

# The Kinsman Redeemer

by G.W. North

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*Jesus is the true kinsman-redeemer, who has the ability, authority, desire, and righteousness to redeem humanity through His own blood and righteousness.*

**Scripture:** Ruth 4:1

**Topics:** "Redemption", "Kinsman Redeemer"

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## Description

G.W. North explores the concept of the Kinsman Redeemer, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of redemption as presented in both the Old and New Testaments. He highlights that redemption involves purchase, liberation, and a deep relational aspect, particularly illustrated through the story of Ruth and Boaz. North explains that Jesus fulfills the role of the ultimate Kinsman Redeemer, being both a blood-relative and the divine Son of God, thus able to redeem all of humanity. The sermon underscores the significance of Jesus' birth and life as a testament to God's redemptive plan, culminating in the fulfillment of the law and the promise of salvation. Ultimately, North encourages believers to recognize the profound blessings of being redeemed in Christ, far surpassing the earthly blessings experienced by Ruth.

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## Transcript

There are several ideas introduced into scripture by the different words used for redemption. These vary between the old and new testaments, and combine throughout them both to present a glorious whole. The basic idea common to both testaments is very plain, namely purchase with a view to ownership. In the New Testament the thought of liberation is also introduced, implying that in the redeeming act someone or something, as the case may be, is set free. Added to this also there is the suggestion of a degree of finality about the transaction. Combining these ideas we arrive at the conclusion that to be redeemed is to be purchased, liberated and kept for ever. In the Old Testament yet another idea is presented to the mind. The writers from Moses onwards use a word which introduces the thought of relationship. When applied to a person making the purchase it can best be expressed as kinsman-redeemer. So when we read of God saying, 'I am thy Redeemer', He is really saying, 'I am thy kinsman who has redeemed thee'.

This thought is so dear to the Lord that He actually legalised it in Israel. One of the reasons the little book of Ruth is introduced into scripture is that it sweetly highlights this aspect of redemption, and we shall examine it later. The importance of this truth is its emphasis on authority - ability because of right - to redeem; this underlines the basic necessity required by the Law. Joining the whole of these aspects of truth together, we may say that redemption is the act of a man towards his blood-relative whereby he

purchases and liberates him and his completely, finally making him his own. These ideas are greatly expanded, illustrated and legalised in the Old Testament canon, and fulfilled and finalised in the person of Christ in the New.

Three outstanding aspects of redemption are presented in the Old Testament, each by a different means: the first is the familiar one of the redemption of the children of Israel from Egypt; the second is the redemption of persons and possessions within Israel; the third is the redemption of Israel from Babylon. The first we have already examined and is by the blood of the lamb. The second has also been referred to and was by money. The third, as yet unmentioned, is by the outpouring of the Spirit. All were by power and the second and third were based upon the first historic redemption by blood in Egypt. Much is known of this first and most basic act of redemption, so we will pass immediately to the second, the redemption of persons and possessions within Israel. This could not be better shown than by the story of redemption related in the book of Ruth.

The incident took place during the days of the Judges, at a time when spiritual and natural famine desolated the land. Because of it, Elimelech, a man of the tribe of Judah, left all his earthly possessions in Israel and departed with his family to live in Moab. There they settled, and eventually his two sons each married one of the daughters of Moab. Before long tragedy hit the family again, wiping out the three men and leaving behind three sorrowful widows, Naomi, Orpah and Ruth. Some time after this, news reached Naomi that God had visited Israel in blessing and prosperity, so sick and bitter in heart she decided to return to Israel. Orpah refused to go with her, but Ruth refused to be separated from her mother-in-law, and so the two women departed from Moab, arriving eventually in Israel at Bethlehem. There the little drama is played out to the end, and a whole aspect of redemption comes into fullest focus.

They arrived home at the time of barley harvest when all available hands went to the fields to reap grain. It was a very propitious time, for it was law in Israel that the poor, the stranger, the widowed and the fatherless were permitted to glean among the reapers. The poverty of the two women was evident. They had no possessions of their own and were without any means of livelihood; they were in acute need. The only hope of life and sustenance for them was that they should find grace in someone's sight and be allowed to glean in his field. They needed enough grain to meet present needs and also to lay up in store against harder days ahead. Therefore, taking advantage of this merciful law, Ruth set out one morning to find a field in which to glean. Now at Bethlehem lived a very wealthy man named Boaz, who was a great landowner and husbandman, and a relative of the now deceased Elimelech. Into one of his fields Ruth all unknowingly came and commenced to glean.

The delightful story continues to unfold through chapter three, in which discoveries were made and identities revealed, all finalising with Boaz promising Ruth to 'do the part of a kinsman' to her. Naomi planned, the Lord overruled and Ruth obeyed, so that eventually the redemption of both Ruth and Elimelech's possession took place as may be expected. The story is a beautiful idyll. The fourth chapter discloses the end of it all. From its detail we gather these facts:

- (1) the redeemer must be the nearest blood-relative on the father's side;
- (2) by the transaction he must not mar his own inheritance;
- (3) he must raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.

There is a wealth of other detail, all of it most instructive, but for our purposes these three will suffice.

The first of these is of most interest to us here; by it we are granted an opportunity of further insight into the person of the Lord Jesus. He is our heavenly Boaz, the true kinsman-redeemer. The self-evident connection with Bethlehem need hardly be pointed out, it was the place of His birth. Yet for the truth we need to learn it cannot be overstressed, for it is around this that the whole point turns. In his day Boaz was a wealthy Jew, he belonged to the race of Israel, the tribe of Judah and the family of Elimelech; perhaps the description 'lion of the tribe of Judah' may well have fitted him, for he was truly lionised of men.

On the other hand the Lord Jesus, when He was born, had none of the earthly things with which Boaz was blessed. Jesus was an Israelite indeed, of the tribe of Judah; in fact Boaz was the great-grandfather of David, of whom Jesus is often called 'the greater son'. But there the similarity ends, for He was only of David through Mary His mother. Joseph, we know, was also of David's line through another branch of the family, but he was not Jesus' father. Paternally Jesus was not of the same race or tribe or family as David or Boaz or Elimelech; paternally He was of God.

Both Mary who bore Him and Joseph who adopted Him were of the house and lineage of David though, so Jesus is rightly called the son of David. He is properly 'the lion of the tribe of Judah', for greater than any man He was begotten into the human race by God through a virgin of that tribe. It is noticeable that though man called Him 'the King of Israel' and 'the King of the Jews', Jesus Himself never claimed the titles. His title is displayed in the book of the Revelation as 'King of kings and Lord of lords'; He had no need to make lesser claims. Also genetically speaking it would not have been true had He made them. Claim to kingship or inheritance in Israel was made only according to paternal, not maternal parentage, hence the silence of Jesus on the matter. He knew that if God was His Father, He could not, as David's son Solomon, claim to be of Bethlehem-Judah; His Father was of heaven.

To those of us who were not born Israelites of the tribe of Judah these things are of good comfort as well as of great importance, for by the very fact that in this respect Jesus was not wholly Jewish, He could be the kinsman of all. The basic relationship required for redemption by a kinsman was of blood, not of flesh or town. The right of redemption did not belong to an in-law, for as in the case of Ruth herself, he or she could be a foreigner; it was vested in blood alone. Paul told the Athenians that God 'hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth'. Save in the matter of blood-group, human blood is the same the world over, and may be transfused from nation to nation without fear.

However, it is with particular thankfulness that we marvel at the extraordinary way in which Jesus is the Son of Man and not the child of Israel. His flesh was the Word, His blood was God's; He is literally the nearest blood-relative that man could have, and therefore his only redeemer. He is the only one who could be said to be the blood-relative of every man. This is one of the reasons that the angelic herald of His birth told the shepherds that the good tidings of great joy was to all people; 'unto you' he said, 'is born a Saviour'. Jesus was born to all of us, He is the Son of Man. Adam did not beget Him, neither did Abraham, nor David, nor Joseph, but God.

During the months preceding Jesus' birth Joseph and Mary were married and together they awaited the birth of the babe conceived of the Holy Ghost. For the event they were lodged in the inn at Bethlehem where, some time before the shepherds reached the manger, somewhere out in the dark a lamb was slain. The babe was Mary's firstborn son, and according to the Law of God, in remembrance of Israel's redemption and consequent deliverance from Egypt, Jesus had to be redeemed. A lamb died and its blood was shed in order that He as a human being might live, and living, live unto God. When the shepherds saw Him they were looking at a redeemed life. In common with all Israel He bore testimony that

they were a redeemed nation. On the eighth day He was circumcised to show that He was of the seed of Abraham, and within two months was presented to the Lord in the temple. At the same time Mary, of her poverty, brought her own compulsory offering for cleansing according to the Law - 'two young pigeons or a pair of turtle doves'.

As the little group entered the temple intent on their business, so also did Simeon, a prophet of the Lord. At the sight of Jesus, the man of God, quite unasked, took Him up in his arms, prayed and prophesied over Him, and then presented Him to God. Scarcely was this over, when an aged prophetess named Anna took up the strain, speaking of Him 'to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem'. So within the first three months of Jesus' young life He was both legally and prophetically encompassed by redemption. It would be difficult to know exactly what Anna understood from her own prophecy. To which kind of redemption was she referring - national/material and spiritual, or individual/spiritual? Whatever others thought, the Lord meant fullness of redemption, but almost certainly none of those who heard the prophecy would have understood it to mean that. Perhaps some people's hopes were raised to a feeling that something was afoot, but who could have imagined that this was the world's kinsman-redeemer? Simeon spoke of 'Thy salvation - a light - the glory'. Anna spoke of redemption. The message was salvation by redemption, but who understood it?

It is probably true that reports of these happenings had persisted throughout the Lord's life. Certain it is that thoughts of redemption had been in the minds of at least some of Jesus' disciples when He died, for they spoke of their hopes of it to the Stranger who joined them on the road to Emmaus. However these hopes had all been dashed when Jesus was crucified. As far as men's expectations were concerned He had died without redeeming them. Because He had not in some way delivered the nation from the bondage of Rome they regarded His mission as an unfinished project. Perhaps their hopes had been raised because in word and deed He had exceeded both Moses and David. In their day each of these had been a deliverer, a kinsman of some sort, who had set the nation free from Egypt and the Philistines. By His words and in His works Jesus had either directly claimed or plainly implied that He was greater than either of these national heroes, yet at His death He had not accomplished anything like the kind of redemption achieved by either of them. To His disciples He did not appear to be the anointed redeemer after all, yet of all men he was the only one by whom all the requirements of God for redemption were fulfilled.

The reason why Boaz appears in the Bible is that in the unfolding revelation of Jesus as the kinsman-redeemer, this man gives us an insight into the Lord's role as the lion of the tribe of Judah, 'the root of David'. Moses was a Levite and therefore could not be Judah's lion; David, though of Bethlehem-Judah, could not be his own root, for he could not bear himself. Great though both were, these men only partially filled the role of kinsman-redeemer. But Jesus fulfilled all.

There is no talk of redemption by bloodshed in the book of Ruth. It was surely by blood though, the blood of relationship. The emphasis of the story is not upon purchase by money as of right; God underlines Jesus' ability and authority. Boaz had ability to redeem because he was a wealthy landowner with great possessions; he had the right to redeem because of blood relationship to Elimelech. He had the desire to redeem because of his love for Ruth, and in the end it was discovered that there was no one else to do it. He could though; without marring his own heritage he could raise up the name of the dead and also marry Ruth; he was able, willing, righteous and loving to redeem. Whether he was a bachelor or not we are not told, but it would seem so, for all mention of other women who could be wives is noticeably absent from the text. From things said in course of the blessings and good wishes and congratulations showered upon

them by friends and admirer's, it would appear that Boaz's hopes of children lay entirely in this union.

Many of the elements of redemption are present in the Ruth story: her former husband (her old man) was dead. She had been brought up out of the land where she formerly lived; together with all she possessed she was purchased outright by Boaz. She was truly 'married to another that she would bring forth fruit unto God. She became the ground of redemption from which David in the fourth generation sprang. Everything about it is spiritually, ethically, morally and legally correct. When legalising the role of kinsman-redeemer in Israel, God acted in conformity with principles of righteousness. He could have granted legal rights of redemption to someone other than a blood-relative, but He did not. Everything was founded upon Himself and His loving designs for man. From all eternity He is the world's only Kinsman-Redeemer.

Now, sweet as is the story unfolded in the book of Ruth, and great as Boaz was, they could not between them do more than hint at the redemption provided by God in Christ. Ruth could lie at the feet of Boaz, be covered by his skirts, glean in his fields, receive his favour, become his wife, live in his home and bear his children, but she could not be in him. She had redemption through her husband, but not in him, except hopefully. In common with all Israel with whom her lot was cast, she shared in the blessings which were their God-given heritage. Perhaps above the majority she enjoyed blessings and possessions and security to the degree her station allowed. She was the wife of a very wealthy man who held a position of great power in the nation, but 0 how far short both he and she fell of the eternal glories of the redeemed in Christ revealed in the New Testament scriptures. She was chosen by Boaz when he saw her; we were chosen by the Father in Christ before the foundation of the world. She was blessed with just about all earthly blessings in Israel, but we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. And so we could go on piling up the superiority of our position and its advantages over Ruth's, making endless comparisons and contrasts. But, sure of our grace, let us instead occupy ourselves with more profitable things.

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