

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON FIFTY-TWO: RUTH 3:12

"And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I."

Boaz informed Ruth that there was a complication. Mahlon had another relative who was a closer relation than Boaz was. Based on the Mosaic Law, the nearest kinsman had the first option to act as the Kinsman-Redeemer.

The Bible doesn't give us the exact relationship of Boaz or the near relation (who is not named). Since Mahlon's only brother was also deceased, the next nearest relative would be a brother of Elimelech if one existed. Hence, some Bible scholars have suggested that the nearer kinsman was Mahlon's uncle, his father's brother. After that, we start going through first cousins, second cousins, etc. Perhaps Boaz was Mahlon's cousin. Since the Lord did not give us the particulars, it is obviously not important.

How did Boaz know about the nearer kinsman? Most Bible scholars have suggested that Boaz had investigated the matter, hoping that Ruth would claim him as her Kinsman-Redeemer. Maybe. But, it might be much simpler than that. Boaz was related to the nearer kinsman. They both lived in the same town. It seems likely Boaz knew all along there was a closer relation.

What about Naomi? It seems likely that she knew about this other relation, especially if he was her husband Elimelech's brother. It may be that she eliminated the closer relation as a potential redeemer because she knew he was already married. Or, perhaps she knew of another reason the nearer relation was not a viable candidate.

But the existence of a closer relation was probably news to Ruth. Imagine how she felt sitting there at Boaz's feet, in the dark, dressed in her finest apparel. She must have wondered if Naomi knew about this relation and, if so, why she hadn't warned Ruth. If Naomi knew there was a closer relation, why advise Ruth to tell Boaz she wanted him to redeem her? Poor Ruth had every reason to be frightened or confused. Yet it appears she had complete confidence in Naomi and in Boaz. She trusted Boaz would work it all out for her.

We know that prophetically Ruth is a type of the Church and Boaz is a type of Christ. Who is the nearer relation a type of? Where does he fit in? The best explanation I've found is that the nearer relation is man (that is mankind in general).

Any human being is closer to mankind in general than Jesus, Who is God. Jesus had to take on humanity to serve as our Kinsman-Redeemer. The price of sin must be paid in human blood. Perfect blood. God the Son, being a Spirit, had no blood. So, He became Jesus, the God-Man, to obtain a human body with blood that could be shed for the redemption of mankind. The closer relation, a sinful human, was not able to act as the Kinsman-Redeemer because his blood was tainted with sin. The Kinsman-Redeemer must be both willing and able to redeem. Boaz was both. We shall see the nearer relation was not.

Ruth was facing a potential glitch in the plans she and Naomi had made. She demonstrated her trust in Boaz by remaining on the threshing floor and lying down at his feet until morning. We, too, will experience glitches in the plans we make. Even if we think those plans are God's will for us. We can

choose to get angry or upset when our plans go awry. Or, we can trust God will work it out to our benefit.

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." Psalm 37:7a