

Who was Boaz in the Bible?

Boaz was a wealthy man from Bethlehem mentioned in the genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1:5). He is one of the main characters in the Bible book of Ruth, a sometimes overlooked masterpiece of Scripture full of life lessons and prophetic implications. The son of Boaz and Ruth was Obed, King David's grandfather. Everything we see about Boaz in Scripture is good. He shows himself to be a kind, generous, and honorable man of his word.

The book of Ruth opens with a sad narrative about a Judean family: Elimelek, his wife Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, move to the pagan territory of Moab due to a famine in Bethlehem, their hometown. Soon after that, Elimelek died, leaving Naomi with the sons, who had both married Moabite women. Tragically, after ten years had passed, the sons of Elimelek died, too.

The widow Naomi later heard that "the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them" (Ruth 1:6). She decided to return home to Judah, and one of her daughters-in-law, Ruth, chooses to go with her. Notably, Naomi and Ruth turn up in Bethlehem just as the barley harvest begins (Ruth 1:22).

Ruth works in the fields as a gleaner, one who picks up leftover grain after the harvesters have moved through. "As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek" (Ruth 2:3). Boaz, who had already heard of Ruth's care for Naomi, speaks to her and assures her that she will be provided for in his field. Boaz then secretly tells his harvesters to leave behind some stalks of grain so that Ruth will have more to gather (Ruth 2:16).

That evening, when Naomi finds out that Ruth has been working in Boaz's field, she identifies him as a close kinsman and one of their guardian-redeemers. A guardian-redeemer, or kinsman-redeemer, is a relative who had the privilege or responsibility to act on behalf of a relative in need. A guardian-redeemer was one to whom an Israelite could turn in times of trouble. The laws governing the guardian-redeemer are found in Leviticus 25:25 -55.

Ruth went to Boaz and let him know that she needed a guardian-redeemer. Boaz told Ruth that he was pleased to offer her redemption, which would include marriage to her, but there was one relative who was closer in line to be the guardian-redeemer. The next day, Boaz met with the other relative and presented the situation. The man declined to marry Ruth, and Boaz then made a commitment in front of the town's leaders that he would take Ruth as his wife (Ruth 4:1-10). Boaz and Ruth were married, and Obed was born.

In the role of guardian-redeemer, Boaz becomes a picture of Jesus Christ. The Quest Bible devotional explains: "The word guardian-redeemer finds ultimate fulfillment in the coming of the Messiah (see Isa 59:20). Jesus is our near guardian who came to buy us back into God's family. In the New Testament the concept is reflected in the various words for redeem, which suggest paying a ransom, making a purchase or saving from loss" (www.biblegateway.com/devotionals/quest-bible/2012/07/17, accessed 6/21/2021).

We see the concept of redemption played out by Boaz throughout the book of Ruth:

In Ruth 2:8-9, Boaz shows compassion and gentleness to Ruth. In Ruth 2:11-12, Boaz, a man with superior leadership qualities, notes that Ruth is a hard worker. He compliments her for taking care of her mother-in-law. Ruth 2:14 describes Boaz's courtesy toward the

young woman. The generosity of Boaz is shown in Ruth 2:15-16, in that he orders extra bundles of grain set out for her to find. He demonstrates his commitment to Ruth by lifting her out of poverty, providing for her needs, and ensuring that Ruth's former husband—Naomi's son—had offspring to carry on the family name.

Boaz can be seen as a reflection of our Lord Jesus Christ, our guardian-redeemer. We were “outsiders” (sinners), impoverished, forsaken, and struggling to make it. The Lord showed us compassion, gentleness, and generosity. He lifted us out of spiritual poverty, provided for our eternal needs, and gave us a forever home.

It is interesting that Boaz is the name of one of the two bronze pillars in Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 7:21). Boaz means “in him is strength.” Since neither pillar was used to support the temple structure, Boaz and the other pillar, Jakin (“he will establish”), were symbolic of Israel’s dependence on God’s strength and presence.