

# Only A Suitable Redeemer Will Do

One of the most startling pieces of information that we are given in relation to Jesus is the fact that he was **made like us**. Jesus' redemptive work *on behalf of humanity* was deeply connected to *his own humanity*. Although he was born "[the Son of God](#)", and radiant with His Father's glory, he participated in every way in all the experiences of what it means to be human. His ability to sympathise with us and to reconcile on our behalf springs from a complete understanding of what it is like to be human; with all our doubts, fears, temptations and failures. He understood humans because **he was human**.

*"For this reason he (Jesus) had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people." – Hebrews 2:17, NIV*

*"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin." – Hebrews 4:15, NIV*

These remarkable concepts of atonement, redeeming and redemption were subtly foreshadowed many times throughout Old Testament stories; one such example is the well known tale of Joseph of the multi-coloured coat and his descent into slavery at the hands of his brothers.

However, the law of *the kinsman* or *the kinsmen redeemer* had been written into the weave of Israeli life from very early times, clearly foretelling what Jesus' work was to be and how it was to be accomplished. We find the narrative of **the**

redeemer and the redeemed poignantly depicted in the [story of Ruth](#)

## A Story Of Redemptive Love

The [story of Ruth](#), the inconsequential outsider, is one of joy and heartbreak, desolation and hope. Ruth, of all people, was an unlikely heroine. Not only was she a woman, in a time when women were of minor importance, she was also a widow, poor and foreign and would have been considered an outsider to any true-born Israelite. Yet the conclusion of this seemingly insignificant tale brings us to the interesting discovery that Ruth eventually became an incredibly significant and vital part of [God's plan of salvation](#) for the world – she was an ancestor of [Jesus Christ](#).

Ruth's story powerfully underscores the importance of love's redeeming power to transform lives. (You can read more about it [here](#).)

Yet hidden within the narrative lies a deeper significance; a story within a story, that has remarkable bearing on the work and purpose of Jesus himself. Hidden, in plain sight, is the way in which God intended to save the world, through His Son.

### 'The Nearest Kinsman Redeemer'

The book of Ruth is set during the time of Israel's history known as 'the Judges' (circa 1220 – 1050 B.C.). It was a period of religious and moral decline, frequent foreign oppression and national disunity. The people of Israel were often at the mercy of enemies from without and discord from within. Yet although it was a time of great instability, certain laws and customs helped to form an integral part of Israelite society. Many of these laws can still be found throughout the Old Testament, in the books of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

One law, in particular, was known as the law of the *nearest kinsman* or the *kinsmen redeemer*. The kinsman-redeemer was a **male relative** who, according to various laws of the [Pentateuch](#), was responsible to act on behalf of a relative who was in trouble, danger, or need. The Hebrew term for kinsman-redeemer (*go el*) designates *one who delivers or rescues*, either property or person. **The redeemer had to be related to the person being redeemed and could not be a stranger.**

The *kinsman-redeemer* or *guardian-redeemer* was the proper legal term for the nearest male kinsman who was able to redeem or vindicate a relative (Leviticus 25:25-55).

*“If your brother becomes poor and sells part of his property, then his **nearest redeemer** shall come and **redeem** what his brother has sold.” – Leviticus 25:25, ESV*

*“If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and **perform the duty of a husband’s brother** to her. – Deuteronomy 25:5, ESV*

*“If a stranger or sojourner with you becomes rich, and your brother beside him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner with you or to a member of the stranger’s clan, then after he is sold he may be **redeemed**. One of his brothers may **redeem him**, or his uncle or his cousin may **redeem him**, or a close relative from his clan may **redeem him**.” – Leviticus 25:47-49, ESV*

While these laws may seem strange and somewhat archaic to us in the 21st century, they were instituted to protect the impoverished or marginalised members of society who might otherwise suffer permanent loss of life, freedom or property.

## The Law Cannot Redeem

Ruth appealed to a wealthy landowner and relative of her mother-in-law, named Boaz, who was eligible to undertake the rights and responsibilities of the *nearest kinsman*. Boaz immediately tells Ruth he is willing to redeem her, however there was a kinsman nearer than himself. If this kinsman could not, or would not, then Boaz promises Ruth he will certainly redeem her.

*“And now do not be afraid, my daughter. I will do for you whatever you request, since all my fellow townspeople know that you are a woman of noble character. Yes, it is true that I am a kinsman-redeemer, but there is a redeemer nearer than I. Stay here tonight, and in the morning, if he wants to redeem you, good. Let him redeem you. But if he does not want to redeem you, as surely as the LORD lives, I will. Now lie here until morning.” – Ruth 3:11-13, BSB*

Boaz’s conversation with the nearer kinsman soon makes it clear that this kinsman cannot redeem Ruth. He offers Boaz this right of redemption, which Boaz accepts.

*“Take my right of redemption, because I cannot redeem it...At this, Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses today that I am buying from Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon. Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon’s widow, as my wife, to raise up the name of the deceased through his inheritance, so that his name will not disappear from among his brothers or from the gate of his home. You are witnesses today..” – Ruth 4:6, 9, BSB*

The nearer kinsman in this narrative represents the Law of Moses, under which Israel was governed. Instituted soon after the Israelites had migrated from Egypt, an event also known as ‘The Exodus’, this law remained in place until Jesus’ time and

still forms a central part of [Judaism](#) today. Yet, while the Law came first, prior to Jesus, and imposed many values of morality and justice, ultimately it could never put a man or a woman right with God. ***It was unable to redeem.***

*“The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent His own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving His Son as a sacrifice for our sins.” – Romans 8:3, NLT*

No amount of doing good or attempts at obedience can remove the stain of sin from a person’s life. All believers must come to understand that obeying God’s laws cannot produce the righteousness needed for salvation. It is only [dependence on God](#), in faith, to put things right, that makes it possible to be [‘right with God’](#).

The law was only a shadow of better things to come; acting as a guardian until all humanity could come to understand their need of a Saviour.

## **Jesus’ Humanity Was Crucial To Redemption**

*“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, [the devil](#).” – Hebrews 2:14, NIV*

Only a human could break the power of sin and death which had gripped humanity in a stranglehold for over 4000 years. Only the **kinsman-redeemer** could redeem.

Yet no ordinary human could possibly have achieved this remarkable feat. God, in His infinite love, did not leave anything to chance, causing His Son to be born, with the mind

and character of Himself, the exact representation of His being and radiant with His glory (Hebrew 1:3), yet flesh and blood like us. Conceived by the Holy Spirit, Jesus became *Emmanuel*, “*God-With-Us*”, strengthened in will and purpose and redeemer of the world.

## Only A Suitable Redeemer Will Do

Jesus was human and ‘our brother’ in every way, made like this so He could be a suitable redeemer.

He fulfilled the essential requirements of being made ‘like his brethren’, human in every respect necessary, so that he could conquer sin and death for all those who shared in his same humanity.

Only in this way, being completely mortal and subject to pain and death, could it be said of Jesus that “*he must suffer and that, by being the **first to rise from the dead**, he would proclaim light both to [the Jews] and to the Gentiles*”, thereby giving the rest of humanity hope of also escaping the finality of mortality and death.

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## Who Moved The Stone?

That [Jesus](#) existed, there is no doubt. There is a great deal of written historical evidence, both from Christian and non-Christian writers, supporting the fact that Jesus was a genuine historical figure, living at the beginning of the first century AD. When applying the standard criteria of historical investigation, virtually all New Testament and Near East historians assert the historicity of Jesus as certain.

[Dr Michael Grant](#) (1914-2004) wrote “Jesus: An Historian’s View

of the Gospels,” published in 1977. In it, he applied the standard disciplines of the historian’s profession and reached the conclusion that the four Gospels are sufficiently reliable to deserve the utmost respect. Subsequent discussions about the historical Jesus widely reference his work.

*“If conventional standards of historical textual criticism are applied to the New Testament, we can no more reject Jesus’ existence than we can reject the existence of a mass of pagan personages whose reality as historical figures is never questioned.” – Michael Grant, Historian*

Nearly all modern scholars are also in agreement about two key events in Jesus’ life, which they consider to be accurate and certain – that of his baptism and of his crucifixion.

*“There is a consensus of sorts on the basic outline of Jesus’ life” in that most scholars agree that Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist, and over a period of one to three years debated Jewish authorities on the subject of God, gathered followers, and was crucified by Roman prefect Pontius Pilate who officiated 26–36 AD.” – [Amy Jill Levine](#)*

The [criterion of embarrassment](#) is used as the metric for establishing events such as Jesus’ baptism and crucifixion. Both events are considered to be accounts which would cause a high degree of embarrassment to the author and would therefore have no reason to be invented. Christians simply would not have invented the painful death of their leader, nor the baptism of Jesus by John, as it is a story in which John baptised for the remission of sins and Jesus was viewed as without sin. The conclusion then is that these events are historically accurate.

## **The Resurrection of Jesus – Who Was He**

# Really?

The debate therefore is not whether Jesus existed, but whether he was who he said he was. He claimed to be the son of God (John 5:25, John 10:36, John 1:4, John 17:1). He claimed to be the promised deliverer of the Old Testament (John 11:25; Luke 4:17-21, John 18:37, Luke 24:27). Not only that, he claimed that he would be betrayed, put to death and after three days would be resurrected to life again.

*“The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. He will be killed, but three days later he will rise from the dead.” – Mark 9:31, NLT*

It is easy to discount these claims as the words of a highly charismatic Jewish prophet, who met a cruel death at the hands of Roman power.

*“That he was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be, since both [Josephus](#) and [Tacitus](#) ... agree with the Christian accounts on at least that basic fact.” – John Dominic Crossan*

What is more difficult to explain is how Jesus could have orchestrated his own death in such a way so as to corroborate with prophecy, or, more to the point, why he would even want to.

What is more confusing and unexplainable is the effect that Jesus' death had on his followers. If, as history supposes, Jesus was a common man who lived a somewhat extraordinary life, it is hard to explain the complete explosion of the Christian faith in the years that followed. It was, after all, founded on the basis of “a risen Christ”. If this was a fabrication, the rulers only had to produce the body to prove the assertion to be false. If the disciples themselves had stolen the body, it seems psychologically improbable that



their story, or their conviction, would be believable or maintainable, they themselves knowing it to be false.

We have the account of Thomas, the doubter, Peter, the denier, a small group of fishermen, a gathering of a few women – simple and ordinary people without status or connections who, within a relatively short passage of time (only some six or seven weeks), were completely transformed by a profound conviction.

*“The actual position is peculiar and, I believe, quite unique in history. It is that the whole party, including the nine men who had fled at the arrest, and certain independent persons who have not previously come into the story, were convinced that something had occurred which changed their entire outlook. It turned their dejection into triumph and their sorrow into an intense joy.” – Frank Morrison*

Despite perhaps wanting to believe otherwise, the story of the arrest, death and resurrection of Jesus carries a strange ring of authenticity. Nothing can account for the strangeness of the narrative in the Gospels. The moved stone, the empty tomb, the baffled religious leaders, the transformed disciples – let’s be honest – *“by the ordinary standards of human reasoning, the mystery attached to the person of Christ ought to have terminated with his death and burial”* (Frank Morrison).

It isn’t our intention in this post to prove conclusively the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It is simply to bring the reader’s attention to a subject, which on first glance, is assumed by many to be fabrication, but on closer inspection seems to arrive at no other explanation than that which is claimed – that Jesus did in fact rise from the dead, as asserted in the Bible!

## Who Moved The Stone?

This article is an extremely condensed summary of the excellent book by Frank Morrison, entitled "Who Moved The Stone?" For anyone with a genuine interest in examining the historical accuracy of the Bible's claims regarding the resurrection of Jesus, this book is highly recommended.

Frank himself confesses that he set out to write quite a different book. He first began to study the life of Christ as a young man and did so with a very definite feeling that the history of Jesus rested on very insecure foundations. He wasn't wrong in his concerns – there was an entire school of thought throughout the 'nineties that denied even the historical existence of Jesus. Frank Morrison didn't find himself in this group at all – he says that *"for the person of Jesus Christ, I had a deep and almost reverent regard."* but he wanted to write an article, more for his own peace of mind than publication, about the supremely important and critical phase in the life of Christ – his last seven days. Ten years later, the opportunity fully arrived to study the subject as he had first wanted, and *"slowly but very definitely the conviction grew that the drama of those unforgettable weeks of human history was stranger and deeper than it seemed."*

The Christian faith hinges completely on this key doctrine of the literal resurrection of Jesus. Without the veracity of this event, Christianity falters. [The Gospel](#) isn't the good news of anything and we would have to concede that the world had been duped by one of the great delusions in history.

Of course, this conundrum is for every person to consider and decide for themselves. However, there are certain questions and discrepancies that cannot be easily explained away. We believe that an honest examination of all the facts leads to an irresistible logic of their meaning.

*"Now, let me ask you something profound yet troubling. If you*

*became believers because you trusted the proclamation that Christ is alive, risen from the dead, how can you let people say that there is no such thing as the resurrection. If there's no resurrection, there's no living Christ. And face it – if there's no resurrection for Christ, everything we've told you is smoke and mirrors, and everything you've staked your life on is smoke and mirrors. Not only that, but we would be guilty of telling a string of bare-faced lies about God, all these affidavits we passed on to you verifying that God raised up Christ – sheer fabrications if there's no resurrection. If corpses can't be raised, then Christ wasn't, because he was indeed dead. And if Christ weren't raised, then all you're doing is wandering about in the dark, as lost as ever...but the truth is, Christ **has** been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those who are going to leave the cemeteries." 1 Corinthians 12-20, MSG*

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To purchase "Who Moved The Stone" by Frank Morrison, [Click Here](#)

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## **Traditions: Good Or Bad?**

One of my favourite movies is *Ever After* with Drew Barrymore and Anjelica Huston. It has all the right ingredients for a great story – humour, romance, drama and a feel-good ending. When I think of this movie, I have a few favourite scenes that top my list, but the one where Danielle's father leaves to go abroad and stops at the gate to wave often plays through my mind. Perhaps because it's such a bittersweet moment. As the

audience, we know what's coming but Danielle doesn't. Perhaps because it speaks so clearly of the love of a parent for their child and the pain that separation from each other brings. And perhaps, also, for the line that Danielle quotes as she waits for what she expects her father will do:

*"Wait! It's **tradition**. He always waves at the gate."*

## What Are Traditions?

Our lives are full of traditions; from cultural and religious traditions to social and family traditions.

*'Traditions' are described as inherited, established, or customary patterns of thought, action, or behavior (such as a religious practice or a social custom) or a belief or story or a body of beliefs or stories relating to the past that are commonly accepted as historical though not verifiable." They can also be "the handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instruction", "cultural continuity in social attitudes, customs, and institutions", or "characteristic manner, method, or style". – Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

The word "tradition" derives from the [Latin](#) *tradere* literally meaning *to transmit, to hand over, to give for safekeeping*. Traditions are, then, often important customs, stories or information, passed down from generation to generation as a means of safekeeping those beliefs or customs. They may have been originally passed through oral communication including methods such as storytelling and poetry, rhyme and alliteration.

Sometimes the meaning behind a tradition becomes lost but the tradition or custom remains. Sometimes a greater meaning becomes attached to a tradition than was originally intended

or implied. The following is an lighthearted story highlighting how traditions or customs sometimes come about:

*A woman was preparing the evening's roast dinner and divided the large piece of meat into two smaller, equal portions, placing them in separate trays in the oven. When her husband asked her why she did it that way, she replied that she actually didn't know – it was just the way her mother had always done it. That got her thinking and later that evening, she phoned her mother to find out the reason behind the two trays of meat. Her own mother didn't know either, it was just what **her** mother had always done. They decided to phone the woman's grandmother and, when asked what was so important about dividing the meat, she laughed and replied. "oh, nothing. I just never had an oven large enough to fit my entire portion of meat on one rack. Dividing it in two simply meant I could fit it all in my oven at the same time."*

In this situation, practical requirements had, by the third generation, become something of a tradition within the family without any actual particular significance behind the tradition.

Even amongst the animal kingdom, traditions can be observed. Behavioral traditions are seen in groups of fish, birds, and mammals, such as orangutans and chimpanzees. In fact, chimpanzees will actually transfer traditional behavior from one group to another (not just within a group).

Human beings are hyper-social animals, albeit a lot smarter (most of the time!) than the animal world but even we come together through shared practices, traditions and rituals. These traditions form a social glue that binds groups within our society and often provides benefits such as increasing family bonds and forming a strong group identity. Traditions often offer a sense of belonging for individuals.

## Traditions: Good Or Bad?

Traditions can sometimes be viewed in a negative light. They are also frequently used in political or religious discussions to establish the legitimacy of a particular set of values. However, it's important to remember that traditions, in themselves, are neither good or bad. Just because something is replicated or repeated, doesn't mean it **isn't** of value or importance. Conversely, just because something is replicated or repeated doesn't mean that it **is** important or valuable.

Traditions matter when they relate to important human values, such as faith, freedom, integrity, education, personal responsibility, a strong work ethic or selflessness. They provide context for thoughtful reflection and a deeper appreciation of the things that matter in life. Traditions are a language unto themselves; with a meaning that conveys something deeper.

## What Does The Bible Say About Traditions?

[Religion](#) is a place when traditions abound and they often form a rich tapestry in the life of a religious person. They are often drawn from history and have meaning and symbolism behind them. In the Old Testament, traditions and symbols actually pointed forward to a greater truth regarding Jesus, [his work as Saviour](#) and God's [relationship with humanity](#).

Jesus himself instituted the tradition commonly known as The Last Supper, a fellowship meal where his followers would eat bread and drink wine 'in remembrance of him' (Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, John 13). This tradition is still observed today, some 2000 years later.

Many cultures have traditions at the heart of their spiritual and religious worship and Christianity is no different. The Bible never condemns traditions of themselves but Jesus' words in Mark 7:6-8 tell us clearly that traditions shouldn't ever

supercede God's will.

*"He (Jesus) replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.' You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions." (Mark 7:6-8), NIV*

Christ's words indicate that He was not condemning human tradition, but *those who place human traditions, laws, or demands before God's will* expressed in the commandments.

The letter of Paul to the believers in Colosse confirms Jesus' words:

*"See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ."  
– Colossians 2:8, ESV*

The Old Testament dealt with this problem too, where rituals had replaced righteousness and justice:

*"I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." – Amos 5:21-25, ESV*

Traditions or rituals shouldn't come before our relationship with God and customs should never supercede God's commandments. When a tradition forms a valuable and significant part of our worship, spiritual life and our human

experience, then it's good that it's observed. But when traditions are human traditions, unrelated to our relationship with God, then their significance and priority is not always important and their observance is neither required nor expected by God in our spiritual life.

There are certain traditions, though, relating to faith and morals that Christians are commanded to keep and obey:

*"I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold fast to the traditions, just as I handed them on to you." – 1 Corinthians 11:2, CSB*

*"So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter." – 2 Thessalonians 2:15, ESV*

We can therefore view traditions as beautiful and meaningful additions to our human life, perpetuating things that matter and ideas that are worth conveying through the generations. But these traditions should never be confused as being superior to the traditions that God is actually looking for in the life of a Christian person; the traditions of "love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23)

*"There is a real beauty to be found in tradition – a beauty that may not propel us forward in the sense of quantifiable "progress" or change, but that does propel us forward as human beings in life wisdom, understanding and even emotional intellect. Indeed, aside from the more obvious – albeit equally important – function of tradition as a way to pass on the values, morals, customs and culture of one generation to the next, tradition also teaches us something about life, where we came from and who we are as people." – [Huffington Post](#)*