It doesn't matter how generous Boaz has been. We would not have the book of Ruth apart from the fact that Ruth is the great-grandmother of King David.

And here again, I just raise this same point. Notice how, you know, we've been all talking about how the redemption laws mean that even though, you know, it's Boaz that's, you know, conceived the child, it's Marlon that will be recognized.

Isn't it? Continue the name of the dead. And yet, what happens here in the record of the Bible? It's not Marlon's line that's being perpetuated, is it?

That's not how the Bible records it. Instead, the Bible recognizes that Boaz is the great-grandfather of David. And if you look at the genealogy in Matthew, it's the same.

You know, I don't know what the other guardian redeemer would have done, but if only he knew how history would have turned out.

[17:19] I wonder whether he would have fulfilled his duty. Christians throughout history would be honoring his name today. And yet, today we don't even know his name.

We don't know who he is. Someone in the morning service commented that he thought that this was too costly. How ironic. Because he gave up something even more valuable.

And that was to be part of God's plan. Now, as for Ruth, well, if someone had asked her or told her as a little girl in Moab the part she would play in the salvation of the world, she would have laughed them out of town.

Back then, she wouldn't even have known who the God of Israel was, let alone have this inkling that she would leave her people to join God's people and play such a pivotal role in salvation history.

And in a sense, if you look throughout the Bible, she's no different to any others in the Bible.

Abraham, he was caught out of obscurity, out of Haran.

[18:26] Same with Rebecca. Same with Tamar, or Hannah, or even Rahab, who incidentally is actually Boaz's mother. She was a prostitute in Jericho, a Canaanite, or Bathsheba, or Mary, the mother of Jesus, or us, even.

Something wonderful happens when people hear the call of God and respond by faith. Who knows what God has in plan for those who do that as they become part of his big plan of redemption for this world.

Now, I'm not saying that any of you, if you've responded by faith, will have a Messiah come from your line. Okay? That's already happened, so, you know, take that out of the equation. But remember, you know, that other reading that we had in Ephesians, the beneficiary of God's plan. But, at the same time, you also become God's agent in his plan. We become, we have a part to play in the fulfillment of that plan as we become his witnesses, as we serve God, as we serve God's people.

We become part of God's plan of redemption. And so, the key to understanding all this and working out God's plan is not to focus on the question, what is God's plan for my life?

[19:49] But rather, to ask, how does my life fit into God's plan? Can you see the difference? This other guardian redeemer, God's plan didn't fit into his life, so he said it was too costly.

But no, the question to ask is, how does my life fit into God's plan of redemption? That's the right question to ask in sin. And I know that it's perfectly normal when we're hoping for something in life, whether it's a career or a life partner or financial stability or children or good health, that somehow these things don't happen, we feel like God has abandoned us, that he's not given us a plan.

Well, the book of Ruth encourages us to see that even though God is intimately interested in us as individuals, and we've seen that, haven't we? Naomi, Ruth, Boaz, God cares for the individual, and yet, God also has in mind for us the bigger plan that he's working to, the plan that is found by being in Christ.

The goal of that plan is God's redemption of humanity to bring all things under Christ. And so we ought to be fitting into those plans, even as we know that God will provide for us.

And so while, as we've looked through the book of Ruth, Naomi and Ruth have had their son and they find security in Boaz's home, that is not the application that we are to take from Ruth.

[21 : 17] As though God has this plan to bless you in specific ways, the same way that he's blessed Naomi and Ruth. And that's because Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz were working under God's promises under the old covenant.

And even then, God was providing, wasn't he, for the Lord Jesus to come. Whereas for all of us, whether we're Jew or Gentile, we now live under God's promises in Christ under the new covenant. And the plan, God's plan, is the one that Paul has already explained to us in Ephesians. And like Ruth, for those of us who are Gentiles, we too were once far off.

And yet, by God's grace, we have been brought near by faith in Jesus, grafted into God's people.

And you know, how do you even become a Christian? It's God that's done the work, isn't it?

You could have been somewhere else rather than here tonight, not hearing about the gospel. And yet, God has drawn you near with his word. And like Boaz, God too has provided us with a redeemer.

[22 : 23] Not to provide for our material security, but to provide for our spiritual security. And that is the person of Jesus, the promised king, the son of David, who saves us from our sins and gives us an eternal home in God's kingdom.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for the gift of your son. Thank you that we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus and brought into your plan of salvation.

Help us to serve you and to be used by you as part of this plan, just like Boaz and Ruth and Naomi were to fulfill your purpose and will for all creation, to bring all things under Christ, to bring glory through your name.

In the name of your son, Jesus, our Lord and Savior, we pray. Amen.