

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON SIXTY-ONE: RUTH 4:3

"And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's."

Boaz began the meeting by explaining to the nearer relative that Naomi had some land to sell. This land belonged to her husband Elimelech.

As mentioned previously, the land of Canaan was distributed to the twelve tribes of Israel under Joshua (Joshua 13:7-8). Within the borders of each tribal land, individual lots were parceled out to each family within the tribe. God forbade the selling of a parcel of land because it was His will that each lot remain in the possession of the original family and tribe (Lev. 25:23).

God, however, made provision for the circumstances of a land owner falling upon hard times and needing money. In that instance, he could "sell" his land temporarily. Really, he was selling the use of the land. In the year of Jubilee, which occurs every 50 years, the land automatically reverts back to the original owner. Thus, the "purchaser" would count the number of years until Jubilee and pro-rate his payment to the owner for x years of use. However, a near relation could "redeem" the land - buy it back - at any time, and give it to the original owner (Lev. 25:25-28).

Naomi returned from Moab impoverished. She had to sell her husband's land out of the family. Unless there was a near kinsman willing to redeem it. Of course, the land would return to Naomi in the year of Jubilee. The Book of Ruth does not indicate how close or far from Jubilee this event occurred. If a near kinsman were willing to redeem the land, it would return to Naomi immediately. The Kinsman-Redeemer does not get to keep the land for himself. He is paying the price but returning the land to its owner.

Naomi was past the child-bearing age so redemption of the widow did not have a bearing on her situation. Perhaps that is why Boaz began negotiations mentioning Naomi only. But the ultimate goal was to keep the land within the same family line. Had Ruth not accompanied Naomi to Bethlehem, Elimelech's line would have died out.

The exact relationship between Elimelech, the nearer kinsman, and Boaz is never given in Scripture. The Hebrew word translated "brother" really indicates a kinsman. It covers brothers, cousins, uncles, etc. All we know for sure is that the nearer kinsman had a closer blood relationship with Elimelech than Boaz did.

Like the Naomi who left Moab, we were once impoverished - but, by sin. We had to turn away from a life of sin as Naomi turned her back on Moab. And, just as she set her face toward the place where her Kinsman-Redeemer could be found, so we turn toward God and His Word. There we found our Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus, the Son of God, Who bought us with His precious blood (Eph. 1:7).

Jesus did not promise that we would have an easy life. Just the opposite. The world will hate us because it hated Him (Luke 21:17). We will have "tribulation" (John 16:33). The Greek word translated "tribulation" means "pressure." The believer will suffer the same illness, hardships, and agonizing

moments of life that the unbeliever faces. The difference is that we do not face them alone (Mt. 28:20). We "sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (I Thess. 4:13). Our hope is in Jesus (Col. 1:27).

People are going to notice that there is something different about you by the way you handle adversity. Peter advises you to have an answer ready when you are asked how you can respond to your situation as you do (I Peter 3:15). Just tell them what Jesus has done for you.

"I have set the Lord always before me; I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope." Psalm 16:8-9