

The Blessing of Obed

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Boaz marries Ruth and fathers Obed, who becomes Naomi's redeemer and blessing
2. aim – to cause us to understand the love of God in giving his Son to redeem a people
3. passage – Ruth 4:11-22

b. outline

1. The Blessing Over Boaz (Ruth 4:11-12)
2. The Blessing Over Naomi (Ruth 4:13-17a)
3. The Blessing Over Israel (Ruth 4:17b-22)

c. opening

1. the **climactic nature** of this chapter
 - a. the 4th chapter of Ruth is the **entire reason** for the book
 1. it completes the story of Boaz redeeming Ruth and Naomi, finishing the storyline (**its climax**)
 2. it completes the picture of the **internal purpose** of the book, namely, the **child** of Ruth and Boaz
 - b. the 4th chapter of Ruth is the **eternal reason** for the book
 1. it is a story that **foreshadows** the coming messiah – the chapter **parallels** (in many ways) the coming of the Christ who would act as the **ultimate** redeemer
 2. **e.g.** the Son keeping his eternal **promise** to the Father; Christ solving our **judicial** need; Jesus **actually** and **willingly** redeeming; the Savior **finishing** his work of redemption
 - c. **Ruth chapter 4 is why this book is included by the providential hand of God in Scripture – it helps us understand the coming of the Christ as foreordained by God in eternity past**
 1. but, it also helps us see **why** in a much more **profound** and **personal** way ...

I. The Blessing Over Boaz (Ruth 4:11-12)

Content

a. the content of the blessing

1. it comes from those who are “witnesses” to the legal arrangement made by Boaz
 - a. **i.e.** all of those (esp. the elders) who “participated” in the **Levirate Marriage** contract at the gate
 - b. **i.e.** all of those who desire to see the arrangement **have its intended purpose** (**see below**)
2. it is a **blessing** = a **prayer** that God would bless the arrangement to accomplish its **goal**
 - a. it is addressed to “**the Lord**”; it appeals to those things God had done in the past (**i.e.** the house of Israel [Jacob]); it hopes for things **outside** of the control of humans (**i.e.** fruitfulness); it is **answered** by God directly (**i.e.** “**the Lord gave her conception**”; **v. 13**), etc.
 1. but, it is probably a **common** blessing/prayer in Israel during these days – it is **unlikely** that the elders are **specifically** praying for a child to be born that leads to a king or to the messiah
 - b. that Ruth (**i.e.** “**the woman ... coming into your house**”) would bear many children
 1. specifically, like Rachel and Leah, the wives of Jacob (even though the 12 sons of Jacob came also from Bilhah, Zilpah and the wife of Joseph; **i.e.** Ephraim and Manasseh)
 - c. that Boaz would act worthily “**in Ephrathah**” and be renowned “**in Bethlehem**” = that the marriage of Boaz to Ruth would be of value to the village and all of the surrounding area (Ephrathah)
 1. specifically, that the whole area would be blessed by the offspring of the marriage as they joined the agrarian society, were married, and produced more offspring
 - d. that Boaz's house would be “**like the house of Perez**” = that the **Levirate Marriage** would continue the line of Perez's family, which was prematurely cutoff by the death of Elimelech and his sons
 1. **remember:** Tamar was “forced” to have children with Judah (Perez) because **his** son (Onan) failed to do his duty in the Levirate Marriage relationship and family inheritance
 2. specifically, that this act of redemption would continue the family line unbroken

b. the intention of the blessing

1. it is **prophetic** = the writer includes the blessing because it helps to make his point: namely, that the child born to Boaz and Ruth is part of the family line of David (**i.e.** the end of the book)
 - a. the people pray for God to bless the relationship **not knowing** that God had purposed for the child to be the ancestor of two (2) great kings (and a number of lesser ones)

2. **it is a foreshadowing = the prayer of the people is for God to provide a line of offspring through Boaz, just as Christ comes to form a line of “offspring” for himself**
 - a. in **Romans 5** and **Galatians 3**, Paul says that those who are justified by faith in Christ are no longer a part of Adam’s progeny (of death), but have now been included in the “lineage” of Christ
 - b. **i.e.** that the work of Christ grants to him by the Father “*Abraham’s offspring*” (**Gal. 3:29**)
 1. similar imageries include a **race** from Christ, a **bride**, a **body**, the **children of God**, etc.
 - c. **Boaz would indeed be renowned in Bethlehem for his offspring; the child would be included in the most significant lineage the world has ever known – Christ comes in that same family tree, and he (too) continues the line, but in a way that never again is broken off by death**
 1. Adam’s race is characterized by “*enmity*” (**Gen. 3:15**) – war, disease, famine, and murder, have prevented Adam’s race from fully obeying “*be fruitful and multiply*” (**Gen. 1:28**)
 2. Jesus’ race is characterized by life – the kingdom of Christ multiplies as the Spirit seeks the elect from “*every tribe, tongue, nation*” who live in perfect harmony without sin and death

II. The Blessing Over Naomi (Ruth 4:13-17a)

Content

a. the marriage and birth of the child (v. 13)

1. **note:** between **vv. 12-13**, it is *assumed* that Boaz goes out and purchases the land
 - a. that would be the *obvious* next step, and (**IMO**) the writer leaves it out because it is *obvious*
2. thus, **v. 13** is (in many ways) the *pinnacl*e of the book = the redemptive act by Boaz completed: he buys the land, he marries Ruth, he fathers a son to continue the line of inheritance for Mahlon
3. **but:** the wording of **v. 13** is “strange” as compared to many other similar statements in the Bible
 - a. typically, when an announcement is made of the birth of a son, the very first thing said of him is *what he is named* (e.g. **Gen. 5:28**: “*Lamech ... fathered a son and called his name Noah*”; **Gen. 29:32**: “*Leah ... bore a son, and she called his name Reuben*”; **Matt. 1:21**: “*she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus*”)
 - b. but *here*, that phrase is *missing* ... thus, the remainder of the paragraph is to explain **why** ...

b. the blessing of Naomi with the child (vv. 14-16)

1. **question:** what relationship does Naomi have to the child born to Boaz and Ruth?
 - a. technically speaking: **none** – the child is born to a couple on the “other side” of the family tree (**illustrate**) – she is not *technically* the grandmother of the child, and has no “real” right to him
 - b. however, she is *given* a connection by *Ruth* and it is a beautiful picture ...
2. the women come to Naomi and give her a blessing
 - a. **question:** who are these “women?” – **answer:** the women of the village that Naomi addressed when she first returned to Israel in **Ruth 1:19-21**
 - b. she had *grieved* then over her belief that the Lord had “*brought [her] back empty*” and that they should not call her Naomi anymore, but call her “*Mara*” (**i.e.** bitter)
 - c. now, the same women come to her *to reverse this sense of loss and bitterness*
 1. and (**I am convinced**) **Ruth comes with the women of the village to bestow this blessing!**
3. the **content** of the blessing (**vv. 14-15**):
 - a. “*blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer*” = although Naomi is “disconnected” from the redemption made by Boaz, Yahweh *has* provided her a redeemer
 1. **note:** the redeemer is *not* Boaz – it is *the child* (**v. 15b** – Ruth has given birth to this redeemer)
 - b. “*he shall be a restorer of life ... a nourisher of your old age*” = although Naomi feels “deserted” by God in the death of her own sons, this child will “replace” that loss by becoming a “new” son to her
 - c. “*for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons*” = the basis of this “redemption” (and blessing) is the relationship that you have with Ruth *and her love for you*
 1. **i.e.** Ruth is *voluntarily* going to Naomi and *including her in the redemptive plan* – out of a tremendous love for her *former* mother-in-law, she is doing this for her (**the real love story**)
4. the **consummation** of the blessing (**v. 16**):
 - a. Ruth (**IMO**) gives the child to Naomi, for Naomi to “*become his nurse*”
 1. either, (literally) to provide sustenance, or (more likely) to become his caretaker and teacher
 - b. Ruth gives her child to Naomi as the *best* one to raise the child in the instruction of the Lord
 1. **i.e.** the love that Ruth has for her mother-in-law *flows* from the *instruction* that Naomi had given to her *about Yahweh* – an understanding of the *One True God* that had caused Ruth to love Naomi even to the point of following her to a foreign country with little hope for the future
 2. **principle: it is our ever-increasing understanding of God that causes us to love him more**

c. the naming of the child (v. 17a)

1. it is the “*women of the neighborhood*” that name the child – in contrast to Naomi calling herself “Mara,” the women *reverse* that “naming” curse by giving the child a name: **Obed**
 - a. **note:** no footnote is given in the ESV; the NASB lexicon indicates his name is derived from a word that means “to work, serve”; in this case, “a worshipper” (for worship is a good work!)
 - b. **in this context:** Obed = one who turns the heart to God; one who turns the heart of Naomi *back* to the love of God; one who turns Naomi back to worship the One True God
 - c. **in the larger context:** Obed = one who brings a people to God; one who (eventually) brings forth the true worship of God from the heart of a people who *belong* to this God (**i.e.** through the Christ)
2. **foreshadowing: Ruth gives her son to Naomi out of a deep sense of love, just as the Father gives his own Son to those he loves eternally**
 - a. **remember:** it is easy for us to speak of election as an “impersonal” or “mathematical” choice by God in eternity past, but his choice of a people *was out of a deep sense of his love for them*
 1. grace (**i.e.** the radical choice of God to bestow favor) is always from *personal love* (**Eph. 2:4f**)
“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved ...”
 - b. **Obed named and given to Naomi is a great picture of *personal and enduring love* – Christ named and given to us by the Father is a similar picture of *eternal and infinite love***

III. The Blessing Over Israel (Ruth 4:17b-22)

Content

a. the genealogy of a king

1. the narrative ends with its *point*: the child belongs to a line stretching down from Perez to David
2. **i.e.** the story is told to explain how it is that David came to be, *intimating* how God used the line of Perez to bring forth his most *significant* descendant
3. **i.e.** the story (for us) is told to explain how the most significant descendant of *Israel* came to be

b. the finale of the book

1. **as followers of this Christ, our primary attitude should be one of *thanksgiving* – that God so loved us that he gave us his only begotten Son, that through *faith in him* we might have *everything* – thus our gratitude is rooted not in “things,” but in God’s goodness to us *in Christ***