

- Our study though the book of Judges has come to an end, but our journey through the time of Judges continues
 - Today we begin the study of Ruth, a small but powerful story in the Bible
 - The book of Ruth has been called one of the most important and beautiful short stories ever written
 - The German poet Goethe said Ruth was “the loveliest complete work on a small scale” ever written
 - Another literary critic said that no poet in the world has ever written a more beautiful short story
 - W. F. Albright wrote that the delicacy of the story remains unsurpassed anywhere
 - Of course, Ruth is also a book of scripture, which means it was inspired by the Spirit of God
 - Not only is the writing divine, but the very events themselves were divinely appointed
 - The Lord orchestrated the many details of this historical event to create powerful pictures of his future plans for Israel and the Gentiles
- These pictures move outward in time, like the concentric circles of a bullseye
 - First, the story of Ruth presents a picture of God’s plan to provide a monarch
 - This monarch will deliver Israel from the anarchy and self-destruction of the time of Judges
 - He will lead the people beyond doing what is right in their own eyes and toward serving God
 - This picture is at the center of the bullseye, because it will be fulfilled closest to the events of the time of Ruth
 - In only a few generations, David will come to rule Israel
 - Secondly, the story creates a picture of a coming Messiah Who will redeem sinners, both Jew and Gentile, from the curse of the Law
 - Just as we saw in the time of Judges, sin is the ever-present scourge that leads us to doing what’s right in our eyes, but not God’s eyes
 - So God tells a story through the characters Naomi, Ruth, Boaz, Obed and others in this story to show how God will ultimately save sinners from condemnation
 - In fact, the story of Ruth reveals more clearly than perhaps any other Old Testament story, how the Lord will address our sin through a redeemer
 - The second story of Ruth is the next ring out in our bullseye comparison, because the fulfillment of these events are some distance away from the days of Ruth
 - Lastly, the book of Ruth reveals how the Lord will bring our age to an end and fulfill all His promises to Israel and the nations of the earth
 - Just as in our second story, this prophetic story is told symbolically through the

characters and circumstances of the book

- And since this third story deals with distant events that take place at the end of our age, it sits on the farthest outer ring of our bullseye
- In all three stories, the central theme is God's faithfulness to redeem His people and give them rest
 - He will redeem Ruth by providing a husband leading her to rest in the security of his home
 - And through Ruth, the Lord will grant her mother-in-law, Naomi rest and security in a new son
 - And through that son the Lord will provide a king to grant the nation rest
 - And through that king's line, the Lord will provide a Redeemer and King to secure eternal rest for the nation
 - And through that nation, the whole world will find redemption
 - Perhaps you're beginning to see just how amazing this one little story is in your Bible
 - So as we look at this account, we want to understand all three stories, and that's how I intend to teach it
 - The three stories are woven together, so we'll spend time in each thread
 - We'll begin each chapter looking at the primary story of Ruth and her life in the time of Judges
 - But at times, we'll move into our outer rings of the bullseye to contemplate how Ruth's story pictures Christ's redemption and the events of the last days
 - Keeping track of these three storylines will require careful attention to detail
 - And it wouldn't hurt to take some notes as we move through the teaching
 - And if you miss a week, be sure to listen to the recordings you miss
- So with that background, let's begin our story by reading the opening verses of the book

Ruth 1:1 Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons.

Ruth 1:2 The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there.

Ruth 1:3 Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons.

Ruth 1:4 They took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years.

Ruth 1:5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of

her two children and her husband.

- As I've mentioned repeatedly, the story of Ruth is set in the time of Judges
 - There is some disagreement over exactly when this story took place during the 300 years of judges ruling
 - There is good evidence that it took place in the first half of those years
 - One of the main characters in this story, a man named Boaz, was the son of the harlot Rahab, who was a young girl when Joshua entered the land
 - We know Boaz was an older man by the time of this story, so perhaps this account happened 80-100 years into the period of Judges
 - Regardless of the specific timing, the meaning of v.1 is clear
 - This account is our third summary of life during the this time
 - The other two summaries are attached to the end of the book of Judges
 - And this one follows immediately after as a final footnote on the time
 - The good news is that this story is nothing like the first two
 - While the first two accounts were tales of hatred, violence and treachery, this story is anything but
 - It's an account of love, faithfulness, self-sacrifice and upright behavior
 - It's a story that represents the hearts of God's people living in an age and among a people who do not follow God
 - So the backdrop of Ruth is a time when men were doing what was right in their own eyes
 - And as we saw in the book of Judges, the people's sin moves God to act against them
 - For as Jesus said

Luke 16:15 And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.

- Therefore, we need to understand the events of Ruth as part of the larger backdrop of God acting to judge the sin of Israel
- And the first events of the story reflect that environment with a Jewish family from Bethlehem fleeing the land due to a famine
 - A certain man takes his wife and two sons and "sojourns" in Moab
 - Notice he's described as a "certain" man of Bethlehem
 - That's exactly the way the last two stories of Judges began
 - All three center on a certain man from Bethlehem so we will understand that

these stories are connected in time and theme

- The man, Elimelech, takes his family and leaves Bethlehem because a famine has come across the land
 - As we've seen elsewhere in scripture, a famine is a dire circumstance for those who are dependent on the land for their livelihood
 - People can find ways to survive for a time, but at some point the famine will force migration in search of food
- And these circumstances are not chance of course, but they are ordained by God in response to the sin of Israel
 - Consider what God spoke beforehand to Israel in their Law

Deut. 11:13 “It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul,

Deut. 11:14 that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil.

Deut. 11:15 “He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.

Deut. 11:16 “Beware that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them.

Deut. 11:17 “Or the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the Lord is giving you.

- The Lord told Israel right before they entered the land that idolatry would result in famine, among other consequences
- And now we see famine in the land
- How do we know that this famine was a judgment from God?
 - We only need return to the book of Judges briefly to remember what was happening at the time of Ruth's story

Judg. 2:11 Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals,

Judg. 2:12 and they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the Lord to anger.

Judg. 2:13 So they forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtaroth.

Judg. 2:14 The anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He gave them into the

hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.

Judg. 2:15 Wherever they went, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had spoken and as the Lord had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed.

- The times of Judges were times of idolatry
- And therefore, the Lord acted in various ways to judge Israel's disobedience to the Law
- And one of those ways was to bring famine as He promised He would do
- When it came time to seek for better land, this man goes to Moab
 - This is further evidence of a man doing what was right in his own eyes
 - Moab is the historical enemy of Israel
 - You may remember the story of Lot in Genesis
 - Lot was in Sodom when the Lord determined to judge the city for its extreme sin
 - And when the city was destroyed, Lot escaped with only his two daughters
 - These daughters were so desperate for children and apparently compromised by their years growing up in ungodly Sodom that they devised a terrible plan
 - In Genesis 19 we learn that they got their father drunk
 - And then they took advantage of him so as to become pregnant by him
 - The two sons born to these daughters become the fathers of two of Israel's greatest enemies, Ammon and Moab
 - So here we have a Jew suffering under God's judgment for sin, seeking refuge from Israel's enemies
 - He is responding to God's chastisement by running from God, not toward Him in repentance
 - Obviously, Elimelech wasn't personally responsible for all the sin in the land but he's certainly part of it
 - And his behavior gives additional evidence that men did what was right in their own eyes
 - There is no reason for us to assume that the Lord wanted Elimelech and his family to leave the land God gave them
- Instead, it's apparent they are running from God's discipline and seeking a human solution to a divine problem
 - And running from God never improves our situation
 - Whatever trials and tribulations we encounter with God, nothing gets better without God
 - Elimelech and his family were suffering in Bethlehem during the days of that

famine certainly

- But that suffering was the direct result of their disobedience to God's law, so the judgment was deserved
 - God intended it to motivate the people to set aside their idolatry and return to a faithful walk with Him
 - And it could have that effect if only they would allow it to work in their hearts
- Consider the situation from the perspective of a parent with a rebellious child
 - If you ground that child, or remove certain privileges, you do so in the hope it will motivate the child to be more obedient in the future
 - Now imagine how you would feel if your child circumvented your restrictions to escape your discipline
 - Are things going to be better or worse for that child?
 - That's how we should understand Elimelech's choice to flee to Moab
- We begin to see the negative effects of his choice almost immediately in the verses that follow
 - Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and his sons Mahlon and Chilion enter Moab
 - Soon thereafter the patriarch Elimelech dies while in the land of his enemies
 - How ironic
 - He fled Bethlehem to save his life
 - Only to die in the land of his enemies
 - This turn of events is even more ironic when you remember that the name Bethlehem means "place of bread"
 - So Elimelech leaves the place of bread seeking bread
 - And he fled from death only to find death
 - This is exactly what happens when we run from God's love
 - Discipline is a form of love, and God disciplines His children because that's what loving fathers do
 - When we run from God's love, we should expect to find less of what we are seeking
 - And in its place we will see only an increase in the sadness that our sin produced
- But the father's sin took an even greater toll in this family
 - Elimelech's choice to bring his family into the land of Moab resulted in his sons marrying Moabite women
 - Mahlon and Chilion married Orpah and Ruth
 - This decision was another act contrary to God's law

Deut. 23:3 “No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the Lord; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the Lord,

Deut. 23:4 because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.

Deut. 23:5 “Nevertheless, the Lord your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the Lord your God loves you.

Deut. 23:6 “You shall never seek their peace or their prosperity all your days.

- Clearly, the Law precludes the people from seeking peace with Moabites
- And yet here we see the sons of Elimelech doing just that
- They were seeking a union with Moab through these women
- Furthermore, the Law precluded Jews from marrying the Gentile nations of Canaan

Deut. 7:1 “When the Lord your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, **Deut. 7:2** and when the Lord your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.

Deut. 7:3 “Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons.

Deut. 7:4 “For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you.

- This passage only lists seven of the surrounding nations, but these seven represent the whole of Israel’s neighbors
- And like Ammon, one of those neighbors was also Moab
- These sons have acted directly contrary to the word of God in marrying these women
- Obviously, the sons’ mistakes have roots in their father’s sinful choice to leave the land
 - Now that the boys are living in Moab, when it comes time for them to find a wife, they look around and only see Moabites
 - That doesn’t excuse their choice to marry outside Israel
 - But we can see how the father’s sin led to the sons’ sin
 - And as a result of all this bad decision-making, the family suffers yet more loss

- After living with these women about ten years, the men die
 - And in their death, this “family” is now reduced to three very vulnerable widows
 - It’s a remnant of a family
 - But it’s a family where none of them are related to one another except by marriages which have now left them widows
- When we look at these circumstances from Naomi’s perspective, it’s all bad
 - She’s been thrust out of her own land and destined to wander in the land of her enemies
 - While she’s there, her family dwindles and weakens
 - The family seems destined to disappear altogether
 - But if we reverse the lens and look at these circumstances from the perspective of the Moabite women, things look a little different
 - By Law they were prohibited from ever entering the assembly of Israel
 - They could never join in the worship before the tabernacle or in a Jewish feast
 - Moreover, they could never marry into the family of God so as to become part of that family
 - Like all Moabites, they were strangers to the covenants God gave Israel, without a knowledge of the living God and without hope for His mercy
 - But what was impossible by Law became possible by grace
 - Even as God was working to discipline this Jewish family, He was prepared to use their sin to accomplish good for a Gentile woman
 - The Moabites could never have gone into Israel and found God
 - They would never have been allowed to see the tabernacle or learn the word of God
 - They would have remained on the east side of the Jordan and lived and died without coming to know God
 - The Law of God was a barrier for them that they could never cross
 - So God in His mercy and grace worked through a disobedient Jewish family to bring the knowledge of Himself into this corner of the Gentile world
 - And over those ten years this family, disobedient though they were, introduced these Moabite women to the living God
 - While God was holding a Jewish family accountable for their sin under a Jewish Law, He was also extending His grace to Gentiles
 - He was turning all things to good for those who loved Him and are called according to His purpose
- As you can probably sense already, this is the point where I introduce the second story of Ruth, of God working to provide a redeemer
 - The woman Naomi is a Jewish wife, while her widowed daughters-in-law are Gentiles

- As such, they become pictures of two groups of people on earth
 - Naomi represents the Jewish people who are in covenant with the living God
 - While the two women represent the nations of Gentiles
- The Jewish people are a people God created out of nothing beginning with Abraham's son, Isaac
 - They were established supernaturally by a promise that God gave Abraham
 - And they exist for one reason: to accomplish God's program of redemption
- Through the Jewish people the Lord brings into existence everything required for our redemption
 - Through the Jewish people came the covenants of promise on which our salvation is based
 - Through them He brought the Law and tabernacle service which picture and explain the need for redemption
 - Later He brought the word of God through Jewish prophets to foretell the solution God will provide
 - And eventually through Israel came the Messiah, the One foretold and promised
- But as God contemplated His plan, He determined to work through a people of His own making
 - He wanted to preclude the possibility any person or nation could claim they had something to offer God
 - Had God selected the Babylonians or Egyptians to bring these things into existence, we might assume these people were inherently better people and thereby diminish God's glory
 - So instead, the Lord made His own people, the Jewish nation, out of nothing
 - And He made sure no one could see Jews as inherently worthy for such a role

Deut. 7:6 "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Deut. 7:7 "The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples,

Deut. 7:8 but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

- Nevertheless, for many generations the Jewish people alone were able to know and receive the things of God
- Gentiles, like these Moabite women, were excluded from the things of God
- As Paul wrote:

Eph. 2:11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands —

Eph. 2:12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Eph. 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

- By the grace of God, we Gentiles were given an opportunity to know and follow the Living God
 - And we came to that awareness by means of the Jewish people
 - When we read the Bible, we’re reading words delivered to us by Jewish men
 - And when we come to know our Savior, we are receiving a Jewish Messiah
 - And when we glory in God’s forgiveness, we are rejoicing over a Jewish covenant into which we were grafted by faith
- That is the mercy we see beginning to work in the lives of these two Gentile women
 - They were strangers to the things of God
 - But they have been introduced to that God through a Jewish family
 - And they have become attached to that family through a covenant
 - Over the next chapter, we see what happens to the two women
 - And in the process we see this picture of Christ, the Redeemer of Jew and Gentile, building as well
 - And next week, we will also introduce our third story, the account of end times represented in these same details

- Last week we spent most of our time introducing the structure and character of this book by reading vs. 1-5
 - Let's re-read those verses to begin again this morning

Ruth 1:1 Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons.

Ruth 1:2 The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there.

Ruth 1:3 Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons.

Ruth 1:4 They took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years.

Ruth 1:5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.

- As we saw last week, this beautiful love story revolves around a single Jewish family in the time of judges
 - A man, his wife and two sons flee a famine in the land of Judah
 - The famine was the result of God's judgment on the land for their sin under the covenant
 - This family decides to try to escape God's judgment by fleeing east into the land of Israel's enemies
- But they can't run far enough to escape God's authority
 - And so during the years they spend in Moab, the father and his two sons die
 - Leaving behind the mother and two daughters-in-law who had married the sons while in Moab
 - All three women are now widowed and destitute
- During our introduction of the story, we also learned that the book of Ruth contains additional layers of meaning
 - Embedded in our story is another lesson picturing Jesus as Israel's redeemer
 - As well as a third story of end times that tells how the Lord will bring this age to a conclusion
- A picture is a prophetic story that uses the characters and circumstances of a story to represent another set of characters and events in the future
 - One character stands for another future character
 - One situation represents other future circumstances

- Scripture is literally filled with pictures like this
- For example, Jesus told us that the story of Noah is a picture of how the world will come to an end
 - The story of Moses and holding the bronze serpent on a staff pictured Jesus on the cross
 - Abraham taking Isaac to the top of the mountain in Genesis 22 is also a picture of Jesus being sacrificed on the cross
 - And the Passover lamb is yet another picture of the same thing
 - In fact, all the Jewish feasts are pictures of events related to either Jesus' first coming or His second coming
- So why does the Lord create these pictures in His word?
 - First, because they teach us about the meaning of certain events
 - When you see a picture behind events that happened long ago like the Passover, they help to shed understanding on why those events needed to happen
 - Ultimately, that meaning will always point us to the story of Christ
- Secondly, pictures are evidence of the sovereignty of God as He moves all events of History toward achieving a common purpose
 - Just consider what it says about God's power when we see Him orchestrate the movements of people, kings, armies and nations in order to create these pictures
 - It tells us unequivocally that all things exist to serve Him
 - And it confirms for us the trustworthiness of the word of God and the power of the One who authored it
- So let's return to our story in chapter 1, but not to the story we started last week...
 - Instead, let's start a different story...
 - Like our first story, our second story also begins with a wife and her husband
 - But in this story, the wife's name is Israel and the Husband is Jehovah
 - But this husband is no ordinary man
 - In scripture, God often describes Himself as the Husband of Israel and Israel as His wife

Is. 54:4 "Fear not, for you will not be put to shame;
 And do not feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced;
 But you will forget the shame of your youth,
 And the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.

Is. 54:5 "For your husband is your Maker,
 Whose name is the Lord of hosts;
 And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel,

Who is called the God of all the earth.

Is. 54:6 “For the Lord has called you,
Like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,
Even like a wife of one’s youth when she is rejected,”
Says your God.

Is. 54:7 “For a brief moment I forsook you,
But with great compassion I will gather you.

Is. 54:8 “In an outburst of anger
I hid My face from you for a moment,
But with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you,”
Says the Lord your Redeemer.

- As we see in this passage, the Lord compares Israel to His wife and calls Himself her Husband
 - But interestingly, the Lord says Israel is like a wife who has rejected her Husband
 - He’s referring to the way Israel rejected the Lord by the forsaking of the covenant, abandoning the Law and worshipping idols
 - This was the pattern in the time of judges, the time of Ruth
 - Even more interesting, the Lord speaks about a time in Israel’s history when the Lord disciplined Israel by making her a “widow”
 - The Lord forsook Israel because of her sin against her Husband
 - The Lord made Israel like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit
 - This is one of the classic ways in which the Bible describes disobedient Israel
 - The Lord placed Israel outside her land, so Israel finds herself grieving, alone and without the Lord’s blessing
- So in Ruth, the second story is what the Lord does to His disobedient wife as a result of her sin against Him
 - Last week we learned that God promised to bring drought to the people of Israel if they sinned under the Old Covenant
 - But there is more to God’s judgment than just famine

Lev. 26:14 ‘But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments,

Lev. 26:15 if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant,

Lev. 26:16 I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that will waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you will sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it up.

Lev. 26:19 'I will also break down your pride of power; I will also make your sky like iron and your earth like bronze.

Lev. 26:22 'I will let loose among you the beasts of the field, which will bereave you of your children and destroy your cattle and reduce your number so that your roads lie deserted.

Lev. 26:38 'But you will perish among the nations, and your enemies' land will consume you.

Lev. 26:39 'So those of you who may be left will rot away because of their iniquity in the lands of your enemies; and also because of the iniquities of their forefathers they will rot away with them.

- The Lord told Israel that if they failed to keep all His commandments, then He would bring a number of devastating curses on His people
 - Specifically, the Lord says He will weaken them in several ways
 - He says I will consume them, causing them to waste away, bringing wasting diseases, draining away their life
 - He would make their sky like iron and earth like bronze, which is a reference to drought
 - He would rob them of their children, making them fewer in number
 - They would perish among the nations (Gentiles), rotting away in the land of your enemies
 - Do you recognize this pattern?
 - Think back for a moment to the names of the characters from our opening lesson on Ruth
 - We had Elimelech, the husband
 - His name means God of the King
 - We had Naomi, the wife, whose name means lovely (as in the lovely Jewish wife)
 - They lived in the times of Judges, a time marked by Israel's disobedience
 - And then the Lord brought drought and famine
 - And the famine scattered the family into the land of their enemies
- Then while they are in this land, the family begins to waste away and reduce in number
 - Soon Naomi is without a husband, made a widow
 - And soon her sons, Mahlon and Chilion, die as well
 - Interestingly, the name Mahlon means sick, weak or afflicted
 - And the name Chilion means pining, destruction, consumption, failing

- Their names foreshadow their lives in Moab
 - They succumb to weaknesses and die while in the land of their enemies
 - The circumstances of this family closely parallel the promises spoken concerning Israel
- Just as Leviticus promised, the sons of Israel (i.e., these sons of Elimelech) are wasting away during their exile
 - They would be reduced in number while they lived in the land of their enemies
 - We're learning that the events of Ruth are also telling the story of how God will deal with His disobedient wife, Israel
- The exile and death of Elimelech and his sons pictures the eventual exile and wasting away of generations of Israel to come
 - These events eventually came to pass when Israel suffered under the conquest of various Gentile nations
 - And in the story of Ruth the Lord is explaining that these events were necessary as a result of His wife's disobedience to her Husband
- Now it's one thing to draw a simple connection between a Jewish character in the story of Ruth and the Jewish people as a whole
 - But it's another thing altogether to suggest that even the smallest detail of their lives can hold important prophetic meaning
 - But that's exactly the case
 - The prophetic connections in the book of Ruth go far beyond the meaning of names or a character's identity
 - For example, I want to draw your attention to a little word at the end of verse 4
 - The word in Hebrew is *ke* – meaning *about*
 - Scripture is careful to tell us that Naomi was in the land of Moab for “about 10 years”
 - The Bible is never inexact
 - Every Hebrew and Greek word in the original manuscripts was carefully chosen by God for a specific purpose and meaning
 - So here when we see the author use the term “about 10 years” it's not because he didn't know the exact date
 - But because the word “about” adds meaning that's important to the story
 - And because the phrase contributes to the picture being created concerning Israel
- As I'm sure many of you know, numbers in scripture are intentionally loaded with symbolic meaning
 - That is not to say that numbers don't have a true literal meaning...they absolutely do
 - But God orchestrates events in the world to align with certain numbers (like

- seven days for Creation, etc.)
 - He does this to supply important clues concerning His purposes and His plans
 - By observing these patterns carefully, we can learn even more than what first meets the eye
- For example, the first ten numbers have the following meanings in scripture:
 - The number 1 stands for God's sovereignty
 - 2 means division
 - 3 means the Godhead
 - 4 means the Earth
 - 5 means grace
 - 6 is the number of fallen man
 - 7 is perfect completion
 - 8 is a new beginning
 - 9 is judgment
 - And 10 is the number of testimony
- Let's take a close look at that verse in Ruth 1:4
 - Naomi and her family are living in Moab about 10 years
 - About means they have been there at least 9 years
 - 9 is the number indicating judgment
 - And saying "about" ten suggests that the tenth year approaches but as not yet arrived
 - Therefore, saying "about 10 years" is a way of saying we're leaving a period of judgment and entering a year of testimony
 - Naomi's family has endured a time of judgment in Moab because they fled a famine during the time of the judges, a time of sinfulness
 - God left them there for 9 years to communicate His sovereign purposes in their exile – they were exiled in judgment for sin
 - But now at about the tenth year, circumstances change and a transition is beginning
 - The period of God's judgment is coming to an end for Naomi and what's left of her family (a remnant)
 - And redemption, a new testimony, draws near
 - But the next year will be a year that testifies to God's faithfulness to His people
- It also pictures a year of testimony in our second story about the Husband Jehovah and His wife Israel
 - Just as Naomi's period of judgment gradually transitions to a new time of testimony
 - So will Israel's time of exile eventually give way to a time of testimony

- To understand that transition, we first need to understand a little of how Israel becomes a wife forsaken by her Husband, the Lord
- As I mentioned earlier, the Lord tells Israel that disobedience to His Covenant will result in the nation being scattered into the nations of the world
 - The Lord promises this most specifically in Deuteronomy

Deut. 28:62 “Then you shall be left few in number, whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, because you did not obey the Lord your God.

Deut. 28:63 “It shall come about that as the Lord delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so the Lord will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you will be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it.

Deut. 28:64 “Moreover, the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known.

Deut. 28:65 “Among those nations you shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul.

Deut. 28:66 “So your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you will be in dread night and day, and shall have no assurance of your life.

- This promised scattering eventually takes place in several stages
 - Many of the tribes are scattered when the Assyrians capture them and take them out of their land
 - Later the rest of the tribes are scattered by the Babylonian invasion in 605 BC, which began a period called the Age of the Gentiles
 - Neither of these events accomplished the complete scattering of Israel though
 - The total and final dispersion of Israel takes place after Israel rejects their Messiah
 - So in AD 70 the nation is set outside their land in a final dramatic fashion when Rome conquered the city
 - Jesus warned believing Jews to escape before this judgment fell upon the city

Luke 21:20 “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.

Luke 21:21 “Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city;

Luke 21:22 because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.

Luke 21:23 “Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people;

Luke 21:24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

- Jesus gave those who would listen the clues they needed to understand how to escape the coming destruction
 - When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then escape
 - Jesus says there will come the days when what is written will be fulfilled
 - The things to be fulfilled are the things we read in Deuteronomy 28
 - The time had come for Israel to be scattered as God promised, led captive into all the nations as Jesus said
 - And once they are scattered, the rest of the curses will follow; the wasting away, reducing in number, etc.
 - Jesus said that during this time of exile Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by Gentiles
 - And this scattering will continue until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled
 - The attack on Jerusalem in AD 70 initiated a period of judgment upon Israel in keeping with God’s promises to His unfaithful wife
 - And so like Naomi in the story of Ruth, Israel has been wandering in the land of her enemies ever since
 - But also like Naomi, Israel’s time of wandering in judgment must eventually transition to a period of regathering in preparation for a new testimony
 - God also spoke prophetically about not only a period of judgment but also a period of regathering

Ezek. 20:33 “As I live,” declares the Lord God, “surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you.

Ezek. 20:34 “I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out;

Ezek. 20:35 and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face.

Ezek. 20:36 “As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you,” declares the Lord God.

Ezek. 20:37 “I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;

Ezek. 20:38 and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against

Me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the Lord.

- The Lord declared that the time spent wandering outside the land was a time of judgment, a time when Israel was passing under the rod
 - And in that time God would purge out the rebels, those who had hearts to disobey and reject the Lord
 - He declares those rebels will not enter the land of Israel
 - He is speaking about the Kingdom to come
 - Those who have hearts to reject the Lord will not be permitted to enter the Kingdom
 - But the Lord will bring some in Israel into righteousness for His name's sake

Ezek. 36:17 “Son of man, when the house of Israel was living in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds; their way before Me was like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity.

Ezek. 36:18 “Therefore I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they had shed on the land, because they had defiled it with their idols.

Ezek. 36:19 “Also I scattered them among the nations and they were dispersed throughout the lands. According to their ways and their deeds I judged them.

Ezek. 36:20 “When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, ‘These are the people of the Lord; yet they have come out of His land.’

Ezek. 36:21 “But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went.

Ezek. 36:22 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went.

Ezek. 36:23 “I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,” declares the Lord God, “when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.

Ezek. 36:24 “For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land.

- If the Lord were to wait for someone in Israel to have a heart to follow Him, He would be waiting a very long time...an eternity
 - So the Lord declares that He will reach out to restore disobedient Israel for His own name's sake
 - The Lord has promised to bring Israel into her kingdom

- And He will keep that promise because His faithfulness is on the line
- And He will be faithful to His promises
- Therefore, the people will be set outside their land as just punishment for their sins of idolatry under the Law
 - We can certainly understand the Lord's desire to scatter His people
 - Remember all the terrible things we've learned from the time of Judges alone, to say nothing of the things that follow
- But our Lord is merciful and loving so He will bring a remnant of Israel back into her land
 - And in that regathering the Lord prepares to bring His wife back into obedience
 - Ultimately, He will bring her into a period of testimony and redemption
 - Again, He does these things for His own name's sake, not because Israel has done anything to deserve it
- That's where our second story is headed
 - Israel has been in exile for the past two millennia
 - Less than 100 years ago, the nation began to regather in her land
 - That regathering is our sign to know that Israel is moving from a time of judgment to a time of testimony
 - That promise of Ezekiel 36 is being fulfilled in our very days
 - Speaking in the Bible's language of numbers, it's been about 10 years for Israel, figuratively speaking
 - She has seen much despair and misery during her years of wandering under judgment
 - And yet judgment is giving way to testimony even before our eyes
 - We've only scratched the surface of this second story, to say nothing of our first story
 - Next week we'll return to the story of Naomi and her daughters-in-law
 - And as we see where events take them, we'll continue to examine how that story reflects the story of Jehovah and Israel

- For the past two weeks, we've spent our time studying exactly five verses in the book of Ruth
 - At this pace, we will require nearly nine months to finish this study
 - Have no fear though
 - We won't need more than seven months, tops
 - Seriously, our pace is going to pick up beginning today
 - In the first five verses of the book, we learned that the story of Ruth centers on a Jewish family
 - The family fled famine
 - Sought refuge in the land of Israel's enemies
 - And over nine years the family was reduced to just three women
 - We also learned that the story of this family is also a story of Jesus as our Redeemer and a story of how God deals with disobedient Israel
 - These pictures are embedded in our story of Ruth
 - So as we move through the story, we'll look to uncover their meaning as well
- For now, it's time to return to the story of Ruth and what's left of her family in the time of Judges

Ruth 1:6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the Lord had visited His people in giving them food.

Ruth 1:7 So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.

Ruth 1:8 And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

Ruth 1:9 "May the Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

Ruth 1:10 And they said to her, "No, but we will surely return with you to your people."

Ruth 1:11 But Naomi said, "Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

Ruth 1:12 "Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons,

Ruth 1:13 would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the Lord has gone forth against me."

- Approaching her tenth year in Moab, Naomi decides it's time she leave this land and return to the land of her family in Judah

- What prompts her to leave now?
 - It can't merely be the death of her sons
 - After all, she has been bereaved of her husband for many years
- In v.6 we're told Naomi has heard news that things have become better back home
 - Specifically, she hears that the Lord has visited her people and is giving them food
 - The wording indicates that famine and drought have ended in the land
 - And more importantly, the people recognize that the arrival of better times is a result of the Lord's sovereign will
 - That just as the time of deprivation was directed by God, so now is this blessing a result of God's direction
- And as a result of food returning to Judah, Naomi decides to return home, but what to do with her widowed daughters-in-law?
 - In the culture of this day, a woman leaves her father's home and attaches herself to the home of her new husband
 - In a sense, she is no longer part of her parent's family
 - She has become a member of a new family, a new tribe
 - So when Orpah and Ruth married Mahlon and Chilion, they became part of the household of Elimelech
 - Even after Elimelech died, these women remained part of his household since their husbands had received Elimelech's inheritance
 - But now even their own husbands had died, leaving the women connected to a household without men
 - Their family ties are very tenuous, almost invisible at this point
 - No one would fault them for walking away from this family and returning to their father's household
- The future for any woman without a husband in these times was very bleak
 - These women would have few options for survival
 - They don't own any land on which to survive, since Elimelech was not a Moabite...he abandoned his property in Judah
 - And even if they did return to their inheritance, the farmland would be overgrown and unable to be farmed without significant effort
 - And these women likely lacked the physical strength or expertise to work the land in that way
 - They were likely destined to be beggars
 - Moreover, these women were unlikely to attract new husbands
 - They had already been given away in marriage once before
 - So they were no longer as attractive to a potential suitor

- Much in the way that someone might prefer a new car over a used car
- And this was especially true for Naomi, the older woman
 - At least her daughters-in-law were younger
 - If they separated from Naomi and returned to their homes, they had a decent chance of being accepted by another man one day
 - But if they stayed with Naomi, they would have few reasons for hope
- Naomi recognizes the situation for what it is
 - So in an act of mercy, she attempts to persuade her daughters-in-law to abandon her for their own benefit
 - In v.8 Naomi blesses the women by asking that the Lord be as kind to them as they had been to their deceased husbands
 - So we see that these daughters-in-law were loved by Naomi
 - Furthermore, Naomi calls for the Lord to grant them rest from the trial and uncertainty of widowhood
 - Resting in the house of a husband is a euphemism for remarriage
 - As Naomi first suggests this plan, the ladies embrace in tears over the prospect of seeing their pitiful family broken apart further
 - The young women declare they will not abandon Naomi
 - But Naomi will not hear of it
 - She insists they depart
 - Then Naomi begins to engage in a little self-pity, understandably so
 - Sarcastically, she asks if she has two more husbands waiting in her womb
 - In other words, Naomi can't help them in their goal of remarriage
 - She will not bear more sons at her age, and therefore they have no reason to attach themselves to her
 - In fact, Naomi says even if she had hope to remarry, and even if she had two more sons, how could these daughters wait that long?
 - She ends her argument saying the Lord has gone forth against her, so who would want to have a part in that future?
- Naomi is giving these young women permission to be selfishly-minded under these circumstances
 - They would naturally feel obligated to stay with their mother-in-law, since Naomi would likely need their help to get along
 - But to stay with her likely means passing up the opportunity to be married themselves
 - So Naomi releases them from that obligation
 - Her insistence allows each woman to make the decision of their heart
 - What happens next is a reflection of each woman's heart

Ruth 1:14 And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

- Orpah decides to take advantage of the opportunity to abandon this sinking ship
 - She kisses Naomi as a final gesture of love
 - And she departs
 - She loved Naomi, but not enough to sacrifice her own desires
- In a sense Orpah valued a marriage to a future husband more than her relationship with Naomi
 - Naomi gave her the chance to choose and Orpah chose a husband
 - And her name reflects her heart
 - Orpah means stubborn or stiff-necked
 - Her personal interests came before Naomi's
- Then there's Ruth
 - At the end of v.14 we hear that Ruth clung to Naomi
 - The word cling can also mean cleave or joined together
 - The word doesn't merely indicate that Ruth stayed with Naomi
 - It means Ruth pledged herself to Naomi forever
 - Ruth made a commitment that she was going to spend the rest of her life in the household of Naomi
 - Even if it meant she never married...Naomi mattered more to Ruth than even the prospect of a husband or children
 - We don't get the explanation for Ruth's dedication in v.14, but we see it in the next two verses

Ruth 1:15 Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

Ruth 1:16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.

Ruth 1:17 "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me."

- Naomi hints at the reason in v.15 when she refers to Orpah's path
- Naomi says Orpah returned to her people and her gods
- Naomi must have sensed that Orpah's allegiance to Moab went much deeper than merely finding a husband
 - She was drawn back to pagan worship

- Elimelech's God, the God of Israel, had never made an impression on Orpah's heart
- So when the going got tough with Naomi, there was nothing else holding Orpah
- But then there's Ruth
 - Ruth begs Naomi not to leave her behind
 - She pledges that whatever future Naomi has, it will be Ruth's future as well until she dies
 - In fact, she invites a curse from God should she fail to keep this commitment
 - Ruth has entered into a covenant with Naomi
- Ruth's reason for her commitment is to be among Naomi's people, the Jewish people
 - And to have the God of Israel as her God
 - We're coming to understand that Orpah isn't leaving simply because she wants a husband
 - And Ruth isn't staying simply because she doesn't
- It's much deeper than that...it's a matter of faith
 - Orpah finds nothing particularly attractive about the Israel of God
 - And she has no affinity for the God of Israel
 - Orpah is proof that you can take the girl out of pagan Moab, but you can't take pagan Moab out of the girl
 - And likewise, Ruth has become a worshipper of Yahweh
 - She no doubt wants a husband like any young woman of her day would
 - But she has come to realize there is something much greater than being married
 - She wants to know and follow the true living God above all else
 - And most importantly, Ruth realizes that maintaining her connection to Naomi is her link to that relationship
 - Before Naomi came into her life, she didn't know Yahweh
 - But now she does
 - And if Ruth is to know more of the God she follows, she must stay close to Naomi
 - And so her love for God propels her to sacrifice her earthly desires to obtain heavenly desires
 - I often wonder why Ruth wasn't included in Hebrews 11, in the "hall of faith"
 - She exemplifies the self-sacrificial love that faith requires
 - She passed on the opportunity for earthly reward in order to seek heavenly reward
 - Based on her actions and her words, we can safely conclude that Ruth was saved by her faith in the God of Israel
 - While we can also conclude that Orpah never turned that corner

- You can remember each of these women this way:
- Naomi was the grieving widow
- Orpah was the leaving widow
- And Ruth was the cleaving widow

Ruth 1:18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

Ruth 1:19 So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, “Is this Naomi?”

Ruth 1:20 She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

Ruth 1:21 “I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?”

Ruth 1:22 So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

- Naomi relents and allows Ruth to accompany her, no doubt with a measure of relief
 - She will be glad to have the company and the support
 - And it will be a source of encouragement to hear that Ruth was committed to her despite the sacrifice required
 - This is the biblical definition of love
 - To sacrifice one’s own interests for the needs of another
 - Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends
 - Perhaps that’s why the name Ruth means friendship
- So Naomi and Ruth head back to Bethlehem
 - And as Naomi arrives, she is greeted by those who remember her family
 - They are astonished to see her again
 - They must have assumed that the family of Elimelech was lost forever
 - Perhaps they heard how the family had fallen on hard times while in Moab
 - As they greet Naomi, she responds by asking them to call her by a new name
 - Her name was Naomi, which means pleasant Jewish wife
 - But she asks that they call her Mara, meaning bitter
 - Naomi is bitter against the Lord for her misery and loss
 - But remember, her family suffered as a result of a chain of sin, not as the result of a

cruel god

- Their story began with the sin of Israel disobeying the Lord and breaking His covenant
- That prompted God's response of judgment, leading to the family's choice to abandon their land during the famine, another sin
- And their sin continued with the sons' decisions to marry Moabites while outside the land
- So Naomi may be bitter toward the Lord, but it wasn't the Lord's fault
 - Naomi spent 9 years outside the land during a period of judgment
 - But even then, the Lord has remained faithful to her
 - That's why she is now back in her land to begin a time of testimony
 - How ironic that even as she returns from exile, she's still harboring resentment against God for her situation
- Naomi even adds that she left "full" and has returned empty
 - In reality the situation is exactly the opposite
 - She left in a famine, but she is returning to a land of plenty
 - She left with three men who were intent on disobeying the Lord and serving only their own selfish interests
 - She returns accompanied by a devoted daughter who is faithfully following her and Yahweh
 - The truth is Naomi has never had it so good
- Her situation at the end of chapter 1 is a classic representation of how the child of God can be persecuted, deprived, and hated by the world and yet blessed by God
 - If we measure our circumstances in earthly, worldly terms, we will also find reason to be bitter
 - Our Lord Himself said that those who follow Him will know the same rejection and persecution He knew before us

Matt. 10:24 "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master.

Matt. 10:25 "It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!"

- And Paul reminded us that our faith in Christ has made us enemies with the world, as it was from the beginning

Gal. 4:28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.

Gal. 4:29 But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also.

- That's why we have to live with spiritual understanding, with eyes for eternity
 - We need to realize that we can't let our happiness be determined by earthly matters
 - Because the Word of God has already disclosed that the life of a Christian will mirror that of our Lord
 - We will suffer at the hands of hateful men and see trial and testing from the Father, just as Jesus did
- Therefore, we let our joy come from knowing we are assured of glory in our heavenly state
 - We will have eternal reward, an inheritance in this earth that God appoints and no one can take from us
 - And we will enjoy that inheritance in a glorified body that can never die or suffer again
 - In light of that future, how can we dwell on the present suffering?
 - As Paul declared:

Rom. 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

- Naomi had her eyes down when she returned from Moab
 - They were looking on her earthly circumstances, not her heavenly position
 - Yes, her situation was difficult and we too would likely be mourning in her place
 - But there is a difference between mourning and bitterness
 - Naomi is bitter because she can't see past her circumstances
 - She needed to lift her eyes heavenward and consider what God was doing around her
- That's our challenge as well
 - Our challenge is to look past this world and consider the one to come
 - We aren't to pretend everything is fine on earth, because it won't be
 - But we are to see life's travails with an eternal perspective
 - To remember that nothing we lose here matters when we stand to gain so much in eternity
 - But this isn't a perspective we can obtain as a result of a single sermon or through the power of positive thinking
 - It comes naturally as we mature spiritually
 - Spend time in God's word, consider the example of the saints who have gone before you
 - Follow the example of the Lord
 - The more the word of God influences your thinking, the less you will care about

the world that is passing away

- Next time, we return to this chapter one last time to consider Naomi and Ruth in the second story, of Israel and Jehovah

- This morning I want to bring you back again into our second story, the story within the story of Ruth
 - Within the book of Ruth we read not only of a family in Israel, but also a story of a nation, Israel, and her Husband Jehovah
 - This poignant love story of two widows seeking the security of a provider also pictures God's love for His chosen people
 - Each week we've studied one or the other of these stories
 - Last time we looked at the return of Naomi and Ruth to the land of Judah

Ruth 1:7 So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.

Ruth 1:8 And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

Ruth 1:9 "May the Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

Ruth 1:10 And they said to her, "No, but we will surely return with you to your people."

Ruth 1:11 But Naomi said, "Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

Ruth 1:12 "Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons,

Ruth 1:13 would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the Lord has gone forth against me."

Ruth 1:14 And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

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Ruth 1:21 “I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?”

- Today we examine the prophetic story told by those same events
 - Naomi lived in days of sinfulness, and she endured God’s judgment against the land in the form of a drought and famine
 - So her family fled from her land and into the land of her enemies, the Moabites
 - These details picture the wife of Jehovah, Israel, judged by God for disobedience by scattering Israel into the land of her enemies
 - This scattering had the effect of reducing Israel’s numbers, bringing them misery and weakness
- As they remained outside their land for two millennia, the people of Israel pined away
 - Until they were only a remnant reduced greatly in number from their prior days when they lived in peace and comfort in their land
 - So just as Elimelech’s family is a fraction of it’s original size, so will Israel be as they begin to return from the nations
- Then we saw Naomi’s story beginning to change after about 10 years
 - And as we studied, that estimation held more meaning than simply an approximate period of time
 - Since 9 is the number of judgment and 10 the number of testimony, this statement is not just speaking of time
 - It’s communicating God’s purpose
 - About 10 years meant the time of judgment for Naomi’s family was coming to an end
 - And a time for testifying of the Lord’s faithfulness was about to begin
 - Like Elimelech’s family, Israel was scattered for a period of judgment
 - And like Naomi, God promised Israel He would regather the survivors on a future day
 - For the past 60 years of history we’ve been privileged to watch that regathering taking place in Israel
 - In a sense, we’re living in chapter 1 of Ruth right now
 - We’re watching the family of Israel, the forsaken wife of Jehovah, coming back to her land looking for rest
- In the first story, Naomi is returning to her land as a different woman than the one that left ten years earlier
 - Now she is a widow without sons
 - In the days of this story and in the eastern culture, the plight of a woman without a husband or son was one of desperation

- Woman couldn't own property, generally couldn't earn a living, couldn't testify in court
- More importantly, the family name was only carried forward by male heirs
 - So a woman without a husband or a son was like an orphan
 - All land ownership rights in Israel transferred through inheritance according to the tribal family name
 - So a widow without sons would lose her claim to the land, lose her support, making her a good candidate for starvation
- So the family of this woman Naomi was literally at the end of the line
 - The end financially, the end socially, the end emotionally
 - Her husband is gone and both her sons are gone
 - So she has no hope for bringing herself out of her hopelessness
 - You can appreciate the plight of widows from a scene in Luke 7

Luke 7:11 Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd.

Luke 7:12 Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her.

Luke 7:13 When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep."

Luke 7:14 And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!"

Luke 7:15 The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother.

- Jesus' compassion for this widow was as much a matter of her bleak financial future as it was for her mourning for her son
- His miracle gave her back both her son and her security
- Which helps us understand Naomi's decision to return to her land
 - She is driven to return primarily by a desire for security
 - For a posterity
 - For someone to rescue her and give her rest in every sense of the word
- So then knowing Naomi's situation, what do we learn of our other widow Israel?
 - Amazingly, throughout the thousands of years the people of Israel were scattered around the globe, they never ceased to maintain their identity
 - There is no parallel in all anthropology
 - Israel remained distinct as a nation though they had no country of their own

and were living in other's lands

- This sort of thing never happens
 - A group of refugees might remain distinct while living in another land for a few generations
 - Maybe even their language and a few traditions remain after a few hundred years
 - We can see this trend in cultural concentrations like "chintown" or "little italy" in certain big city places
- But such groups are only able to maintain their identities because their homelands still exist to supply them with new immigrants on a regular basis (i.e., China and Italy still exist)
 - Without this regular supply, the enclaves would soon disperse into the local culture
 - Their separate identity would be lost in time
 - Immigrants into larger societies always meld and assimilate into the larger culture
- But Israel never did this, despite having no homeland for nearly 2,000 years
 - Jews have remained distinct from other cultures wherever they lived in the world
 - Even when they were persecuted and systematically murdered, they maintained their identity and survived
- Clearly God has been at work preserving a remnant of Israel
 - He was keeping His promise to Israel to preserve them as a distinct people among their enemies
 - Ironically, their distinction was the source of their misery
 - They have remained the most persecuted people throughout the ages since their dispersion in AD 70
 - Their strong identity has caused the nations wherever they lived to strike out against them
 - It would have been so much easier for Israel to simply blend in and become part of the culture in which they lived
 - But God never allowed that to happen
 - This is the life of Israel in her widowhood
 - Living in the land of her enemies, yet those foreign lands hold no true security or rest
 - Because it's ultimately not home
 - No matter how comfortable the Jewish people might become living among other nations, the comfort was temporary
 - They lacked a place of rest and security

- They were like a widow in their lack of an inheritance
- But then in 1948, everything changed
 - Jews the world over awoke on May 14th, 1948, to the reality of a Jewish state for the first time since AD 70
 - Immediately, millions of Jews began making plans to return
 - Finally, they could find rest from their enemies they thought
 - Finally, they could be at peace in their home
 - But they didn't return the same people who left
 - They were reduced in number
 - Though they were happy to live in their homeland again, they were bitter
 - Generations of persecution and loss and suffering had taken a toll
 - And they were grieved
 - Remember what we read last time as Naomi decided to return to Israel

Ruth 1:19 So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, “Is this Naomi?”

Ruth 1:20 She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

Ruth 1:21 “I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?”

- Like the widow Israel, Naomi returned when she learned there was opportunity again in Israel
- But she returned grieved, reduced in number, bitter
- More importantly, Naomi didn't return alone
 - In tow were two Gentile women, Orpah and Ruth
 - As we saw last time, Orpah was an unbeliever who wouldn't make the trip
 - The other, Ruth, attaches herself to Naomi
 - Consider what Ruth's future held in Israel
 - Like Naomi, she was a widow
 - But unlike Naomi, Ruth was young enough to expect an opportunity to remarry
 - But Ruth is leaving her native land where she would be free to remarry anyone
 - And she is going to a foreign nation where the men were forbidden by law from marrying her
 - So Ruth's decision to accompany Naomi is a crazy decision

- As we learned last time, Naomi's God has revealed Himself to Ruth and stirred up such a love for Him that it leads Ruth to attach herself to Naomi
 - In fact, Ruth is so attracted to Naomi and her God that she is willing to leave everything behind, even the prospect of a husband
 - This is quite a commitment
 - This attachment of Ruth, a Gentile, to Naomi, a Jewish widow, is another picture of the widowed wife of Jehovah
 - God knew that his wife, Israel, would depart from Him and chase after other gods
 - And so He forewarned Israel they would know a time of severe judgment for their unfaithfulness
 - But God also said He would turn this time of judgment into something good for other nations
 - He would use Israel's judgment to extend His grace to another group of people

Deut. 32:20 "Then He said, 'I will hide My face from them,
I will see what their end shall be;
For they are a perverse generation,
Sons in whom is no faithfulness.

Deut. 32:21 'They have made Me jealous with what is not God;
They have provoked Me to anger with their idols.
So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people;
I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,

- The Lord declared that as Israel provoked Him, He would establish a new relationship with a different people
 - This new relationship would "provoke" the Jewish nation into a form of jealousy for what they lacked
 - Who is this foolish nation?
 - The Hebrew word for nation in Deuteronomy is *goy*
 - It means Gentiles, any non-Jew
- God said through Moses that He would establish a covenant relationship with Gentiles following a period of Jewish rebellion
 - He would use this relationship to provoke jealousy or a longing within Israel to know Him again
 - Israel would be jealous for their relationship with God
 - Jealous for their rest in that relationship
- God set out to create this opportunity among a group that never would have sought it otherwise

Is. 65:1 “I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me;
I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me.
I said, ‘Here am I, here am I,’
To a nation which did not call on My name.

- Ruth represents the Gentiles who will seek after God during a period of Israel’s judgment
 - As Isaiah foretold

Is. 55:5 “Behold, you will call a nation you do not know,
And a nation which knows you not will run to you,
Because of the Lord your God, even the Holy One of Israel;
For He has glorified you.”

Is. 55:6 Seek the Lord while He may be found;
Call upon Him while He is near.

- He will call a nation that the Jews do not know
- And this nation that doesn’t know Israel will run to Israel
- Because of the Lord, the Holy One of Israel
- This is exactly a description of Ruth, isn’t it?
 - She didn’t know the God of Israel
 - But because of a period of judgment upon the Jewish people, Ruth came to know Yahweh
 - And now as a result, Ruth is running toward Naomi and away from her own people
 - Ironically, Ruth has found the rest that Naomi still seeks
- In the same way as Ruth attached herself to Naomi, the Gentiles of the world will become attached to Israel
 - They will hear and believe the gospel of a Jewish Messiah sent to save them
 - They will enter into a covenant with that Messiah, a covenant given to Israel
 - This attachment is spiritual as Paul summarizes in Romans 11

Rom. 11:11 I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be!
But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

Rom. 11:12 Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!

- Paul explains that God has set the Jewish nation aside for a time

- But Israel's sin has made a way available for the Gentile nations to know God
- Paul wanted the Church to understand that Israel's judgment was the means for their blessing
- Therefore, a future day of Israel's restoration would be a time of glory for the world
- Paul says in v.12 that if God could produce so much good from Israel's judgment, how much more will God produce in restoring them?
 - Then Paul explains how the Church is attached to Israel, as a Gentile family member

Rom. 11:17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree,

Rom. 11:18 do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.

- Paul uses the analogy of an olive tree to represent Israel and Gentile nations
 - The tree of Israel was pruned for disobedience, with branches broken off
 - Then God proceeded to graft in unnatural branches, the Church
 - The Gentiles aren't the natural tree God planted, but He grafted us into tree by faith in the covenant given to Israel
 - So we receive our nourishment, spiritually speaking, from the Jewish nation
 - We owe our very spiritual life to the Jewish people
- As does Ruth, who in faith and love recognized her relationship with this Jewish woman was her only lifeline to the God of Israel
 - And we are Ruth
 - Gentiles spiritually attached to Israel by our faith in the Redeemer of Israel
 - As Paul says in Ephesians

Eph. 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Eph. 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,

Eph. 2:15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace,

Eph. 2:16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

Eph. 2:17 and He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near;

Eph. 2:18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

- The Church and Israel are united by faith in a common God
 - Paul is not saying that the Church and Israel become the same entity or that we replace Israel
 - Paul clearly teaches here and elsewhere that Israel remains distinct from the Church
 - Even as believing Jews are welcomed into the Body of Christ today, yet still a nation of Israel remains on earth
- One of the best pieces of evidence for the ongoing distinction between Israel and the Church is the symbology in the story of Ruth itself
 - When Ruth comes to know and follow Naomi's God, do Ruth and Naomi merge into a single person?
 - Or does Ruth replace Naomi in the story, pushing her out of the way?
 - No
 - The two remain distinct but are united spiritually by faith and love for the same God
- For the Jew, the idea of Gentiles sharing in the promises God gave to Israel is very difficult to accept
 - Jews long rejected the possibility that a Gentile could ever share in the blessings of the kingdom
 - And this difficulty is even reflected in the story of Ruth
 - Consider how Naomi at first resisted Ruth's desire to follow her home to Israel
 - Only after Ruth pledged her devotion to Naomi's side in v.18 did Naomi relent
 - Similarly, the Jewish apostles of the early church struggled with the same idea
 - At one point, the apostles gathered to decide whether God intended to allow Gentiles to enter into the Church

Acts 15:6 The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.

Acts 15:7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

Acts 15:8 "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us;

Acts 15:9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

- It's strange for us to consider that the early church leaders doubted whether Gentiles were part of God's plan
- That's how radical this step was for the Jewish people
- That's how radical Ruth's decision to return is, even in her day
- But now the time has come for Naomi to return and Ruth to accompany her

- That time is the time of the barley harvest

Ruth 1:22 So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

- The time of harvest becomes the backdrop for the events of chapter 2
- Next week, we return to our first story, to Naomi and Ruth again
- We learn what happens as they come back to a land of plenty, yet without husbands

- After nearly ten years spent outside her land, Naomi returns to Bethlehem
 - She comes back a widow, bitter, fragile and desperate
 - Her family plot of land has been abandoned for nearly a decade
 - It's probably overrun with weeds
 - It no longer produces an income or even enough to feed a widow
 - In contrast to her bitterness, the land is enjoying a renewed strength
 - In v.22 of chapter 1 we learned that it was the beginning of the barley harvest
 - The barley harvest begins in April, so it's springtime
 - After a period of drought and famine, once again the land is producing and life is good
 - Except for Naomi and Ruth, who must find a way to survive without a provider
 - Despite being poor widows together, Naomi and Ruth are actually quite different
 - Naomi is mourning the loss of what she once had
 - And she has no prospect of recovery or so it would seem
 - While Ruth is excited by knowing the Jewish God and the Jewish people
 - She had nothing by comparison in Moab, but now she has access to something far greater than earthly riches
- As we enter chapter 2, let's see how these two women respond to their life in the land

Ruth 2:1 Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

Ruth 2:2 And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

Ruth 2:3 So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

- Chapter 2 opens by introducing us to the next major character in the story, Boaz
 - Boaz is a kinsman, a relative of the family of Naomi and a man of great wealth
 - Apparently, Naomi has traveled back to the general area of her family inheritance, probably intentionally
 - Though she is destitute and has no prospect of finding a husband, she is hoping that her family will take pity on her
 - As the saying goes, charity begins at home
 - The name Boaz means "swift strength" or "quickness" which describes his readiness to serve

- He is called a kinsman, which is a technical term
 - It doesn't just mean he is a relative of Elimelech's
 - The term kinsman describes someone who is eligible according to the Law to perpetuate Elimelech's family line (more on kinsman later)
 - Finally, he's wealthy, which means he's the ideal candidate to assist two poor widows
- So these two women enter the land of Elimelech's family, and as they do they are focused on basic needs
 - Like Maslow's hierarchy predicts, the women must attend to food and protection before all else
 - The need for food is obvious
 - They have no source of income and they cannot produce their own food over night
 - So they must find a way to eat to survive
 - But secondly, they must find a source of protection
 - Just as today, two women living on the streets or in the fields were very vulnerable
 - Can you imagine how terrified they must have felt in the middle of a dark night as they heard men moving to and fro?
 - So Ruth being the younger, takes the initiative
 - In keeping with her promise to Naomi, she seeks to find a way to provide for both of them
 - And under their circumstances, the only choice they had was to beg
 - So Ruth asks Naomi's permission to glean from the fields
- The Lord in His mercy had made a provision for widows and the poor under the Law
 - The Lord told Israel to harvest their fields in a particular fashion so as to ensure the needy were able to find provision in an honorable way

Lev. 19:9 'Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest.

Lev. 19:10 'Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the Lord your God.

- Harvesting grain is a multistep process
- First, men took long sharp blades attached to long poles and swung them through the stalks of grain to cut them to the ground
- Then others collected the stalks into bundles

- Then the bundles were carried to a threshing floor where the fruit was separated from the husks usually by treading of oxen
- Finally the grain was winnowed to separate it from the chaff
- In Leviticus, the Lord directed that those collecting the grain from the field should be intentionally sloppy
 - As the men cut down the stalks, they typically swung the sickle in a circular fashion, cutting arcs of grain with each pass
 - As they reached the corner of the land, their swing would typically leave behind a triangular patch of uncut standing grain
 - The Law told Israel to leave those triangles behind in the field
- The point was to leave something for the stranger or the needy
 - The stranger referred to anyone sojourning in the land of Israel who did not have ownership in the land
 - Someone like Ruth
 - And the needy referred to anyone in Israel who was in need due to unfortunate circumstances like widowhood
 - Someone like Naomi
- It's interesting that the Lord commanded the people to leave the grain standing
 - He didn't say harvest everything but then give a donation to the needy
 - Instead, He commanded that the needy be given opportunity to harvest for themselves
 - The point was to make sure the needy and the stranger didn't suffer the humiliation of taking a handout
 - Instead, they were permitted to harvest for themselves
 - They had the dignity of working for what they received
 - Even as they harvested from someone else's field
 - In a sense, they were hired workers for the day and they were receiving the fruit of their own labor
 - This is exactly what Ruth is hoping to do, and she appears to know this custom in Israel, probably because Naomi has explained it to her
 - We can safely assume that Naomi discussed her plans with Ruth during their journey back to Israel
 - She would have told Ruth that they might be able to survive if they can find a land owner willing to obey Leviticus 19
 - This is no small step of faith, because remember this is the time of Judges
 - It was possible, and maybe even likely, that the Jews in that day would have ignored the law and denied Naomi and Ruth their provision in the Harvest
 - Because everyone did what was right in their own eyes anyway

- Back in v.2 Ruth asks Naomi if she can begin the gleaning and Naomi gives her agreement
 - She probably asked permission because she was taking a risk
 - Ruth is taking a risk in going out into the fields by herself
 - And Naomi is taking a risk by letting her go and to remain alone in the fields
 - But they have to separate if they are going to survive
 - So Ruth sets about following the reapers in the field
 - As a Moabitess, Ruth obviously knows no one in Israel other than Naomi
 - So as she goes from field to field, she has no idea where she is headed
 - She gleans for a while in one location and moves on when she runs out of opportunity
 - This is hard work, all day in the fields, exposed to the sun and without water
 - But by the providence of the Lord, Ruth finds her way to the field of Boaz
 - From Ruth's point of view, this is just another field
 - The writer says in v.3 that she happened into Boaz's field
 - But the writer doesn't mean it's an accident or that it wasn't according to God's purpose
 - On the contrary, the writer means Ruth herself didn't know what she was doing
 - But God certainly knew
- As she sets about working in the field, the master of the field comes on the scene

Ruth 2:4 Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, “May the Lord be with you.” And they said to him, “May the Lord bless you.”

Ruth 2:5 Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?”

Ruth 2:6 The servant in charge of the reapers replied, “She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab.

Ruth 2:7 “And she said, ‘Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.’ Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while.”

- Boaz comes to his field from Bethlehem
 - As he enters his estate, he immediately takes notice of the young woman gleaning in his land
 - The timing of Boaz's arrival further testifies to the Lord's hand in all these circumstances
 - On the very day that Ruth happens into Boaz's field, Boaz happens to arrive back from Bethlehem

- Every detail of the story is pointing us to the Lord at work
- As Boaz returns home he greets his servants by saying “May the Lord be with you”
 - To which they reply the same
 - What do we make of this simple exchange?
 - You may not even take notice of it, but don’t overlook it!
- Remember, this story is set in the time of Judges
 - In this day and age, the people of Israel were not thinking of the Lord, generally speaking
 - We saw that clearly when we studied the book of Judges
- So to have a man during this time greeting even his servants in this way tells us something about his character
 - Boaz is a godly man whose mind is directed toward the Lord and His will
 - This detail by itself is a striking contrast with everything else we’ve seen in the time of Judges
 - The hypocrite will display his piety only before men of privilege or wealth or power
 - Because in doing so, they seek to make an impression and curry favor to some advantage
 - The rest of the time, they revert to their true nature, lording over the poor and taking advantage of the weak
 - But a truly godly man or woman will practice their godliness before even the lowest of the culture
 - As James tells us:

James 1:27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

- James says that true religion...true worship of God...is seen in serving the underprivileged
- Like widows and orphans who have nothing to give us in return for our investment in them...groups that convey no status upon us
- Why take time to invest in their lives? Because you love God
- So when Boaz turns his attention to Ruth, a poor Moabite widow gleaning in his field, we see him practicing true, undefiled religion
 - And this detail, together with his greeting, tells us Boaz is a truly godly man
 - He is godly before his servants
 - And he takes opportunities to serve the less fortunate around him

- This is just the sort of man Naomi and Ruth need
- Boaz's servant goes on to explain that Ruth was the Moabite related to Naomi and she had asked to glean in the field
 - Moreover the servant explains that this woman has been working in the day
 - She arrived early and she worked hard through the hottest part of the day
 - And only now she has taken refuge for a time in the house
 - The servant's report of Ruth tells us something about Ruth's character
 - Ruth was a woman of high character
 - Though she was destitute and seeking the generosity of strangers, nevertheless she maintained a desire to bless others
 - She worked hard for her support
 - She didn't expect her assistance to simply fall into her lap as if she was entitled
 - She recognized that the law made provision for her but only if she worked
 - Ruth's character is the perfect compliment to Boaz
 - Boaz is an example of someone who displays godliness in times of plenty
 - He was blessed with much and yet he approached the needs of others with compassion as a service to God
 - And on the flip side Ruth was in need yet she sought for assistance with an attitude of industriousness and faithful service
 - Her godliness was evident in her desire to bless others in return for their charity, as Paul said to the Thessalonians:

2Th. 3:10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.

2Th. 3:11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.

2Th. 3:12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.

2Th. 3:13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.

2Th. 3:14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.

2Th. 3:15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

- So Ruth's disciplined, hardworking attitude is evidence of her godly character
 - And this is an attractive quality for Boaz
 - But Boaz's interest in Ruth goes beyond her attractiveness
 - He would have also been intrigued by her origins
 - You may remember Boaz's mother, Rahab

- She was also a Gentile woman who found refuge in the God of Israel
- Rahab gave assistance to the spies of Israel as they entered the land under Joshua
- So they spared her life and welcomed her into the people of God
- We can say that Rahab, like Ruth, was attached to Israel by God's grace, and in that way she came to know God
 - In fact, Rahab is in the line to the Messiah
 - And so Boaz is a Jewish man prospering among the people of God because someone granted a Gentile woman mercy
 - And so as he looks upon another Gentile woman, one with admirable qualities, he must have been thinking about his own family
- So Boaz gives his servant particular instructions

Ruth 2:8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids.

Ruth 2:9 "Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw."

Ruth 2:10 Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

Ruth 2:11 Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know.

Ruth 2:12 "May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge."

Ruth 2:13 Then she said, "I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."

- Boaz approaches Ruth as she sits in the house and calls her my daughter
 - The term is a tender way to address the young widow
 - She is vulnerable and probably concerned that someone might take advantage of her
 - But now the master of the house comes to her and calls her "daughter"
 - In this context, the term means a maidservant, a woman employed as a servant
 - So Boaz is placing Ruth under his protection in his house

- He tells her she is to remain in his house, following his gleaners as they work his fields
- She need not look elsewhere for a provision, because Boaz will endure that she finds all she needs in his home
- It's a promise of provision
- Secondly, he assures Ruth that no one will touch her, that is no one will harm her
 - This is the first anti-sexual harassment policy and it's found in the Bible
 - Boaz probably wasn't expecting his servants to attack Ruth in the field, though that did happen to women like Ruth
 - It's unlikely that a godly man like Boaz would have employed such men in the first place
 - But just in case anyone were inclined to take advantage of Ruth's vulnerability, Boaz has put everyone on notice not to even think about it
 - The main point of his comment was to reassure Ruth
 - It's a promise of protection
- Finally, Boaz says Ruth is to draw water with the servants
 - Access to water in the hot, dry lands of Judah was of particular importance
 - Someone like Ruth would have been forced to find water in open pools, or perhaps a stream if one were available
 - Such water was likely to be dirty and water-borne sickness was an ever-present concern for the poor
 - Or if she could access a well, she would have to do the difficult work of drawing up water for herself
- But Boaz sets those concerns aside by assuring Ruth may drink the clean well water in the jars filled by Boaz's servants
 - Not only will she have ready access to water, but she will have it without the backbreaking works usually required
 - More importantly, she has fresh living water that won't run out and won't make her sick
 - It's a promise of privilege
- Boaz has stepped into the desperate life of a Gentile widow with promises of provision, protection and privilege, and it stuns Ruth
 - She bows in respect to Boaz and asks how could this happen to me?
 - Specifically, she asks why she has found favor in Boaz's eyes
 - The Hebrew word for favor is *chen*, which can also be translated grace
 - Ruth asks why did you show me such underserved kindness?
 - Boaz answers her by explaining what he has heard
 - Ruth's testimony has preceded her

- He says I know what you did for Naomi and her family
- He knows she has sacrificed her family and way of life to help her mother-in-law, Naomi, who was a relative of Boaz's family
- This act of sacrifice alone would have been worthy of some recompense
- But Boaz was even more impressed by Ruth's commitment to join herself to a people and a God she didn't know
 - He points to Ruth's choice to seek refuge under the wings of the God of Israel
 - And Boaz says may the Lord reward her for her faith
 - In other words, Boaz is acting on behalf of the Lord to bring the rewards that belong to any child of God by faith
- Finally, Ruth comes to understand that Boaz was serious
 - She acknowledges that she has received grace and is amazed to have it
 - She has been comforted by these acts of kindness
 - And she embraces her new position as a maidservant in the home
 - Nevertheless, Ruth is conscious that she isn't like the other maidservants
 - She's mindful that she is an outsider who has been brought into the home
 - Her recognition is humility
 - And by her humility she magnifies the master's mercy and kindness
 - Boaz's choice to favor Ruth with the privileges of a maidservant was all the more remarkable when we remember that Ruth was a stranger
- The Lord has united a godly Jewish master with a godly Gentile woman in the midst of an ungodly culture and done it by means of grace
 - It doesn't take much effort for us to see ourselves in this story
 - As we drive deeper in to this story, we'll come to understand that Boaz pictures Christ in many ways
 - But already we can recognize that Boaz's favor bestowed upon Ruth is a beautiful representation of Christ's grace given to us
 - We were strangers to God, working in the field of the world, just getting by
 - We weren't looking for the Lord
 - But then one day the Lord took notice of us
 - He came to us, introduced by His servant
 - The unnamed servant in this story is a picture of the Holy Spirit
 - In fact, when a servant remains unnamed in scripture, it's often intended to picture the Holy Spirit working behind the scenes
 - In this case, the servant brought Boaz and Ruth together
 - But notice the spirit brought Christ to Ruth, not the other way around
 - And then as Christ comes to us by way of His Spirit, He brings us His grace

- Where before we were strangers, Christ now joins us to the house of God, making us His servants
- He promises provision now and in the kingdom
- He promises us protection from the penalty of our sin and the power of death
- And He grants us privilege as adopted sons and daughters
- He gives us living water
- He does all these things for us before we even opened our mouth to acknowledge Him
 - Before we bowed before Him, before we called Him Lord
 - He was lifting us up and grants us His favor
 - And we see all this represented beautifully in the story of Boaz and Ruth
- But what of Naomi? And how do these events fit into our second story of Israel and the Church? We'll explore that next week

- We're turning back to the hidden story of End Times found in the book of Ruth
 - Last time we studied vs.1-13 in chapter 2...let's reread them

Ruth 2:1 Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

Ruth 2:2 And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

Ruth 2:3 So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

Ruth 2:4 Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May the Lord be with you." And they said to him, "May the Lord bless you."

Ruth 2:5 Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?"

Ruth 2:6 The servant in charge of the reapers replied, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab."

Ruth 2:7 "And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while."

Ruth 2:8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids."

Ruth 2:9 "Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw."

Ruth 2:10 Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

Ruth 2:11 Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know."

Ruth 2:12 "May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge."

Ruth 2:13 Then she said, "I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."

- Naomi and Ruth returned to the land in a time of harvest
 - This will be a time of testimony in contrast to the prior years of judgment

- After they arrived, Ruth began to seek support for herself and Naomi by working in a field collecting leftover grain
- She happens to land in the field of Boaz, a kinsman of Naomi
- After spending all day gathering the leftover grain for herself and Naomi, Ruth meets Boaz
 - He extends her great kindnesses
 - And commits himself to protecting Ruth as she gathers
- We've already studied how Ruth pictures the Gentiles attracted to the God of Israel as God promised would happen
 - And last lesson we saw how Ruth's time gathering in the field reflects the time we were once without hope in this world
 - In fact, in Matt 13:38 Jesus refers to the world metaphorically as a field
 - We sought our provision working in that world but it was work without hope
 - And by our own hands, we accomplished a certain degree of success
 - Just as Ruth is working hard in chapter 2
 - But it can't give her what she truly seeks: security
 - Then Boaz appears in verse 4, and with him the opportunity for true rest
- The next major detail is Boaz, and the relationship that develops between Boaz and Ruth
 - This detail offers us an opportunity to draw a new parallel to God's plan for Israel and the Church
 - As you probably know, Boaz, the kinsman redeemer in this story, is a type or picture of our Lord, Jesus Christ
 - If this is a new thought for you, don't worry
 - We will allow that picture to develop as we proceed through the rest of the story
 - But for now it's enough to recognize that Boaz is the hero, the one who rescues both Naomi and Ruth from their circumstances
 - And through this relationship, we will learn something about the way God prepares a Bride for His Son
 - We already noted that Ruth, the Gentile, has been drawn to Boaz's field, as though by chance
 - Yet we know that chance had nothing to do with it
 - This was the field God intended Ruth to work
 - And then we notice that relationship between Ruth and Boaz begins not because Ruth took note of Boaz
 - Ruth had no idea whose field she was in
 - But rather, Boaz takes notice of Ruth
 - And Boaz turns to his servant seeking an introduction to Ruth

- That servant pictured the Holy Spirit, Who introduces us to Christ by causing us to be born again through faith
- So at this point in our second story, we have Christ, pictured by Boaz, having introduced himself to his future Bride, the Gentile Church, pictured by Ruth
 - And even before Ruth was aware of Boaz, Boaz had already made plans for Ruth
 - Boaz began his first conversation to Ruth by calling her my daughter
 - He welcomed her into his household
 - Secondly, he gives her access to his field indefinitely, without condition
 - Third, he makes her one of his maids
 - A maid was the female equivalent of a servant under his household
 - And fourth, Boaz tells her to work with His other servants who will protect her and care for her needs
 - When we looked at this last time, we noted these were all grants of Boaz's grace
 - And they clearly picture the grace the church receives once we enter into the New Covenant by faith
 - The Church enters into a relationship with our Redeemer on a moment and in a manner He determines
 - Before we know it, we're given provision, protection and privilege
- But it also comes with an expectation of service
 - Notice that Boaz made Ruth a servant in his house
 - He didn't award her a bundle of money so she wouldn't have to work anymore
 - He didn't tell her to just enjoy the afternoon on the couch in the house playing X-Box and eating a box of Oreos
 - He still expected her to work everyday as a servant in his field
 - This is the call of every disciple of Christ...we work to serve the Master who has come to us and given us protection, provision and privilege
 - Serving Him is easy compared to the work we knew before
 - Just as Ruth worked harder for less, before she knew Boaz
 - As John said:

1John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.

1John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

1John 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.

- The central error of the prosperity gospel heresy is overlooking that God has purposely

left us in a state of need, so that we are motivated to serve

- Christ assures us that our service will be rewarding, both now and in eternity
- That work comes with promises and it will provide us rest
- We will have rest from the worries of eternity, of sin and judgment, of the endless rat race of seeking to please men
- But we must work nonetheless

Matt. 11:28 “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

Matt. 11:29 “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and You will find rest for your souls.

Matt. 11:30 “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

- Furthermore, when Boaz responded to Ruth’s questions, he told her in v.11 that he had observed her actions
 - Boaz mentioned three things about Ruth that have parallels to Christ and the Church
 - First, he notes Ruth’s association with Naomi
 - Naomi we know pictures Israel in this story: widowed, under judgment, seeking rest in her land
 - Every believer enters into a relationship with Christ because of Israel
 - We could say Jesus comes to us because of His relationship to Israel
 - Because of Jewish scriptures, the Jewish covenant and the Jewish Messiah
 - Secondly, Boaz mentions Ruth’s willingness to leave her family
 - Just as it would have been impossible for Ruth to know Boaz without first leaving behind Moab, so it is for every disciple of Jesus
 - Our opportunity to know and follow Jesus begins with a call to repent and leave behind the world and its values and priorities

John 17:16 “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

- Sometimes that will mean distancing ourselves from unbelieving family members if they force us to make that choice

Matt. 10:37 “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

- More often, it means leaving behind earthly accomplishments, earthly pursuits, earthly identities so that we may live to please Christ

- The Apostle Paul had much to lose by becoming a disciple of Jesus
- Yet here's what he said about his loss

Phil. 3:7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Phil. 3:8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

- Ruth traded everything she knew to gain something she had never seen
- So it must be for disciples today...let go of this world so you can take hold of what God has waiting over the horizon
- Finally, Boaz commends Ruth for attaching herself to a people she didn't know
 - Ruth threw her lot in with a despised people, the Israelites
 - She did so because she wanted to know Yahweh
 - Here she pictures the Church again
 - Every Christian has been grafted into the promises made to Israel
 - In a sense, we've thrown our lot in with Israel
 - We reject the false gods of other cultures
 - We acknowledge the one true God is the One Who revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
- As we leave the world behind, we find new rewards to replace what we once valued
 - Notice in v11 Boaz told Ruth that ultimately the Lord would reward Ruth for her kindness
 - Boaz's kindness was merely a downpayment on that future reward
 - Here again we find a parallel between Christ and the Church
 - The promises Christ made to us are merely a downpayment on a heavenly reward
 - We will have a measure of reward now, including gifts of the Spirit, provision in one way or another, and the privilege of serving Christ

Mark 10:29 Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake,

Mark 10:30 but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

- As Jesus said, our full reward awaits eternal living in Heaven, where the Lord will recompense us for the deeds done in the body, good or bad
 - We never want to lose that perspective
 - What we have now is merely a foretaste of things to come
 - Don't try to make it more than it is, otherwise you're likely to trade something earthly for something heavenly
 - And that's always a bad trade
- We left off in chapter 2 at v13, so let's go forward a little further today
 - The next verse adds one more important parallel we need to consider

Ruth 2:14 At mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.” So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left.

- Boaz ends their conversation with a meal
- Meals had greater significance in ancient eastern cultures than our meals usually do today
 - It was a high honor to host someone for a meal in your home
 - And meals were commonly used to seal solemn agreements or covenants
- Meals in our culture are increasingly informal
 - Families used to dress up for the evening meal, and not just on Sundays
 - Today we consider a meal to be formal if the food isn't served on a stick
 - Families barely sit down together much less attach significance to a meal
- I knew dinner had lost its importance in our culture when a friend told me about a practice of eating dinner at Sam's Club or Cosco
 - He said he often had a seven course meal at these clubs
 - I told him I didn't remember seeing a fine dining restaurant inside the club
 - He said it's not a restaurant...he visits all the food samplers working the aisles in the clubs
- He starts in the appetizer aisle then moves to the soups and seafood, followed by BBQ and pizza
 - He finishes off with the dessert aisle and sports drinks
 - He says if you arrive at the right time in the afternoon, you can be there for the shift change and take another lap for “seconds”
 - Meals just don't mean what they once did
- But meals were important events in this day

- A meal was often an integral part of establishing covenants or new relationships
 - We can see that something important is happening in this meal when we look at the details
 - Notice something interesting in verse 14?
- At the end of v14, we see that the evening meal was roasted grain
 - The meal was actually the roasted grain
 - Ruth ate this grain and was satisfied
- Yet earlier it says she was given bread to dip in vinegar
 - The Hebrew word for vinegar here is a word that means sour wine
 - So before the meal actually began, Boaz instructs Ruth to take bread and dip it in wine and eat
 - This wasn't an appetizer
 - It was a ceremonial act before meal itself
- This ceremonial moment sealed the promises Boaz has made to Ruth
 - Boaz has entered into a covenant with Ruth
 - A covenant is a lifelong binding obligation
 - It ended only with the death of those who make it
 - Some covenants place obligations on both parties, while others only place requirements on one party
 - In this case it's clear that only Boaz has obligated himself in this covenant
 - Ruth had nothing to offer Boaz in any case
 - And all the promises have been made from Boaz to Ruth
 - So Boaz is voluntarily entering into a lifelong binding promise to protect Ruth
 - Clearly, Boaz is thinking well beyond this harvest season
 - He has determined he will be there for Ruth for the rest of her life
 - When the harvest ended and the opportunity to glean in the field ended for a season, Boaz would still be there taking care of Ruth
 - That's why we say Ruth has truly found rest!
- Once again, in all these details God has placed markers to draw our attention to His plan for the Gentile Church
 - As Christ found us, he granted us protection, provision and privilege and He sealed these promises in a one-way covenant in His blood
 - The covenant places burdens on Christ but grants us His grace
 - It comes with no conditions
 - The certainty of our covenant with Christ is based entirely on His faithfulness
 - And He who has promised is faithful

2Tim. 2:13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

- Which is why Paul expressed such confidence in our future in Christ

Phil. 1:6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

Rom. 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,
Rom. 8:39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Understanding that our covenant with Christ is based on His work and His faithfulness explains why we have eternal security in our salvation
 - We aren't eternally secure because we have the strength
 - Or even because we are forgiven of sin
 - It's simply because our covenant with Christ is entirely a one-way agreement
 - Just as Ruth could rest knowing Boaz has made his promises, so can we rest knowing Jesus has promised to return and take us home
 - This is our source of rest while we wait

Matt. 11:28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

Matt. 11:29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and You will find rest for your souls.

- Finally, as we enter into this covenant, we commemorate it through a ceremonial meal just as Boaz did with Ruth
 - Boaz took Ruth aside and instructed her to eat of bread and wine to signify their new relationship, a relationship Boaz extended to Ruth
 - This moment pictures the Church participating in the Last Supper meal
 - Just as Boaz instructed Ruth, Jesus has instructed us
 - And just as their partaking of bread and wine was ritual rather than a full meal
 - So is our communion meal a ritual
 - We eat bread and wine (or grape juice) to remember the covenant in Christ's body and blood
 - That covenant brought us into a new relationship as it did Ruth
 - And it formed a new relationship

- In our case, the communion meal is a reenactment of the meal Jesus shared with His disciples
 - Jesus couldn't put the entire Church around that one table, since most had yet to be born
 - So He instructed the church to repeat the meal regularly until He returns
- But there is yet one more detail that connects these characters and our story with Christ
 - Boaz's relationship with Ruth and this covenant meal take place during the barley harvest, as we learned at the start of this chapter
 - The barley harvest happens in the spring, in the months around the Jewish Passover
 - And of course, Jesus' death on the cross happened on Passover, since He was the Passover Lamb
 - Therefore, on God's prophetic time clock, we can say that this moment between Ruth and Boaz is a picture of the start of the Church age
 - The Messiah, pictured by Boaz, has entered into a relationship with a Gentile woman, who pictures the Church
 - It begins soon after Passover
 - And it begins with the Last Supper meal, when the Church first dipped bread into wine, with Christ
 - That detail explains why Ruth is here alone without Naomi
 - The Jewish woman pictures the nation as a whole
 - Naomi isn't in the scene at this point, because the Jewish people largely aren't a part of the Church
 - They are still back in the field, the world, without Boaz and without Ruth
 - They are still desperate and hungry
 - Meanwhile, Ruth is secure and in a covenant relationship with the master of the house
 - And this master happens to be a kinsman of Naomi
 - Just as our Lord is a Jewish Messiah, a Kinsman to all Israel
- This one-sided relationship will continue for a while, just as the age of the Church lasts for a time
 - But eventually the time for the church will give way to a time for Israel
 - And that's where our story is going too
 - Next time we finish chapter 2 and enter into chapter 3
 - Where we see how the age begins to come to its end in preparation for Naomi to find her rest too

- Our study of of Ruth and Naomi and Boaz marches onward
 - Now that Ruth has received promises from Boaz, she's enjoying a new spirit of optimism in the land
 - She has a grant of protection and privilege
 - She has reason for optimism
 - And she just enjoyed a full meal probably for the first time in a while
 - But as we noted last week, these two individuals are moving forward without Naomi, or so it would seem
 - While Ruth has benefited from Boaz's kindness, Naomi was not a part of the covenant with Boaz
 - Still, Ruth has attached herself to Naomi
 - So Naomi's opportunity for rest is closely connected to Ruth's situation
 - And speaking of Ruth and Boaz, theirs is an interesting relationship to say the least
 - He's committed himself to Ruth but what are his intentions?
 - Single men don't casually establish this kind of covenant with single women
 - Clearly, Boaz has his eye on Ruth
 - Yet he has given no indication he intends to move forward
 - So we're searching to understand why Boaz hasn't taken the next step
- In Chapter 2:14 we learned that Boaz had concluded their meeting with a covenant meal
 - Let's return to that point

Ruth 2:14 At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left.

Ruth 2:15 When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her.

Ruth 2:16 "Also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."

Ruth 2:17 So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

Ruth 2:18 She took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took it out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied.

- After the covenant ritual, Boaz invited Ruth to eat roasted grain
 - The first thing you should notice is that Boaz served Ruth
 - Yet Boaz just made Ruth a servant in his home

- It was surprising to say the least that the master of the house would be serving one of his servants
- I'm sure Ruth was shocked, though I wonder if others in the house would have been surprised
 - I wonder if Boaz's character was well known among his servants
 - I doubt this was the first time Boaz reversed roles in this way
 - So I suspect Boaz was frequently a man of kindness and consideration of others
 - Nevertheless, Boaz is a remarkable and unusual master to say the least
- Next we see that he also honors her with a huge portion of grain as well, so much that Ruth couldn't eat it all and had some left over
 - You may remember the story in Genesis where Joseph invites his brothers to eat at his table in Egypt
 - Joseph purposely reversed the norms of his day by giving the youngest son, Benjamin, far more food than he gave the rest of the sons
 - Joseph did this to test his brothers' hearts to see if they would be jealous of their younger brother's good fortune
- Similarly, Boaz gave Ruth this excess portion for a reason
 - It was not an accident or simply a miscalculation nor is it an insignificant detail in the story
 - Boaz is working behind the scenes to bless Naomi as well
 - He expects Ruth to take the excess and share it with her mother-in-law
- But here again, notice how quietly he does his work
 - He is working through Ruth to bless Naomi
 - He could have told Ruth to bring Naomi
 - But instead, he leaves it to Ruth to transfer the blessing to Naomi
- Immediately, Boaz begins to fulfill his promises to protect Ruth
 - Ruth is given shelter for the night in Boaz's home, probably in the maids' quarters
 - It was too late in the day for Ruth to walk back to Naomi
 - She would have been traveling after nightfall which was dangerous for anyone, let alone a single woman
 - And since Boaz has assured Ruth of safety, he can't let her leave
 - Then when Ruth arose the next morning to continue her gleaning work in Boaz's field, Boaz fulfills his promise to provide for her
 - First, Boaz directs his reapers to keep an eye out for this woman as she works
 - In v.15 Boaz tells his servants to allow Ruth freedom to work in the field as she collected the leavings
 - This command ensures that no one inhibits Ruth's work

- Workers can sometimes compete for the best place in the field as they go about their work
 - Consideration is usually the first casualty
 - Or more often, a worker would simply find the presence of a woman beggar like Ruth to be a nuisance who gets in their way
 - So Boaz ensures that the servants know that Ruth has equal right to be in the field
- Furthermore, Boaz goes a step further by giving Ruth an advantage in her work
 - First, remember the law allowed widows to glean where the reaping had already happened and in the standing grain in the corners of the field
 - Essentially, widows could obtain the leftovers
 - That would give a woman enough to eat daily, but it wasn't easy work or particularly fulfilling
 - A woman would have to bend over all day picking through old stalks on the ground to find a good one here or there
 - And she competed with other widows
 - Think of it like an Xtreme Easter egg hunt, where the loser has a risk of dying of starvation
 - But for Ruth, Boaz tells his servants she is welcome to glean in the standing grain even before it's been cut down by the reapers
 - Obviously, it's going to be a lot easier for Ruth to gather grain under those circumstances
 - Now's she's guaranteed to find success and plenty of it everyday
 - In fact, I imagine the servants would have had to encourage Ruth to venture into the standing grain to gather it since it was against the rules normally
 - I doubt Ruth would have dared to do it on her own
 - And that's the point
 - Boaz is fulfilling his promise to provide for her and secure her rest
 - In a sense, he's doing the work for her, or at least he's made her work far easier
 - From Ruth's perspective, she's put in the time and effort and she's seeing a reward
 - But in reality, she's being carried along by Boaz's kindness, experiencing a degree of success far beyond her abilities
 - Boaz has taken away her worry, uncertainty and fear...but not her need to serve in the work
 - Ruth will still work, but she's going to find her work easier and the rewards of that work to be even greater and without fear of failure
 - Boaz is blessing Ruth behind the scenes, making these accommodations without taking away Ruth's dignity in the work

- What a joy this work will be for Ruth!
- But Boaz goes even a step further
 - He instructs his servants to purposely pull out some of the grain previously collected and bound by the gleaners and leave it for her
 - They were to surreptitiously scatter this grain on the ground where it would be easily found by Ruth
 - Once again Boaz is going well beyond anything required to assist Ruth in the gleaning
 - Yet he's doing it without leading her to feel uncomfortable because of his charity
 - So each day for about six weeks, Ruth goes out into the fields and enjoys a bountiful harvest
 - It would be like a fisherman going out day after day and no matter where he dropped his hook, he caught something every time
 - She must have looked forward to each day of work
 - It could be hard at times, certainly, but it was rewarding all the same
 - And each day brought it's own reward
- We remember last week how Boaz pictured the Lord's call for us to serve Him
 - And here we see again how Boaz pictures what it's like to work for our Master
 - Ruth's work in the field is a picture of the Church working to serve the Lord Who brought us into a relationship through His covenant
 - He called us all to serve Him, and He told us that the work will be easy and joyful
 - Ruth saw her work achieve unexpected bounty, so it will be in serving the Lord
 - You and I have been called to make Christ's priorities our priorities
 - To work in His field, not in the world's field, so to speak
 - And He says if we devote ourselves to that pursuit, it will be such easy work
 - What kind of work are we talking about? Literally, anything and everything
 - It's not just those of us in full-time ministry or missionaries or even church volunteers
 - We're also talking about mothers who serve Christ in the home
 - Fathers who serve Christ leading their families
 - Godly children representing Christ in their schools
 - Godly men and women representing Christ in all levels of society
 - Funding ministries with their personal resources
 - Praying for the needs of others
 - Giving time and attention to those who are lonely or hurting
 - Serving in the work the Lord assigns to each of us...

- As we do this work, the Lord is preparing the field to ensure we are going to reap some kind of harvest
 - And He literally instructs His servants to help us
 - Just as Boaz's servants followed Ruth around and made her work easier, so do the Lord's servants
 - What servants are we talking about?
 - Who does Jesus have following us, throwing grain in our path so to speak?
 - The writer of Hebrews says that the Lord's angels were created for this very purpose
 - Speaking of angels he says:

Heb. 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

- The angelic realm is working behind the scene to make sure our work is productive and easy
- To ensure we gain results far beyond what we could accomplish on our own
- And just as Boaz's servants helped Ruth without her knowing it, angels work outside our notice as well
- We can't see them or even how they work, but we can see the result
 - When you step out to serve Christ...when you make a commitment to follow His word or take on some new challenge...
 - Expect Him to show up
 - But you won't see the help coming before you take that step
 - And you may hesitate to step out because you can't see it, but that's why we call it faith
- Like Ruth, there could be no gathering unless, and until, she entered the field
 - Ruth couldn't see the miraculous provision of Boaz's grace by staying in the house
 - She had to begin the work
 - And so do we...test the Lord...see if He won't keep His promise to make the work fruitful
 - It will still be work, but what a joy the work will be
- And we can see the impact of Boaz's grace on Ruth's first day of harvest
 - In v.17 Ruth we're told Ruth collects an ephah of grain
 - An ephah is roughly a bushel of grain or about 35 liters
 - That's 46 pounds (21kg) of barley grain
 - She probably had trouble carrying the grain home
 - In fact, she probably collected just an ephah and not more because that was

limit of what she could carry!

- I can't tell you what the average widow would normally collect on an average day scavenging in the field
 - But I assure you it was a lot less than 46 lbs!
 - So of course Naomi was stunned to see what Ruth brought home
 - Naomi had probably been praying to just receive a small sack or so of grain
 - Perhaps enough for a meal for the two of them
- Instead, Ruth appears with a weeks worth of food
 - And Ruth also brings the leftover boiled grain from the previous night's dinner
 - So not only does Naomi have a measure of security in the raw grain
 - But she also received the immediate joy of a meal
- So Ruth has fulfilled her pledge to be a blessing to Naomi
 - She accomplished this because Boaz has fulfilled his pledge to be a blessing to Ruth
 - And this is true because Boaz is related to Naomi and in covenant with Ruth
 - So we can say that Boaz was the means to both women receiving a blessing
- So then we see Naomi's reaction

Ruth 2:19 Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz."

Ruth 2:20 Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the Lord who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead." Again Naomi said to her, "The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives."

- Naomi asks the obvious questions
 - Where did you get this and who made it possible?
 - Naomi understood immediately that there was no way Ruth could gain so much grain under normal circumstances
 - Something unusual happened
 - Ruth tells Naomi the story and when she reveals the man's name, Naomi's eyes must have opened up
 - She recognized the name of Boaz...he was a member of Naomi's extended family
 - So Naomi responds in praise to the Lord
 - She says may the Lord bless Boaz for what he has done

- And then Naomi praises the Lord exclaiming that the Lord has not withdrawn his kindness from the living and the dead
 - She's speaking of the wombs of these women
 - The living refers to Ruth
 - And the dead refers to Naomi
 - Ruth has a "living" womb in the sense that she is still young enough to produce children
 - And producing children was a woman's lifeline in these days
 - An eligible woman who could produce children was still likely to find a husband
 - Because a man's posterity was tied to his offspring
 - In that sense, Ruth is the "living", because she can bring life into the world
 - And likewise, Naomi is the "dead" because she is past child bearing years
 - And therefore, Naomi knows she has zero prospect of ever being married again
 - Which made her all the more desperate and vulnerable
 - But now at this moment, Naomi sees the Lord is working to care for both of them through Boaz's kindness
 - It's obvious the Lord is working to care for Ruth
 - But when Naomi sees the left over grain from dinner, she knows that Boaz is thinking of her too
 - This is all the more credit to Boaz
 - It's obvious why Boaz might have an interest in showing kindness to a young, unmarried woman like Ruth
 - But to extend his kindness through Ruth to Naomi is another thing altogether
 - It says he's truly desiring to do the Lord's work of showing mercy and kindness to the least of Israel
- Naomi tells Ruth at the end of v.20 that Boaz is one of their closest relatives
 - Which leads Ruth to tell Naomi more of the story...

Ruth 2:21 Then Ruth the Moabite said, "Furthermore, he said to me, 'You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.'"

Ruth 2:22 Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, so that others do not fall upon you in another field."

Ruth 2:23 So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

- Ruth says Boaz has instructed her to remain in the field until the end of the harvest
 - To which Naomi gives the most obvious advice that any mother-in-law has ever

offered

- Naomi tells Ruth you should definitely stay there
- Not only will it ensure a good provision for then
- But Naomi expresses concern for what would happen to Ruth should she wander into another property
- Remember, this is the time of Judges
 - Remember what happened to the concubine who was abused by the Benjamites?
 - Historically, women have always been victimized by bad men
 - But in this time in Israel, such abuse was especially bad, or so it seems
- So Ruth stays close to Boaz throughout the barley harvest and up to the next harvest
 - Barley is harvested in the spring around Passover
 - And wheat is harvested about 6 weeks later
 - So Ruth works in Boaz's field for a season or so
 - Until the second harvest
 - But all that while, she has stayed with her mother-in-law
 - Naomi probably is staying on her ancestral land
 - The land hasn't been farmed, since it has been abandoned for 10 years
 - But perhaps some of the homes were still standing
 - Even if they had a roof over their heads, they still depended on Ruth working in the fields
 - Ruth's work provided enough grain to live on and it also became a source of income for the women
 - For a season Ruth has the joy of working in Boaz's field
 - For a season Ruth is blessed with protection and provision
 - And during that same season, Naomi is blessed as well, though from a distance
- But the harvest doesn't last forever
 - So Naomi, foreseeing the harvest time drawing to a close, begins to plan for what will happen next
 - She knows Boaz has made a commitment to Ruth but not to her
 - So she begins to help Ruth cement the relationship
 - And her plan centers on Boaz's connection to Naomi as a kinsman

Ruth 3:1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?"

Ruth 3:2 "Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight.

Ruth 3:3 “Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

Ruth 3:4 “It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do.”

Ruth 3:5 She said to her, “All that you say I will do.”

- Naomi begins by telling Ruth she wants to seek for Naomi to have a more secure future
 - She’s not talking strictly about financial security, though that’s a small part of it
 - She’s talking about obtaining a husband for Ruth
 - This is a two-fold strategy on Naomi’s part
 - She wants Ruth to have a security that (in that day and age) only a husband could provide
 - Secondly, she knows that if Ruth obtains the security of a husband, it will ultimately benefit Naomi as well
 - So Naomi says to Ruth, Boaz is our kinsman
 - I’ve been alluding to the significance of the term kinsman on several occasions, and we need to explain
 - It’s a legal term coming from the Law of Moses
 - In Deuteronomy 25, the Law provides another mercy for a widow
 - Just like the law that required that widows had a way to provide for themselves, this law ensured a posterity for tribes in Israel
 - Here’s what we read

Deut. 25:5 “When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her.

Deut. 25:6 “It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

- If a married man dies before he produced a male heir, the widow of the dead man is given a means to ensure his family name lives on
 - The law required that the unmarried brother of the dead man marry his brother’s widow
 - Then the first male son produced from that marriage would technically be considered the offspring of the dead man
 - When that son was an adult, he would inherit the estate of his deceased

“father” and continue the family name

- The purpose of this law was two-fold
 - First, it provided a second chance for the widowed woman to gain the security and rest of a husband and a son
 - Secondly, it ensured that the dead man’s family name wasn’t cut off from among the tribes of Israel
 - The name given to the man who redeems his brother’s widow is “kinsman”
- This is Ruth’s situation
 - Ruth married a Jewish man who later died without a son
 - As such, she should be redeemed by her deceased husband’s brother
 - But in this case, her husband’s brother has also died
 - So the law required the nearest, unmarried male relative to assume the duty for Ruth
- Naomi is thinking of this very requirement on one evening at the end of the barley harvest
 - Naomi gives Ruth womanly advice on how to trigger Boaz to do the right thing by Ruth
 - When we come back to the study next time, we’ll look at Naomi’s advice and what Naomi expected to see happen
 - And as we explore these events, we’ll return to the prophetic significance of what’s happening

- After a long break, we're ready to start back in our study of Ruth, picking up again in chapter 3
 - We're following the story of two widows seeking rest in the land of Israel
 - One widow is Jewish, one is Gentile
 - Together they represent Israel and the Church
 - And they have met, Boaz, the man willing to care and provide for them
 - For Ruth, Boaz entered into a personal covenant to care for the woman
 - For Naomi, Boaz is discreetly making provision available through Ruth
 - Boaz is a picture of Christ
 - And his relationship with each of these women pictures Christ's relationship with God's chosen people, and with the Gentile Church
 - While Israel has been set aside in a period of judgment, the Church has entered into a relationship with Christ
 - But Israel hasn't been forgotten, so that in a time to come, they will be restored as well
 - These two stories are intertwined in the story of Ruth
 - One story of two widows who work together to obtain the rest they desperately want
 - And a second story about two groups of people who obtain eternal rest by the grace of a common Savior
- As we reached the end of Chapter 2, the season of harvest is coming to an end
 - Ruth has spent the season working in Boaz's field
 - The work has been easy and rewarding because Boaz has made it so
 - And it gave Ruth and Naomi the security they sought
- In these details, we also saw a prophecy of God's plan for Israel and the Church
 - Israel would enter into a period of judgment as a result of her disobedience to the Old Covenant
 - During that time, the nation will experience trial after trial, making the nation weak and reduced in number
 - During that time, the Gentile church would come into a relationship with Israel's Messiah
 - And it would do so through the influence of the Jewish people, through their scriptures and according to their promised covenant
 - Eventually, the time for Israel's judgment would give way to a time of testimony
 - And in that moment, Christ's relationship with both Israel and the Gentile church would change in significant ways
 - Those changes are where we go next in this story
 - Beginning with how Naomi and Ruth's relationship to Boaz changes in Chapter

3

- The harvest season is drawing to a close, and so Naomi's concerns over rest return
 - How will these two widows get by during the long winter?
 - Will Boaz's kindness continue after the harvest is over?
- Not waiting to find out, Naomi launches a plan to help Ruth cement her relationship with Boaz and ensure this season of provision becomes a lifetime of support

Ruth 3:1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?"

Ruth 3:2 "Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight.

Ruth 3:3 "Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

Ruth 3:4 "It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do."

Ruth 3:5 She said to her, "All that you say I will do."

- Naomi's plan centers on Boaz's role as the kinsman to Naomi
 - Boaz is Elimelech's relative and so, according to the Law, he's the man expected to rescue Naomi's family from widowhood
 - But as we learned in past weeks, Naomi is simply too old now to be taken as a wife
 - But Ruth is still young enough to marry, and that's Naomi's hope
 - Ruth's decision to remain with Naomi has become Naomi's best hope for security
 - If Ruth remarries, then Naomi knows she will be welcomed into the home as well
 - So Naomi's future is tied to Ruth's
- Naomi explains to Ruth that her relationship with Boaz is the key to their continued survival after the harvest ends
 - Naomi says she is going to seek security for Ruth
 - This is the chiastic turning point in the story of Ruth
 - The Hebrew word translated "security" here is *manoach*, which literally translated means a place of rest
 - Naomi finally sees a way to obtain rest, both for her and Ruth
 - To the Hebrew mind, rest is a sacred term
 - Theologically, we speak of "being saved" in the same way that Hebrews spoke of obtaining rest

- Obtaining rest means far more than simply finding a comfortable living
- *Manoach* means ceasing to worry, ceasing to struggle, ceasing to doubt, ceasing to be in jeopardy, by obtaining a permanent source of blessing
- Finding rest has been the desire of Naomi's heart from the beginning of our story
 - She followed her husband outside her land, seeking rest from a famine
 - But his decision led the family to experience one tragedy after another
 - First her husband died, then her sons died, and so she found herself destitute in a foreign land
 - The family had done everything it could and by its own power to find rest
 - But things have only gone from bad to worse
 - So Naomi and Ruth returned to the land still in search of rest
 - Meeting Boaz gave them a measure of provision and protection in the land, but this is not true *manoach*; rest
 - It's temporary provision at best, and when your hope lies in something temporary, it's no rest at all
- Many of us know how Naomi and Ruth feel, searching for rest from the disappointments and insecurities of daily life
 - Rest seems forever out of reach
 - Every phase of our lives is a pursuit of some kind of satisfaction, but for many of us it's like living in a Rolling Stones song
 - We strive in school expecting to enjoy the security of a good job
 - We get the job, but then find we have to work overtime to afford the things we expect will bring us comfort and rest
 - We obtain the things, but they never bring the joy we expected
 - In fact, we struggle a lifetime to be ready for the retirement that will finally give us rest
 - Yet as we approach retirement, we begin to worry there won't be enough to last...enough money, enough health, enough friends or enough purpose
 - And what are we supposed to do in retirement anyway?
 - If we're not careful, we'll fill our lives with striving and regrets so that as the end approaches, we'll be left with worry that life just passed us by
 - We worked our whole life for some kind of rest, yet it was always just out of reach
 - Where's the satisfaction, the rest, the security, the freedom from want and worry that we were striving so hard to obtain?
 - For those Christians who lead this kind of life, the problem isn't that rest can't be found
 - The problem is they were always looking for rest in the wrong place

- As the saying goes...we all want to go to heaven, but just not today
- In that sense we're like Naomi's family, working to secure a rest that couldn't be found outside the land
 - Their rest was found in a redeemer they never saw coming
 - But now that they have him, they're anxious to move to the next step of the plan
 - Just as we've come to know our Redeemer, our Protector and Provider
 - He's made promises to us, and He's directed us to work in His field
 - But we're eager to see Him bring us into the rest we so long to know
 - The true, eternal rest of the Kingdom
 - While you wait, don't make the mistake of thinking you can accelerate His plan, that you can obtain true rest on your own terms
 - True rest isn't going to come while we're working in His field
 - Our true rest – true relief from sin and disappointment and conflict and all the unfulfilled longings of our life –
 - That rest comes only in the Kingdom
 - If we think we can find that rest while we're still working in the field, we're going to get distracted from the work of serving Christ
 - We're going to wander into someone else's field, so to speak
 - But we're not going to find that peace we were seeking, because it was never there
 - Nevertheless, we can know a measure of that rest even now...if we know what to look for
 - We aren't going to escape working, but if we make our work building the Kingdom, then our work can be as joyful and easy as Ruth's work in Boaz's field
 - We may not obtain earthly riches, but we can learn to be content with less if it means obtaining riches in the Kingdom
 - We won't escape trials, but we can endure them gladly knowing Christ is testing us to know if we are worthy of greater things in the Kingdom
 - In other words, we can withstand a lifetime of striving with Christ to obtain an eternity of rest with Christ
- So at the start of Chapter 3, Naomi and Ruth are seeking to find that true rest, and Naomi sees an opportunity to secure it
 - Naomi has been waiting the entire harvest season for Boaz to fulfill the levirate marriage requirement of the Law
 - Remember, the levirate marriage law expected the closest relative to marry a widow who lacked a son
 - Through a levirate marriage, the widow might receive a son and an inheritance for her dead husband
 - A husband and a son for these women would mean true rest

- In a patriarchal culture, a husband and a son would bring the protection and provision for life that both these women are seeking desperately
- If only Boaz would decide to meet the terms of the Law
- One of these widows needs to pursue the relationship in a cautious manner
 - But which of the widows should seek his proposal?
 - Obviously, Naomi's child-bearing days are over, so it falls to Ruth
- Naomi instructs Ruth to take a bold step to prompt Boaz into assuming the levirate marriage responsibilities
 - She tells Ruth in v.2 that Boaz is sleeping on the threshing floor during the harvest
 - At the end of a harvest, the threshing and winnowing begins
 - This is a process of bringing the stalks of grain to a hard floor and beating them severely to separate the grains of fruit from the chaff
 - Then the remains are lifted up into the air so that the wind might blow the lighter chaff away from the heavier fruit, which then falls back to the threshing floor to be collected
 - This process was usually done at night because in the Middle East in late summer, the hot dry climate produces little breeze during the day
 - But the breeze kicks up in the evening, finally subsiding around midnight
 - So in the first half of the night, the threshing begins with the beating of the grain
 - Followed by the winnowing until about midnight, when the work would cease and a large meal would follow
 - Then the workers would sleep by their heaps of grain to guard them
 - Naomi knew how the harvest worked so she saw an opportunity for Ruth to approach Boaz on this night and appeal to him to fulfill the Law for her sake
- Naomi tells Ruth how to approach Boaz to encourage a proposal for marriage
 - First, Ruth is to wash herself, anoint herself and put on her best clothes
 - These are the steps a bride takes before a wedding
 - In this day, a bride was betrothed to her husband weeks or months prior to the wedding day
 - And during this time, the bride lived apart from her groom in a state of perpetual readiness
 - On an unannounced day, her groom would come to claim her and escort her to the wedding ceremony
 - Therefore, Naomi is coaching Ruth to present herself as a woman ready for her groom
 - Secondly, Naomi tells Ruth to find Boaz at the threshing floor
 - In the time of the harvest, the threshing floor would have been a busy, happy place

- It was the place where a year's hard work was rewarded
- Each night's feast would be a joyous affair
- It's the place Naomi knew Ruth could find Boaz and find him in a good mood
 - Notice that she tells Ruth to wait until the eating and drinking has completed
 - She's telling Ruth to be patient and wait for the right moment when things have quieted down
- Finally, in v.4 Naomi tells Ruth to lie down discreetly next to Boaz and uncover his feet
 - Men in this day wore robes that covered even their feet
 - So as they lay down to sleep, their robes formed a blanket over them
 - Naomi wants Ruth to discreetly pull up Boaz's robe just far enough to expose Boaz's feet to the cool desert night air
 - At first this may seem like a strange plan, but Naomi knew what she was doing
 - She's drawing on a Jewish custom, one Naomi expects Boaz to understand
 - We can see this because in v.4 Naomi tells Ruth that Boaz will tell her what to do
 - What is Naomi up to here?
 - By taking these actions, Ruth will be letting Boaz know she's willing to be his wife if he should desire to marry her
 - In Israel, uncovering someone in this manner was an allusion to marriage
- We can see this idea reflected in scripture in various places
 - In Ezekiel, the Lord describes entering into a covenant with His "wife," Israel this way

Ezek. 16:7 "I made you numerous like plants of the field. Then you grew up, became tall and reached the age for fine ornaments; your breasts were formed and your hair had grown. Yet you were naked and bare.

Ezek. 16:8 "Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine," declares the Lord God.

- Notice that God says He spread His "skirt" over Israel and covered Her nakedness
- This is symbolic language to represent a spiritual marriage through the Old Covenant
- Similarly, entering into a sexual union is described in the same way

Deut. 22:30 "A man shall not take his father's wife so that he will not uncover his father's skirt.

Deut. 27:20 ‘Cursed is he who lies with his father’s wife, because he has uncovered his father’s skirt.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

- So when Naomi asks Ruth to lift up Boaz’s cloak to expose his feet, she’s sending a clear message to Boaz
- By uncovering his feet, Ruth is inviting a marriage proposal
- She’s implying that when Boaz acts to recover his cold feet, he is welcome to cover hers as well
- Some have chosen to take this innocent moment and pervert it by suggesting Ruth was uncovering more than Boaz’s feet
 - Others have suggested Naomi was encouraging Ruth to brashly make her own proposal to Boaz
 - But these speculations are not dealing with the text honestly
 - In reality, Naomi was asking Ruth only to uncover Boaz’s feet, just enough exposure to make a point and no more
 - And Ruth wasn’t proposing to Boaz
 - Boaz has already initiated the relationship with his earlier promises to Ruth
 - Boaz hasn’t moved the relationship ahead because he was considerably older than Ruth and assumed she wanted a younger husband
 - Therefore, Ruth’s actions were a way for her to politely indicate her willingness to consider marriage
 - Furthermore, Naomi has ensured that the encounter would take place in the most discreet manner possible
 - It was dark and many people were gathered in a large area sleeping in the open
 - Under those circumstances, Ruth’s appearance at the feet of Boaz would not have attracted much attention
 - And as she uncovers Boaz’s feet and waits for his response, no one would have been the wiser either way
 - Boaz would be free to respond either way without concern for his reputation
- And with that Ruth sets out to obey her mother-in-law

Ruth 3:6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her.

Ruth 3:7 When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down.

Ruth 3:8 It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet.

Ruth 3:9 He said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am Ruth your maid. So

spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative.”

Ruth 3:10 Then he said, “May you be blessed of the Lord, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich.

Ruth 3:11 “Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.

Ruth 3:12 “Now it is true I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.

Ruth 3:13 “Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the Lord lives. Lie down until morning.”

- Ruth executes Naomi’s plan perfectly
 - When Boaz awoke to find Ruth there and his feet uncovered, he asked Ruth who she was and what her intentions were
 - The fact that Boaz didn’t realize it was Ruth at first tells us how dark it was that night
 - Everyone was in the shadows
 - Ruth responds telling Boaz he may “spread your covering over your maid”
 - Moreover, Ruth adds that Boaz is a close relative
 - The Hebrew word for close relative is the same word for kinsman redeemer
 - So Ruth is politely saying I am willing to have you as my redeemer if he would be willing to fulfill the Law on her behalf
 - Naomi expected her plan to bring Ruth and Boaz to this point
 - Naomi has faith in Boaz’s character to expect he’ll do the right thing in the end
- In response to Ruth’s overture, Boaz responds with joy declaring that her first kindness to him has been exceeded by this kindness
 - That may seem like a backward statement, since after all it was Boaz who showed kindness to Ruth, wasn’t it?
 - Yes, but Ruth showed respect and kindness to Boaz as well
 - Her first act of kindness toward Boaz was to serve him well as a maidservant
 - Ruth showed Boaz kindness in her devoted service during the harvest season, working every day, all day, rewarding his trust
 - Every servant in Boaz’s household was blessed to be made a part of Boaz’s house
 - But not every servant returned that favor by blessing Boaz with faithful obedience
 - So Boaz was blessed by Ruth’s service
 - And now Ruth is willing to forgo younger men and become Boaz’s wife, a second act

of kindness toward him

- Boaz notes that Ruth hasn't gone after younger men
- From his perspective, Ruth was young and attractive
- As an older man, Boaz must have assumed she was looking past him seeking a younger man as a husband
- Instead, she has remained devoted to him, gladly seeking to be his bride
 - Once again, it's Ruth who would be gaining the blessing of a husband, but Boaz is likewise blessed by her affection
 - Just as every man is blessed by the affection of a loving wife
- In response to Ruth's kindness, Boaz pledges to do what he can to make the wedding happen, but there is an obstacle
 - Here we learn the second reason Boaz hadn't moved yet to redeem Ruth or Naomi
 - Boaz is not the closest living relative to these women
 - Another man has the first right to redeem any widow in Elimelech's family
 - So Boaz has been prevented from acting for this reason
 - Remember, the levirate marriage rule in the Law required that the closest relative be the one to redeem the widow
 - And marrying a beautiful young woman was not considered an act of sacrifice but of privilege
 - So before Boaz could take Ruth, he had to give the closest relative the right of first refusal
 - Boaz was a man who made sure the Law was followed exactly
 - Therefore, Boaz says he will address this conflict in the morning
 - In the morning, he will seek to know if this closer relative can redeem Ruth
 - If the closer relative is unable to meet the terms of the levirate Law, then Boaz will step into his place and redeem Ruth
 - One way or the other, Ruth and Naomi are finally going to get the rest they have been seeking
- Turning to our second story, we remember Ruth pictures the Gentile church betrothed to our Groom, Christ
 - Like Ruth, we feel as though we are the ones blessed by our relationship with Christ, and certainly we are
 - In fact, we truly don't have a clue just how blessed we are
 - We can't possibly appreciate all the glory our relationship with Christ will bring for us in time, as Paul says

**1Cor. 2:9 but just as it is written,
"Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard,**

**And which have not entered the heart of man,
All that God has prepared for those who love Him.”**

- But also like Ruth, despite the fact that we receive so much from Christ, nevertheless we can be a blessing to Him
 - Ruth blessed Boaz in response to his kindness by working diligently in his field
 - Likewise, we can bless the Lord Who has extended grace to us by serving Him faithfully in His field, that is the world
- It's a small thing when you think about it, really
 - Where would Ruth have been without Boaz's kindness?
 - And where would we be had the Lord not extended His grace to change the eternal course of our lives?
 - How lonely, how frustrated, how desperate, how hopeless might we be today without Him?
- So if you have wished you could find a way to repay the Lord or show Him your thanks, well here's the way we do it
 - Paul sums it up in Romans 12

Rom. 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Rom. 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- If you want to bless your Lord, serve Him sacrificially
 - Bless Him by forsaking other, more “attractive” suitors and remaining devoted to Him
 - Set aside your desires for earthly riches, fame, power, accomplishment, pleasures and the like
 - Don't waste time striving for the rest that only comes in the Kingdom
 - Just serve in the field, get up everyday seeking ways to bless the Lord
 - And when the harvest comes, we'll have our rest, just as these women are about to receive theirs

- Let's pick up in our "second story" again within the book of Ruth
 - We're following the story of two widows seeking rest in the land of Israel
 - I've reflected in the past on how the timing references within the story of Ruth were important details in our second story
 - The story of Ruth and Naomi takes place in the time of the judges
 - Which creates a picture for a second story of Israel and the Church
 - The story of Israel and the Church takes place at the end of an age of judgment, and on the verge of a new age of testimony
 - Today we have seen the re-emergence of Israel on the world scene
 - So we know we are living in the very period of history anticipated prophetically by the events of Ruth
 - And there are more clues in the story of Ruth and elsewhere in scripture that reveal God's timeline for restoring Israel
 - Let's begin by remembering a couple of important time references found in earlier chapters
 - First, we learned in 1:22 that Naomi's return to her Land, with Ruth in tow, was at the beginning of the barley harvest
 - And in 2:23 we learned that Ruth worked as Boaz's servant in the field until the end of the harvest
 - In that way, Ruth pictures the Gentile Church working in service to Christ, laboring in His "field," in the world, which is ripe for the harvest
- But the harvest is drawing to a close in the story of Ruth, so what becomes of the Church's work and what comes next for Israel?
 - Before we understand the significance of these sign posts, let's revisit the circumstances of our widows, Ruth and Naomi
 - Ruth we know enjoys security and protection because of her new relationship as Boaz's servant
 - But Naomi is still searching for what she needs
 - She enjoys a measure of protection through Ruth's relationship with Boaz
 - But she is still without a husband and therefore lacks true rest
 - Naomi's situation is a perfect picture of Israel today regathered in the Middle East
 - Israel is certainly better than they once were in the sense that they have a degree of provision
 - And that provision was made possible by the Lord through the sympathetic support of Christians in the West
 - Time does not permit me to recount the political events that led to the modern nation of Israel
 - But suffice to say that the Lord prompted Christians in Britain, France, the United States and elsewhere to support Zionism

- And even after the nation was formed, many believers have provided financial and political support to Israel
- And on an individual level, Christians have been used by God to preserve the Jewish people during many periods of persecution both inside Israel and around the world
- Ruth's support of Naomi while living in the land is a picture of the relationship between the church and Israel in these days
- Nevertheless, like Naomi, Israel isn't secure in their land
 - They possess very little of what was originally granted them by God
 - They are constantly under attack and must defend their land daily
 - They do not have security nor rest in their land
- However in Chapter 3, the relationship between Ruth and Boaz changes dramatically
 - At the end of a harvest, the threshing and winnowing begins
 - Remember I described this process as one of violence and separating
 - Stalks of grain are beaten and crushed
 - The seed are separated from the chaff
 - The seeds are collected while the chaff is taken away
 - All the while, Ruth is resting at Boaz's feet, while Naomi is alone in her home
- This section of the book of Ruth reveals the plan God has for bringing the Church's work on earth to conclusion
 - It pictures the Church's departure and Her wedding to Her Groom, Christ
 - To understand this picture, we must first notice how the Bible describes the Church's work serving Christ on earth

John 4:35 “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.

John 4:36 “Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.

- In John 4, Jesus describes the world as a field and He describes believers as workers gathering a harvest
- As we work in the field, we earn wages which are “fruit” for our eternal life in the kingdom
- Next, we turn to Matthew to hear Jesus saying this:

Matt. 9:37 Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.

Matt. 9:38 “Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”

- Again, believers are workers, and there are not as many workers as Jesus would prefer
- In other words, the entire Church is offered the opportunity to work for Christ and earn eternal rewards in the field
- Yet surprisingly, few believers take up the opportunity to work in this way leaving the plentiful rewards to a minority
- Then we turn to Matthew 13 to discover that a “harvest” time is the Bible’s metaphor for the end of this age of working for Christ, appropriately enough

Matt. 13:37 And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man,
Matt. 13:38 and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one;
Matt. 13:39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.

Matt. 13:40 “So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.

Matt. 13:41 “The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,
Matt. 13:42 and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matt. 13:43 “Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

- Jesus compares the end of our age to the end of a harvest period
 - Notice, however, some of the imagery changes...
 - The field is still the world, but now the seed represents the believers in the world
 - While the stalks of tares represent the unbelievers in the world
 - And most importantly, a harvest pictures the end of this age, Jesus says
- So at the end of this age, the Son of Man will collect all His precious grain from within the field
 - The chaff, the unbelieving world, will be left behind, burned up
 - Just as the chaff collected during the winnowing process is gathered in bundles and burned up
 - But the grain seed will be collected and delivered to the Master
- Putting this together, we come to understand that the harvest in Ruth 3 pictures the end of the Church age
 - So what comes next for the Church and Israel in God’s plan? What does the end of

the age bring?

- Well, we can answer that question simply by looking at what happens to the characters in the story of Ruth
- First, let's examine Ruth and Boaz
- Ruth came to Boaz, as Naomi instructed, to remind him of his opportunity to act as a kinsman redeemer
 - Even though Naomi was a Jewish widow without a husband, it was Ruth who gained the husband
 - According to the Law, either woman could be redeemed because neither had a husband and neither had sons
 - But Naomi had already been given two sons, yet they amounted to nothing, so it was a squandered opportunity
- Meanwhile, Ruth was without any sons and was still young enough to produce a son
 - So Boaz could have acted as Naomi's redeemer or he could act as Ruth's redeemer
 - And from the story, it's clear that Naomi decided to forgo her own opportunity to be redeemed in favor of allowing Ruth the opportunity she never had
- These details are a revealing picture of Israel's relationship with their Messiah
 - When Israel's Redeemer made Himself available at His first coming, Israel declined Him
 - Which in turn resulted in Christ redeeming others in place of Israel
 - We see this truth reflected by the parable in Luke 14 of the banquet set out for invited guests, but they declined to join the host

Luke 14:16 But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many;

Luke 14:17 and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.'

Luke 14:18 "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.'

Luke 14:19 "Another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.'

Luke 14:20 "Another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.'

Luke 14:21 "And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'

Luke 14:22 "And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and

still there is room.'

Luke 14:23 "And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled.

Luke 14:24 'For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'"

- Naomi pictures Israel passing over her opportunity to receive a redeemer
 - And in her place, another receives the redemption that could have been hers
 - Just as Ruth, the Gentile church received the Messiah that Israel overlooked
- So then what will come of Israel at the time of harvest? And what's next for the Bride of Christ, the Church?
 - When the harvest comes, Israel will be in her land but lacking rest and security
 - But she is still very insecure, troubled, surrounded by her enemies
 - And most importantly, still without a redeemer, without their Messiah
- Meanwhile, Christ has proposed to His Bride
 - The moment here takes place while Boaz is with his grain, after the harvest is over
 - But Naomi is nowhere in the scene
 - And the entire scene takes place in the pitch black of night...
- So let's list the elements found in the description of this scene in Ruth
 - It's night, it's a dark time
 - Naomi is in her land but alone
 - There is violent threshing and separation taking place in the field
 - Boaz is at rest with his grain harvest, the fruit of the field
 - And his bride, Ruth, is resting at his feet in safety
- Now let's look at scripture to find the parallels
 - First the detail of night, darkness, is important
 - Boaz's proposal to Ruth happens in the middle of the night, a period of darkness
 - And the Bible (particularly in the OT) teaches of a period of judgment that must come upon the Earth before the Lord's return
 - And this time of judgment is for Israel
 - And it's commonly associated with darkness
 - In Zephaniah this period of judgment is called the Day of Darkness

Zeph. 1:14 Near is the great day of the Lord,
Near and coming very quickly;
Listen, the day of the Lord!

In it the warrior cries out bitterly.

Zeph. 1:15 A day of wrath is that day,

A day of trouble and distress,

A day of destruction and desolation,

A day of darkness and gloom,

A day of clouds and thick darkness,

Zeph. 1:16 A day of trumpet and battle cry

Against the fortified cities

And the high corner towers.

Zeph. 1:17 I will bring distress on men

So that they will walk like the blind,

Because they have sinned against the Lord;

And their blood will be poured out like dust

And their flesh like dung.

Zeph. 1:18 Neither their silver nor their gold

Will be able to deliver them

On the day of the Lord's wrath;

And all the earth will be devoured

In the fire of His jealousy,

For He will make a complete end,

Indeed a terrifying one,

Of all the inhabitants of the earth.

- As the prophet explained to Israel, the Lord will bring a period of great distress on the entire world
- This period is repayment for Israel's sins against the Lord
- And he calls it a day of gloom and darkness
- Jeremiah tells Israel that this time of gloom and destruction is focused on Israel

Jer. 30:2 "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book.

Jer. 30:3 'For behold, days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah.' The Lord says, 'I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it.'"

Jer. 30:4 Now these are the words which the Lord spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah:

Jer. 30:5 "For thus says the Lord,

'I have heard a sound of terror,

Of dread, and there is no peace.

Jer. 30:6 'Ask now, and see

If a male can give birth.

Why do I see every man

With his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth?

And why have all faces turned pale?

Jer. 30:7 ‘Alas! for that day is great,

There is none like it;

And it is the time of Jacob’s distress,

But he will be saved from it.

Jer. 30:8 ‘It shall come about on that day,’ declares the Lord of hosts, ‘that I will break his yoke from off their neck and will tear off their bonds; and strangers will no longer make them their slaves.

Jer. 30:9 ‘But they shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.

- Notice several important details in Jeremiah’s prophecy concerning Israel
 - First, a period of great calamity is coming for the world and for Israel
 - These events occur after Israel has been brought back into their land in v.3 (just as Naomi has returned to the land)
 - Secondly, these events are targeted against Israel (v.4)
 - The events are called the time of Jacob’s (Israel’s) troubles
 - Nevertheless, Israel will not perish in it (v.7)
- Earlier in our study, I read a passage from Ezekiel 20...let’s reread it now

Ezek. 20:33 “As I live,” declares the Lord God, “surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you.

Ezek. 20:34 “I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out;

Ezek. 20:35 and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face.

Ezek. 20:36 “As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you,” declares the Lord God.

Ezek. 20:37 “I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;

Ezek. 20:38 and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the Lord.

- We read this passage earlier when discussing Israel’s return to her land, as pictured by Naomi’s return to Israel, in bitterness
 - But now take note that this regathering will take place during a period of judgment

- Ezekiel says Israel would be made to pass under the rod, which is a term for God's discipline
- Israel would be disciplined by God in order to bring them into the bond of the covenant which they have forsaken
- God will use judgment to purge the rebels from within the assembly of Israel
- Ezekiel is also describing the time of Jacob's troubles
 - This period called the Day of Darkness
 - This coming time when the world suffers under God's outpouring of judgment against the nation of Israel
 - So as we seek to understand what happens to the Church and to Israel at the harvest, our first clue is these events are associated with a time of darkness
 - Which is a picture of a time of great distress on the earth, directed at Israel
- The second clue is found in the threshing and winnowing of the harvest itself
 - As I've mentioned, threshing was a brutal beating of the grain
 - The fruit of the grain is so dense that it's almost impossible to damage it in the threshing
 - So the workers find the most brutal way possible to crush the grain, often treading it under the hoofs of oxen that weigh thousands of pounds
 - John the Baptist describes Jesus as One Who carries a winnowing fork and goes to the threshing floor to separate the wheat from the chaff

Luke 3:16 John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Luke 3:17 "His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

- Jesus applies this pressure at the time of the harvest, at the end of the age, against His "grain", that is against Israel
- Isaiah describes how the Lord will strike His people in this way

Is. 27:6 In the days to come Jacob will take root,
Israel will blossom and sprout,
And they will fill the whole world with fruit.

Is. 27:7 Like the striking of Him who has struck them, has He struck them?
Or like the slaughter of His slain, have they been slain?

- Isaiah asks rhetorically has God ever struck Israel in the way He plans to strike them in

this future moment...the answer is no

Is. 27:12 In that day the Lord will start His threshing from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt, and you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel.

- And in that day, Israel will experience a “threshing” in preparation to be gathered up one by one
- So this coming period of judgment against Israel for their disobedience to the Lord is like a threshing – a beating
 - The One doing the treading and holding the winnowing fork separating the wheat from the chaff is the Lord
 - And this process leads Israel into a glorious future
- Finally, to a third clue, which is Boaz at the base of his pile of grain with Ruth resting at his feet throughout the night
 - While Naomi is in the darkness, alone and exposed, Ruth is in safety with Boaz
 - It’s as if Boaz has gathered up Ruth like he gathered up his precious grain
 - She has received her rest in a husband even as Naomi still seeks rest
- We read earlier in Matthew 13 that Jesus compared the end of the age to a harvest
 - We know that Ruth is a picture of the Church gathered to Christ at the end of the age
 - But now we also notice that Ruth spends the entire period of night with Boaz
 - So during the period of darkness and gloom appointed for Israel, is a time when the Bride of Christ rests with Her Groom
- This time of judgment we’ve been describing goes by many names in scripture
 - In addition to the time of Jacob’s trouble or the time of darkness, it also goes by another name

Ezek. 30:3 “For the day is near,
Even the day of the Lord is near;
It will be a day of clouds,
A time of doom for the nations.

Joel 1:15 Alas for the day!
For the day of the Lord is near,
And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.

Joel 2:11 The Lord utters His voice before His army;
Surely His camp is very great,
For strong is he who carries out His word.

**The day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome,
And who can endure it?**

Amos 5:18 Alas, you who are longing for the day of the Lord,
For what purpose will the day of the Lord be to you?
It will be darkness and not light;

Mal. 4:5 “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

- The Bible refers to this same time of judgment and calamity against Israel and the world as “the day of the Lord”
- It’s not a literal day but a period of time lasting several years
- And as Joel asks, who can endure it?
- The New Testament also describes this day, where we find Paul explaining to the Church what will happen to us in that day

1Th. 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

1Th. 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

1Th. 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

1Th. 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1Th. 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

1Th. 4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

1Th. 5:1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you.

1Th. 5:2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.

1Th. 5:3 While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

1Th. 5:4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief;

1Th. 5:5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of

darkness;

1Th. 5:9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

- In vs.13-18, Paul revealed to the church that there would be a day when all those in the Church, whether dead or alive, would be resurrected into new bodies and raised to meet Christ in the clouds
 - We commonly call this moment the rapture; when we are united with Jesus permanently
 - Jesus comes for the Church, just as Boaz covered Ruth
 - But Jesus doesn't come back to the Earth because God isn't ready to set up His kingdom yet
 - Jesus has unfinished business with the nation of Israel
 - In Chapter 5 Paul says this coming day of judgment, the day of the Lord, comes like a thief upon the world
 - But in v.5 Paul says the Church is not a part of this darkness, that is the day of the Lord
 - It will not overtake the church because as Paul says in v.9 the Bride of Christ is not appointed to receive that wrath
 - So the Church is caught up to be with Jesus prior to the dawning of the dark day
 - Just as Ruth was taken in with Boaz during the night when Naomi was left alone and exposed
- So let's end with a summary
 - A dark time is coming for the entire earth
 - It is a time when the Lord brings judgment against Israel for their sins under the Old Covenant
 - The violence of that time is compared to a threshing floor, a severe beating that separates the fruit from the chaff
 - Jesus is the Winnowing collecting His grain, the fruit of the field, and placing it in His barn
 - This time of darkness is called the time of Jacob's troubles, the day of the Lord, but it's also called the Tribulation
 - The threshing of God's judgment has come upon not only the nation of Israel but also against the world as a whole
 - But Ruth will spend that "night" safe at Boaz's feet
 - Which is a picture of the Church raptured and removed from the calamity coming upon the Earth and Israel
 - Finally, that rescue culminates with a proposal and wedding

- Where Boaz elevated Ruth from maidservant working in His field to a betrothed bride
- Likewise, the Church will be wed to Christ following our removal from the earth
- As we are gathered into Heaven, we will hear this in the throne room

Rev. 19:5 And a voice came from the throne, saying, “Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.”

Rev. 19:6 Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

Rev. 19:7 “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.”

Rev. 19:8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

- Next week we pick up again in the story of Naomi and Ruth
 - And as we move forward, we watch as the work of Boaz takes center stage in the story
 - The work of our Redeemer ties together the fortunes of both Ruth and Naomi
 - Just as Jesus is the One Who redeems both the Church and Israel

- We're approaching the climactic moment in our story of Ruth and Boaz at the end of Chapter 3
 - Ruth followed Naomi's instructions on the night of the harvest
 - She approached Boaz respectfully to invite a marriage proposal
 - And she was rewarded with Boaz's promise to redeem her one way or another
 - Ruth spent the evening with Boaz without anyone being the wiser, so that Boaz's reputation would not be compromised
 - But Boaz also told Ruth that there was a legal hurdle preventing him from redeeming Ruth
 - We'll rejoin the conversation in Ruth 3

Ruth 3:11 "Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.

Ruth 3:12 "Now it is true I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.

Ruth 3:13 "Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the Lord lives. Lie down until morning."

Ruth 3:14 So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."

Ruth 3:15 Again he said, "Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it." So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her. Then she went into the city.

Ruth 3:16 When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did it go, my daughter?" And she told her all that the man had done for her.

Ruth 3:17 She said, "These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"

Ruth 3:18 Then she said, "Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today."

- As Boaz explains, he is prohibited from acting to redeem her, because another man in the family was a closer relative
 - The Hebrew word translated "closer relative" is the word for kinsman redeemer
 - So Boaz is essentially saying that he can't redeem Ruth because he is not legally the closest relative
 - He is not the kinsman redeemer
 - The other man is technically the one who must act to redeem Ruth
 - But Boaz adds that if this man is not able to redeem her for any reason, then Boaz is prepared to step in and assume that responsibility

- As I've said before, Boaz was not obligated to act in this way
- He was volunteering to assume this role in case Ruth is found without a redeemer
- Meanwhile, Boaz protects Ruth through the night
 - He would have been within his right to ask Ruth to return home
 - If someone had seen her lying at his feet, it would have brought shame to him
 - Nevertheless, he puts her safety above his own reputation
 - A young girl walking alone at night was a recipe for disaster
 - Boaz protects her at risk to himself
- In keeping the visit secret, Boaz is also protecting Ruth
 - He's protecting her reputation as well
 - In v.14 we see Boaz giving direction to his servants not to report she had been with him
 - Boaz wasn't asking them to lie, since no one was going to ask them about something that wasn't publicly known
 - He's asking them for discretion to prevent gossip and lying
 - Furthermore, Boaz continued caring for Ruth and Naomi's needs
 - In the past they were allowed to glean in the fields
 - But the harvest has come to an end, so the gleaning is over
 - Therefore, Boaz gave Ruth a generous portion of his grain to take to Naomi, once again caring for Naomi through Ruth
 - The text says six measures of barley
 - A measure was probably two hand scoops or so
 - The result would have been enough to keep her and Naomi fed for several more days
 - The fact that he sent her with enough grain for a few days is itself an indication of how quickly Boaz planned to move on this matter
 - He wasn't expecting these women to be alone much longer
 - And Naomi picks up on this sign when Ruth returns
 - When Ruth reports what happened to Naomi and shows Naomi the six measures of barley, Naomi immediately understands the meaning
 - She says wait my daughter
 - Let's see how this turns out
 - He won't rest until this is settled today
 - Or said another way, Boaz can only rest after he has redeemed Ruth
 - We can safely assume Boaz's speed is an indication of his desire for Ruth as a potential bride

- And sure enough, Boaz acts quickly

Ruth 4:1 Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, “Turn aside, friend, sit down here.” And he turned aside and sat down.

Ruth 4:2 He took ten men of the elders of the city and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down.

- The next morning, Boaz goes to the gate of the city
 - Why is everyone meeting at a gate, you might ask?
 - It was a consequence of how cities protected themselves in this day
 - Cities in ancient times were surrounded by high walls for protection
 - But of course, there must be a way in and out of the city, so there were gates in the walls
 - Adding a gate to a fortified wall instantly made it the most vulnerable part of the wall and the weakest link in your security
 - If you opened the gate to let the city’s residents go in and out, then you were also likely to let in the bad guys
 - And they didn’t open the gate if someone just knocked
 - *Knock knock, who’s there? Nebuchadnezzar...*
 - So gates were actually fortified chambers of rooms inside the walls – like a courtyard literally inside the wall itself
 - A visitor entered through an outer door and had to pass through the chamber to reach the inner door leading into the city
 - Inside the chamber were guards, positioned high above on the top of the city walls that encompassed the gate chamber
 - So if an army breeched the outer wall, it would encounter a second door barring their entry into the city
 - And archers shooting from above could pick them off in the chamber
- Nevertheless, a city was a place of commerce
 - Many people from the surrounding areas traveled into the city to conduct business daily
 - People came in to sell and buy in the city
 - Others lived in the city but left to work the fields during the day
 - And if a person needed to conduct official business, he would travel to the city to meet with city officials
 - With all this traffic in and out of a city, how did the city ensure the security of those who lived inside?

- A practice developed to conduct as much business as possible in the chambered gates of the city
- These chambers felt like bazaars where merchants lined up to sell and trade
- And the chambers also became City Hall
- Judges held court in gates of the city during the day
- And the elders of the city might convene in this space to hear from witnesses in some important matter
- In this way, many people who did not live in the city could still gain access in a secure way
- So when we hear that Boaz went up to the gate of the city of Bethlehem in v.1, we should understand Boaz has gone to City Hall to meet with officials of the city
 - Boaz also has a second purpose in going to the gate
 - Since this was the primary way in and out, Boaz goes to the gate expecting to see his closer relative
 - He has arrived early precisely so that he can catch this man as he leaves for the day to work the field perhaps
 - As he encounters the man, Boaz asks him to “turn aside” and to sit down in the gate
 - Boaz and this man are related, so the man must have recognized Boaz and stopped in response to his greeting
 - Boaz’s invitation to sit would have been friendly, but the setting would have suggested something more serious
 - The next thing the guys realizes, Boaz has assembled ten men from among the elders of the city
 - Boaz must have had these guys prepared for a meeting
 - So Boaz has orchestrated the situation to place his relative on the spot, in an official proceeding concerning Naomi’s and Ruth’s situation
 - Boaz seems to have wanted the man to be caught a little off guard so that the situation might play to his advantage
- With Boaz, his relative and these ten men assembled in the gate, an official inquiry is now underway
 - These men are witnesses to the conversation that will take place between Boaz and the relative
 - So whatever they decide together will become settled in law
 - No man will be able to go back on his word or claim this meeting never happened
 - Boaz wants this matter settled justly and permanently
 - When the conversation is over, the matter will be finished

Ruth 4:3 Then he said to the closest relative, “Naomi, who has come back from

the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech.

Ruth 4:4 “So I thought to inform you, saying, ‘Buy it before those who are sitting here, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am after you.’” And he said, “I will redeem it.”

- Boaz begins the conversation announcing to this relative that Naomi has come back from the land of Moab to her property
 - Since Elimelech is dead, Naomi would have inherited the family property that once belonged to her husband
 - There was no requirement that she sell her property
 - But the land is unproductive after ten years abandoned
 - And a woman without a son would not possess the ability to work the land
 - So under the current circumstances, she probably had no choice but to sell it to provide for herself
 - The Law of Moses addressed this very situation in Leviticus

Lev. 25:24 ‘Thus for every piece of your property, you are to provide for the redemption of the land.

Lev. 25:25 ‘If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor he has to sell part of his property, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back what his relative has sold.

- Naomi needed to sell her property just to survive
- And under those circumstances, the Law required that the nearest relative buy it
- This law ensured that a person in desperate circumstances could find a sympathetic buyer
- Selling to a member of the family ensured the land remained within the tribe
- And it increased the chance that the selling price would be fair assuming family ties encouraged honesty
- So Boaz turns to this relative and invites him to redeem the property, that is to buy it from Naomi
 - If the man wouldn’t buy it, Boaz says he is prepared to assume that responsibility
 - Boaz will buy Naomi’s property if the relative declines
 - Boaz is betting that the opportunity to purchase the land will be too good for the relative to pass up
 - He will naturally jump at the chance to enrich himself through a distress purchase and without a bidding war

- Finally, notice that Boaz says Elimelech was a brother to these men
 - We can't be sure he means a literal sibling
 - But regardless, we know these men share a blood relationship
- Immediately, the man says he will redeem the land, which is exactly what Boaz knew he would say
 - Boaz has played this situation well
 - He has drawn this man out into the open
 - Remember, the Law placed no timetable on the act of redemption
 - This relative had the right of first refusal as kinsman redeemer
 - But legally, he could have waited forever to decide if he was going to act
 - In that time, Boaz couldn't have acted since he was not the closest relative
 - By offering the land first, Boaz brought this man out of his indecisiveness and off the fence and forced him to commit
 - The relative has made a decision to purchase the land
 - By committing to buy the land, the relative has also officially assume the role of kinsman redeemer for Naomi's family
 - Boaz's tactic was brilliant
 - Boaz gave the man an incentive to act
 - And he used the opportunity to purchase the land as the bait
- To help you understand Boaz's strategy, I need to draw a parallel to our day today
 - Suppose my brother has found a great used car for sale
 - The car belonged to an older man who barely drove it
 - It has only 10,000 miles on it and his widow is trying to sell it cheap
 - This car is a steal and I really want to buy it
 - But my brother-in-law saw it first, so he gets first chance
 - But he's hesitating and he won't make a decision
 - Meanwhile, I'm worried that someone else will buy the car while I'm waiting on my brother-in-law to decide
 - So I tell him that I'm ready to buy it if he doesn't want, and in effect I force him to commit one way or the other to the deal
 - If he wants it, then buy it by the end of the day
 - Otherwise I will go to the widow tomorrow and make the purchase
 - That's what Boaz has done here in forcing the relative to either act or get out of the way
- Now there are some differences between my analogy and Boaz's situation
 - First, Boaz is engaged in a legal question

- In my analogy, there is no law that says someone has to buy the widow's used car
- But in Boaz's day, the Law did require a kinsman redeemer to act once he has been identified
- So when this relative commits to the purchase, he has assumed the legal identity of kinsman redeemer for Naomi's family
 - Once that legal identity attaches, it can't be revoked
 - To become the kinsman redeemer means assuming all the legal obligations that accompany the role
 - In fact, the presence of the elders at this meeting is a result of the fact that there was a Law at work here
 - Remember this is the time of judges, so Law was adjudicated through judges and elders
- And the Law required the kinsman redeemer to redeem the land should Naomi sell it
 - And in the presence of these elders, excited by the prospect of acquiring more land, the brother enthusiastically responds, I will redeem it!
 - That brings me to the second difference between my analogy of the used car and the story of Ruth
- Boaz's offer came with a catch

Ruth 4:5 Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance."

- Boaz reminds the relative if he's going to assume responsibility as kinsman redeemer for Naomi, then he must be prepared to fulfill the role in all respects
 - Not only must he redeem the land
 - But he must also be prepared to redeem the widow in Naomi's house, speaking of Ruth
- This would be like me telling my brother-in-law that I forgot to mention that there's a catch:
 - If you buy the widow's used car, then you will also need to marry the widow
 - I'm sure that would diminish his interest in the deal significantly
 - And that's what Boaz was expecting as well
- As you may remember, the levirate marriage law required that a redeemer marry the widow and raise the first son as the child of the deceased

Deut. 25:5 "When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man."

Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.

Deut. 25:6 "It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

- In such a case, the child born to that union was considered the legal offspring of the deceased, not of the new husband
 - That's how the name of the family continued
 - And that child also received the inheritance rights of all the property that had previously belonged to the deceased man
- In this way Boaz has compelled his relative into making a decision regarding his levirate marriage responsibilities
 - With the opportunity to buy land dangling in front of him, the relative jumped too quickly into becoming the redeemer
 - Now he was also legally responsible to act as the redeemer for Naomi's family as well
 - He probably knew that redeeming Naomi was included in the deal, but he also knew she was past childbearing years
 - So he probably had no fear of taking on a levirate marriage in her case
 - But evidently he hadn't heard about Ruth, or perhaps considered her situation as a widow
 - So he didn't anticipate having to marry her
 - Had he suspected what was coming, he might deferred on his decision, claiming he needed time to decide
 - Then he could have waited years or even decades until Ruth was past childbearing years
 - At that point, he could agree to be redeemer but decline to marry Ruth on the basis that she couldn't be redeemed (i.e., she couldn't bear children)
 - Now the relative is trapped by his own words
 - If this man is to be the redeemer, he must commit to taking Ruth as wife and raising up a child to be the deceased's son
 - He can't say he will wait and think about because he's already committed to acting as kinsman redeemer
 - And he can't take the land without also taking Ruth
- Boaz has played this so well
 - He put forth the opportunity to purchase the land first to gain the man's commitment
 - Then he introduced Ruth into the deal knowing it will likely end the man's interest

- The prospect of a cheap bargain on land is one thing
- But entering into a marriage you didn't see coming was another
- Predictably, the man declines the opportunity

Ruth 4:6 The closest relative said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem it.”

- The man changes his mind and says he cannot be the kinsman redeemer after all
- He says he cannot redeem the land because it would jeopardize his own inheritance
- If this man uses some of his wealth to purchase the land from Naomi and then later he father's a child for Naomi's family, that child would receive Naomi's property back as his inheritance
 - The relative who purchased the land from Naomi would lose it without payment since it now belonged to the son
 - The redeemer's own wealth would have gone into purchasing the property and would never be returned to his family
- In that sense, the man was jeopardizing his family's inheritance by, in effect, transferring his wealth to Naomi's family
 - The man's love for his own wealth exceeded his love for Naomi's family, and so he relinquishes the right to be kinsman redeemer
 - The man simply could not redeem the land nor could he redeem the family of Naomi
- Many of you can probably see new parallels emerging for our “second story” of Christ and the Church and Israel
 - Next time we meet we will consider those parallels and move forward to see how the story ends
 - Already we can see a picture of Christ acting to redeem His Bride
 - Acting without requirement but out of love
 - Acting according to the Law
 - And making a payment that another could not make
 - As we examine that question, we must also consider who is this closer relative who could not redeem Ruth?
 - This closer relative is also represented in our second story
 - And next week we will unveil this identity

- Today we're finishing our study of Ruth, by returning to our "first" story: Boaz pursuing rest for Ruth and Naomi
 - Last week we studied Boaz's brilliant strategy to compel the kinsman redeemer-in-waiting to either commit or relinquish his role
 - This man stood between Boaz and Naomi's family
 - This man was a closer relative, so he had to decline to redeem Naomi before Boaz was permitted to step into the gap
 - Boaz knew that it wouldn't be easy to get this guy on record
 - The relative had good reasons to delay a decision as we learned last week
 - But Boaz had a plan to gain a decision one way or another, just as he promised Ruth
 - He dangled the prospect of receiving Naomi's land in front of the man
 - This man was allowed first right to purchase this land should Naomi need to sell
 - Obtaining land was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in that day
 - All the land of Israel had been divided up and assigned to tribes and families
 - There was literally no land available in Israel, and the Law set limits on how long land could be possessed outside the family
 - Land sold outside the family had to be returned to the family within 50 years or less
- The opportunity to acquire land permanently seemed too good to be true to this relative, so he jumped at the opportunity
 - He said he would gladly redeem the land
 - The man assumed Naomi's family was on the verge of disappearing
 - Therefore he assumed the land would remain in his hands forever and become part of his own inheritance
 - But it was too good to be true
 - After the relative said he would redeem the land, Boaz added that Naomi had a daughter-in-law who required redeeming also
 - Suddenly, the man's hopes faded as did his commitment
 - He was willing to pay the price of redemption so long as it profited him
 - But when there was a real, personal cost involved, well then he was no longer able to pay such a steep price
 - So he said I cannot redeem Naomi's land, or Ruth, lest he risk his inheritance
 - The relative spoke his words in front of ten witnesses, who Boaz assembled to ensure the matter was official
 - These elders stood by silently, but their impact was felt
 - Their watchful eyes ensured what was done was binding on all concerned, so now the matter was finished

- So from there, let's proceed forward in the story

Ruth 4:7 Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of land to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the manner of attestation in Israel.

Ruth 4:8 So the closest relative said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself." And he removed his sandal.

Ruth 4:9 Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon.

Ruth 4:10 "Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his birth place; you are witnesses today."

- As Samuel explains, there was a custom in the days of the judges for how matters of this kind were officially concluded
 - Since there was no king nor judge on every corner, local tribal leaders generally enforced the rule of law in their towns
 - In this day the people adopted a custom for how a man refused his right as redeemer
 - The custom was for a man to remove a sandal and give it to the one who would act as redeemer in his place
 - This custom finds its origins in the Law

Deut. 25:8 "Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak to him. And if he persists and says, 'I do not desire to take her,'

Deut. 25:9 then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, 'Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.'

Deut. 25:10 "In Israel his name shall be called, 'The house of him whose sandal is removed.'

- The Law required that the woman who wasn't redeemed should be the one to pull off the sandal
 - Furthermore, she spit in the man's face for refusing to redeem her
 - Spitting at another was a sign of disgust
 - And having a woman take these actions was particularly humiliating for a man in that day

- So the Law intended that the one who wouldn't keep the law of redemption would be publicly shamed
- But Samuel says in this day, a time when people did what was right in their own eyes, the custom was practiced differently than the law expected
 - Instead of the woman shaming the man, the tradition had become that the discredited redeemer simply removed his own sandal and gave it up to the new redeemer
 - By giving up just one sandal, the discredited redeemer would have been unable to walk properly as he left the proceedings
 - His lopsided stride would have drawn attention to his missing sandal and would communicate his shameful refusal to redeem
 - Moreover, the new redeemer possessed physical proof that he had gained the redemption right from the other man
 - Giving up his footwear to the new redeemer created two powerful symbolic messages
 - First, standing on land was a way of expressing ownership over it
 - We remember how God told Abraham to walk throughout Canaan to survey the land that the Lord had given to him
 - Therefore, removing a sandal was a symbolic way of relinquishing the right to land
 - And in this case, that's what's happened – the relative gave up his claim to redeem Naomi's land as he says in v.6
 - Even more powerfully, taking possession of another's sandal symbolized "walking in the footsteps" of the other
 - Boaz was taking the place of the other man, walking the path that the other relative should have walked had he been able to keep the Law
 - Since the relative couldn't meet the terms of the Law, he gave up his footwear to Boaz who would keep the law in his place
 - So Boaz stepped into the man's place, as if wearing his shoes, to marry Ruth
- Next, Boaz declares to the witnesses that he has rightfully assumed the place of the other
 - The elders and the crowd gathered for this meeting formed the witnesses
 - If called upon, they could truthfully testify that the matter was settled according to Law
 - They could report that the closer relative was disqualified from redeeming and failed to meet the Law
 - And they could attest that Boaz met all qualifications to assume the redeemer role, having performed the Law in the relative's place
 - These witnesses respond with much more than merely an affirmation
 - They heap praise upon Boaz for his actions

Ruth 4:11 All the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, “We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem.

Ruth 4:12 “Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the Lord will give you by this young woman.”

- First, the people declare they are witnesses, and then they ask that the Lord would bless this woman like Rachel and Leah
 - Rachel and Leah were Jacob’s wives, and each wife produced many children, including a total of 12 sons
 - These twelve sons eventually gave rise to the tribes of Israel
 - And in like manner, the people ask the Lord to bless Boaz with a host of descendants
 - Boaz was obligated to raise up the first born son as if it belonged to Naomi’s family
 - So what if this were the only son Boaz and Ruth ever produced?
 - It could mean that Boaz would be without an heir.
 - So the people ask the Lord to bless Boaz well beyond this first son by giving him many sons
 - Furthermore, they ask that Boaz might possess great wealth for having placed his personal inheritance at risk in this way
 - They say “in Ephrathah,” which is just another name for Bethlehem
 - Like the closer relative, Boaz will have to pay a price to obtain the land and the woman, and that wealth will leave his estate and may not return
 - So the people ask the Lord to compensate Boaz for his mercy and kindness
 - Finally, they ask that Boaz’s name would be made great for this sacrifice
 - Specifically, they declare may he be a famous son of Bethlehem
 - Throughout future generations, people will associate Boaz’s name with the town of Bethlehem
 - They declare that the name of their son will be “famous”
 - The Hebrew word in v.11 is *qara* which means called upon or declared
 - So the name “Boaz” will be declared in Bethlehem
- Then the crowd proclaims in v.12 that Boaz’s offspring for Ruth should be like Perez, who Tamar bore to Judah
 - The crowd must have recognized the many parallels between this story and the story in Genesis 38:
 - Ruth and Tamar were both Gentiles who married into Israel

- Both were widows without children and both were redeemed
- Both married considerably older husbands
- But both had to resort to creative methods to obtain what they rightfully deserved under law
- Tamar eventually bore a son, Perez, who inherited the seed line of Judah
 - Perez became the leading family within the tribe of Judah
 - And so now the crowd requests may the son of Boaz and Ruth have the blessing of continuing the seed promise line also
 - This suggests that the crowd knew that Boaz carried the seed promise in his family line having descended from Perez
- What we're learning is that the first born son to Boaz is destined to carry the seed promise, that is, be in the family line to Messiah
 - He would legally be Naomi's son and inherit the wealth of Elimelech, Naomi's husband
 - But the seed promise came through Boaz and would remain on his first born regardless of how the law viewed custody
 - So Naomi will be the mother of a child that came by one father but raised as if from another father
 - And ultimately, that son will lead to a Savior for her nation
- Then as promised, Boaz takes Ruth as a wife and soon by the grace of God the couple bears a son

Ruth 4:13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

Ruth 4:14 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel.

Ruth 4:15 "May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him."

Ruth 4:16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse.

Ruth 4:17 The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

- Naomi's dreams have come true
 - She has come through a dark time, a time of hopelessness
 - And she returned to her land broken and bitter
 - Yet the prospect of a redeemer gave her hope
 - Now today her hope has been realized as she receives a son

- After the child's birth, Naomi becomes the child's caretaker (not a wet nurse)
- Why does Ruth give this child to Naomi?
 - Remember, under the Law the redeemer was responsible for providing an heir to the family who was missing an heir
 - Elimelech and his sons died, so his family needs the heir
 - Now that Ruth has married Boaz, she has become a part of Boaz's family
 - That leaves Naomi as the last living member of Elimelech's family
- So when Boaz, who is Naomi's redeemer, brings a son into the world, that son is raised as if he were the son of Elimelech
 - Therefore, Naomi receives the son as if he is her son
 - She will raise him as a son of Elimelech
 - But as I said, this son still receives the seed promise from Boaz
 - He may be legally part of Naomi's family but he carries the line of Messiah from Boaz
- The women of the town rejoice with Naomi
 - They declare that the name of this son will be "famous"
 - Again, this is the Hebrew word is *qara* meaning declared or called upon
 - So this son will be declared and called upon in Bethlehem
 - And they say this child will be a restorer of life and a sustainer for Naomi
 - Ironically, because of Naomi, Ruth came to know her Jewish redeemer and husband
 - And now the tables are turned, as Ruth becomes the one to make possible for Naomi to receive her own deliverer
- Interestingly, the parents do not name their child. Instead, a neighbor woman gave the child a name, Obed
 - His name means servant or one who serves
 - The neighbor gave the child this name to recognize Naomi's caring for Ruth's child
 - But of course we see a greater parallel
 - In fact, I'm guessing you've been seeing many parallels throughout today's lesson
 - Going back into last week, we have a lot of unpacking to do in explaining the second story of Chapter 4
 - And in this chapter, the second story isn't one of End Times as much
 - It's a story of history
- Let's start back with Boaz in the gate with his closest relative, at the beginning of the chapter
 - The easiest piece of this puzzle is Boaz himself

- Everyone knows this man is a picture of Jesus Christ acting as our Redeemer
- And we are like Ruth, the Gentile Bride of Christ, in need of redemption
- In Ruth's case, she needed redemption from widowhood, while we needed redemption from something far more serious and devastating
 - As sinners we incurred a life-threatening debt before God
 - The Bible says that all people come into the world as sinners

Rom. 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

- And our sin nature causes us to then live in ways that are contrary to God's law
- Our contrary nature, and the behavior it produces, is called sin and sin is a debt before God
- Because we have this debt before God, we need to pay that debt
 - But this isn't an easy debt to pay
 - The payment must be equal to the debt
 - And the debt we owe is our life

Rom. 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- So we need someone to bail us out of our debt, to redeem us, to pay a ransom to free us from our sentence of eternal death
- Boaz pictures Christ, our Redeemer, Who willingly paid the price for our sin debt before God
 - Like Boaz going before the elders and the people in the gate, Christ entered into a legal transaction
 - He made a payment for our debt, which the Bible calls propitiation

1John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

- By our redeemer's payment, we were justified, which means we were acquitted of our guilt and obtained peace with God

Rom. 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

- Christ stepped into the gap to assume the Redeemer role in place of another who

couldn't, just as Boaz did

- Like Boaz, Christ first assembled ten witnesses
- In Boaz's day, these men represented the authority of the people, who could testify concerning right and wrong
- Notice the 10 elders didn't force anyone to do anything
- They just stood by silently giving witness to what ought to happen in this situation
- Where do we find ten witnesses concerning right and wrong in our story with Christ?
 - We find them in the Law
 - Because before Jesus could redeem us, He had to meet the terms of the Law
 - And specifically, he had to satisfy the scrutiny of the Ten Commandments
 - The Law can't compel anyone to do good, as Paul says
 - Rather, it stands witness, silently condemning us as we fail to live according to its requirements
- Boaz withstood the scrutiny of his ten witnesses, having satisfied all that the law required concerning Naomi's family
 - Just as Christ also met all the requirements of the Law by living a perfect, sinless life
 - The Ten Commandments testified to Christ's righteousness, as scripture says

1John 3:5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

- Like Boaz, Christ was a man who fulfilled the Law
- But there was another man present who couldn't fulfill the law's requirements
 - This other man was a close relative of Boaz
 - But he was unable to redeem Naomi's family
 - He couldn't pay the price
 - And so under the scrutiny of the ten elders, he was forced to hand his shoe to Jesus
 - Thus Boaz could walk in his place, doing what he couldn't do
 - Who does this close relative picture?
 - He pictures Adam, and ultimately everyone who comes from Adam
 - In effect, that closer relative is you and me
- We are related to Christ at least in blood, because Jesus took on flesh to be our representative

Heb. 2:14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render

powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

- Though Jesus was God, He took on flesh so He could walk in our shoes, taking our place on the cross

Phil. 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

Phil. 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

Phil. 2:7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

Phil. 2:8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- Boaz and his relative pictures Christ and mankind
- But like that relative, we're more closely related than Christ
- We share the sin nature of those Christ redeems, which makes us a closer relative
- So somehow we must move out of the way so Christ can redeem
 - We have to give Christ our shoe, so He can step into our place and walk where we can't go
 - He must redeem us since we can't redeem ourselves
- He could pay the price for our sins, a price we couldn't pay
 - The price was too great
 - We don't have the perfect life that the Law requires
 - Those ten witnesses, the Ten Commandments, stand by silently condemning us, testifying against us, exposing our sins
 - We have to give our shoe to Christ by faith, so He can walk in our place, paying our price
- As Boaz paid that debt, the man who couldn't pay was shamed as one unable to meet the law
 - And in a sense, that's what Christ did for us
 - He took our place, paying our price, and in the process relieved us of the debt which shamed us
 - He took our shame on the cross, scripture says

Col. 2:13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

Col. 2:14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it

to the cross.

Heb. 12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- Lastly, we remember that Boaz redeemed not only Ruth but also Naomi's land
 - Just as Christ is Redeemer of both mankind, and all Creation

Col. 1:19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, **Col. 1:20** and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

- Next, we see that once Boaz became the redeemer, he received great adoration and he inherited all that belonged to Elimelech, according to v.9
 - Remember that the name Elimelech means "God is King" and his character in the story represents God the Father
 - Scripture calls God the Father "Husband" to Israel, just as Elimelech is the husband of Naomi
 - And now Boaz has received everything that was Elimelech's
 - So here again we see a picture of Christ, as scripture teaches

Phil. 2:9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, **Phil. 2:10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **Phil. 2:11** and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- And Hebrews says that Jesus was the heir of all things

Heb. 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, **Heb. 1:2** in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

- Jesus received the Father's inheritance as a result of His service of redemption
- And He is prepared to share His inheritance with His Bride

- And Boaz's act of mercy led to many descendants and a great name in Bethlehem
 - Just as Jesus' work on the cross has resulted in many sons and daughters of faith in the family of God
 - Furthermore, the name of Jesus is likewise synonymous with Bethlehem itself
- Why did Boaz do all this? To give Ruth and Naomi rest, to give them the permanent security and peace they longed for...a Sabbath rest
 - For Ruth, the rest came in the form of a marriage
 - Just as our Sabbath rest is found in faith in Jesus Christ
 - We are the Bride Who has found our Groom in Christ
 - Never again will we work for our righteousness
 - For we have obtained it in a Redeemer Who covered us in His robe of righteousness
 - But Naomi, Israel, still needs a redeemer
 - Ironically, Israel is the one that brought us, the Gentile Church, to our Redeemer through the covenants and the scriptures
 - Israel brought the Messiah into the world
 - Yet today Israel stands in widowhood
- But in a day to come, the nation will receive that same child they rejected so long ago
 - The same Israel who made possible our opportunity to know the Messiah, will one day receive that same Messiah
 - Just as Naomi led Ruth to Boaz, and then one day Ruth gave Naomi the deliverer she needed
 - Likewise, we have Christ because of Israel
 - Scripture says in a future day the nation of Israel will receive the same child they rejected earlier

Zech. 12:9 “And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

Zech. 12:10 “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

- Naomi's receiving a child to redeem her is a picture of how Israel comes to understand that the Christ child was their Messiah
 - They will weep over this firstborn son upon recognizing the error of their forefathers
 - They will understand they pierced their Messiah on the cross but by that recognition, they come to find rest Rom. 11:12 Now if their transgression is riches for

the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!

Rom. 11:13 But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,

Rom. 11:14 if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.

Rom. 11:15 For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

Rom. 11:30 For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience,

Rom. 11:31 so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.

Rom. 11:32 For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

- The story ends with a brief genealogy

Ruth 4:18 Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron,

Ruth 4:19 and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab,

Ruth 4:20 and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon,

Ruth 4:21 and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed,

Ruth 4:22 and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.

- Samuel connects the descendant of Judah and Tamar to David
 - Remember, this was written by Samuel as the monarchy of Saul was fading and David was in waiting for the throne
 - So the genealogy stands to testify to the line of the seed promise and of the monarchy
- David, not Saul, was in the line of Judah, the tribe of kings
 - And the Messiah would come through David's line by way of Boaz and Ruth
 - In that way Samuel makes a scriptural case for the House of David having priority over the House of Saul
 - Clearly, this was God's plan
- But there is another reason we have this genealogy, one that testifies to God's grace to the Gentiles
 - Perez was the son of Judah and Tamar
 - Tamar was Judah's daughter-in-law, and she tricked him into impregnating her

by posing as a prostitute on the side of the road

- Though Tamar had right to be redeemed as a widow, Judah refused to let her wed his final son
- So Tamar felt forced to take this step
- The product of that union was Perez, who was a child of illegitimate birth (a “bastard” son)
 - There is a law regarding such children

Deut. 23:2 “No one of illegitimate birth shall enter the assembly of the Lord; none of his descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall enter the assembly of the Lord.

- The law says that such a person cannot enter the assembly nor can the next nine generations of descendants
- To not enter the assembly means to be barred from the religious life of Israel
- They cannot enter the temple nor participate in the feasts
- That is the curse of the Law
- We’re not sure if this law was followed in the case of Perez’s family
 - But we can be sure that the Lord didn’t lose track
 - He would have counted out the ten generations
- Interestingly, the very next verse in Deuteronomy 23 is one we read at the beginning of our study

Deut. 23:3 “No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the Lord; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the Lord,

- The Law placed the same restriction on a Moabite who joined to the people of Israel
 - That person was also barred from participating in the assembling of Israel for ten generations
 - Ruth was a Moabite, so she would have fallen under this restriction
- **Addendum:** *An alternative perspective of this verse, based in Rabbinical teachings (William Davidson Talmud, Yevamot 77b), interprets this law to apply only to Ammonite or Moabite males as unable to enter the assembly. Thus this clause would not apply to Ruth or Boaz.*
- But as our story ends, we find a list of exactly ten names ending in David
 - Ten being the number of testimony
 - And the curse of Perez’s line ending with David, another picture of Christ

- So we have Boaz, the man who pictures Christ on the cross, paying the price, taking the curse of a Moabite upon himself
 - And we see David, a picture of Christ risen and ruling, removing the curse
 - In one we see the first coming of Christ
 - In the other, we see the second coming of Christ
- I hope this study has opened your eyes to the power of the God we serve
 - Truly he has authored history, including the lives of those in our story
 - And every move He makes communicates His love for us in His word
 - When you see the puzzle coming together, you recognize this was written by God
 - And you come to understand the lengths He has gone to redeem us